

Having absorbed Taoist and Buddhist relationship schemas during my childhood, I recognized them in English translations of *Tao Te Ching*. However, something was missing.⁷³ I sensed an undue abruptness and an unnecessary lack of cohesion.⁷⁴ From my background in music, I knew whole-piece musical cohesion as the outcome of organized measures, phrases, and sections. From my background in English writing, I knew whole-piece literary cohesion as the outcome of organized phrases, sentences, paragraphs, sections, and chapters. From my background in theater, I knew playscript cohesion as the outcome of organized lines, scenes, and acts.

In 2021, I focused ten months of thought experimentation to resolve the undue abruptness and unnecessary lack of cohesion I had sensed. As a result, I revealed to myself a whole-book literary structure which met and surpassed my native anticipation of cohesion. Trusting my early-childhood awareness and following the “language laws” listed in *Tao Te Ching*, I discovered a square structure complementing the two-book taijitu structure. An isometric repetition of the relationship between square and taijitu used by Sino-Tibetan logographs encompasses this entire ancient text.

Tao Te Ching is composed of eighty-one chapters.⁷⁵

Eighty-one is a square number.

A square alone does not organize a text.

However, all odd-numbered groups share a particular characteristic.

To demonstrate, I begin with simple even and oddness. Even-numbered lines may be split into two equal halves. Odd numbered lines maintain a “center” position as the remainder between two equal halves. In the case of eighty-one, this middle position is the forty-first. In *Tao Te Ching*, forty chapters are delivered before and after ching 41.

Odd square numbers also maintain a “center” position characteristic. Eighty-one squares build a nine-by-nine grid. Between nine columns and nine rows, the fifth position of the fifth row is always the fifth position of the fifth column. Numbering by rank and file beginning in any corner while proceeding in any direction, the same number always lands in the bullseye. Take a look.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19
36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28
45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37
54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46
63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55
72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64
81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73

73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81
64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73
72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64
63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55
54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46
45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37
36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28
27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19
18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

1	10	19	28	37	46	55	64	73
2	11	20	29	38	47	56	65	74
3	12	21	30	39	48	57	66	75
4	13	22	31	40	49	58	67	76
5	14	23	32	41	50	59	68	77
6	15	24	33	42	51	60	69	78
7	16	25	34	43	52	61	70	79
8	17	26	35	44	53	62	71	80
9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81

73	64	55	46	37	28	19	10	1
74	65	56	47	38	29	20	11	2
75	66	57	48	39	30	21	12	3
76	67	58	49	40	31	22	13	4
77	68	59	50	41	32	23	14	5
78	69	60	51	42	33	24	15	6
79	70	61	52	43	34	25	16	7
80	71	62	53	44	35	26	17	8
81	72	63	54	45	36	27	18	9

9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81
8	17	26	35	44	53	62	71	80
7	16	25	34	43	52	61	70	79
6	15	24	33	42	51	60	69	78
5	14	23	32	41	50	59	68	77
4	13	22	31	40	49	58	67	76
3	12	21	30	39	48	57	66	75
2	11	20	29	38	47	56	65	74
1	10	19	28	37	46	55	64	73

81	72	63	54	45	36	27	18	9
80	71	62	53	44	35	26	17	8
79	70	61	52	43	34	25	16	7
78	69	60	51	42	33	24	15	6
77	68	59	50	41	32	23	14	5
76	67	58	49	40	31	22	13	4
75	66	57	48	39	30	21	12	3
74	65	56	47	38	29	20	11	2
73	64	55	46	37	28	19	10	1

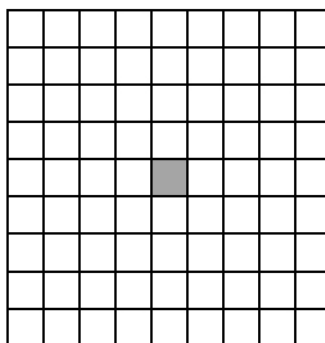
Consider a phrase from ching 26, “At the center of all movement rests stillness.” Whether it is viewed right-side-up, upside-down, on its side, from the front, or from the rear, ching 41 means to be a single unmoving point of reference. *Tao Te Ching* displays literal compassion toward the beginner reader.

As a veteran classroom teacher and pedagogist, I recognize the contents of ching 41 as providing 1) a performance rating system, 2) a syllabus, and 3) a requisite for graduation. It contains all the information a contemporary instructor needs to build a full, logical curriculum.⁷⁶

Spoiler alert!

On deeper examination, more patterns emerged from the nine-by-nine square. A reader may pause here and turn back one page for a chance to decipher solo. For English, keep reading.

The *original structure* discussed above matches the fifth character structure listed by Lu, Pi, and Liao. It mirrors (0,0) at the origin of a two-dimensional grid, the structure of celestial bodies in orbit, a membrane-bound nucleus enclosed by a cell membrane, an iris dilating a pupil, electrons orbiting an atomic nucleus, and many other natural phenomena.



Original Structure

The *wheel structure* reflects a wheel. Ching 41 acts as the hub. Axial and diagonal positions retain their ranks across orientations to delineate the spokes of a wheel. Perimeter positions maintain the status of rim. Positions in the empty spaces between spokes (eight groups of three) keep together across orientations. An eight-spoked wheel (*dharmachakra*) is a central Buddhist symbol associated with the Noble Eightfold Path.⁷⁷ Wheels had been around for at least one thousand years when *Tao Te Ching* is thought to have been documented. The pattern also matches cardinal and intercardinal directions on a compass rose.