Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy 6

Xiaogan Liu *Editor*

Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy

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While "philosophy" is a Western term, philosophy is not something exclusively Western. In this increasingly globalized world, the importance of non-Western philosophy is becoming more and more obvious. Among all the non-Western traditions, Chinese philosophy is certainly one of the richest. In a history of more than 2500 years, many extremely important classics, philosophers, and schools have emerged. As China is becoming an economic power today, it is only natural that more and more people are interested in learning about the cultural traditions, including the philosophical tradition, of China.

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Difficulties and Orientations in the Study of Chinese Philosophy

Xiaogan Liu

This volume, after a complicated few years, is finally complete. As its editor, I am delighted and grateful to all the contributors and each chapter's reviewers. I am quite proud that the contributing team consists of internationally established experts, specialists, and promising young scholars from all over the world. I am satisfied that the book is comprehensive, informative, and in many ways inspiring.

1 Daoism and Chinese Philosophy

In a volume devoted to explaining and exploring Daoist philosophy, we should begin by briefly discussing the meaning of "Daoism" (a new romanization of the older "Taoism"). Daoism is a complex term and difficult to define clearly. The Anglicized term was coined in the 1830s by Western scholars[1] working from the pronunciation of the Chinese word *dao* 道, which literally suggests a path or road, and is extended to indicate approaches, methods, and principles; *dao* has been used this way since antiquity in Chinese political and moral discourse. Aside from these common meanings, the word's most striking early appearance is in the *Laozi* (or *Lao-tzu, Lao-tze*) or *Daodejing* (or *Tao-te-ching*; Eng., *The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*), where *dao* is used to refer to the ultimate source and ground of the

[1]According *Webster's Dictionary*, the first known use of D[T]aoism is in 1838. See http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/taoism?show=0&t=1348302546.

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universe. Through this work it became a new philosophical term and the seed of a new intellectual and cultural tradition. SIMA Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE), drawing on some version of this tradition, invented a new term, *Daojia* (literally "*dao*-family," indicating one of six schools of thought in early Han dynasty), which first appeared in his *Historical Record*.[2] The *Laozi* and a later work entitled *Zhuangzi* are conventionally understood to be the most representative texts of Daosim—Daoist philosophy in particular. Thereafter, texts, authors, and ideas similar or related to these two texts, or elements within them, are commonly labeled Daoist. In modern academic discourse, we find that certain ideas have become recognized as standards of Daoism. Examples include taking Dao or "the Way" to be the source of the universe and assuming belief in the naturalistic generation of the universe, endorsing *ziran* (naturalness) and *wuwei* (non-action) in political and social life, and promoting individual freedom in personal and social life. These are commonly taken to be major elements of the Daoist tradition, hence we can use them as a working scheme from which to decide key texts and thinkers are pertinent to a book on Daoism. Of course, this practice remain will open to ongoing discussion.

The question of what Daoism is becomes more complex and uncertain when we include the historical religious movements that have been called "Daoist." Because our volume is meant to introduce Daoist philosophy, we will limit our discussion of these movements to a chapter that briefly introduces Daoist religion and its relation to Daoist philosophy.[3]

The more difficult problem concerns the discipline of Chinese philosophy. Namely, just what *is* Chinese philosophy and how can we study it in a more serious and consciously academic way? Obviously, this problem is of great concern to readers who want to begin or improve their study of Chinese philosophy, and Daoist thought in particular. A footnote to this concern is a debate that exploded in China a decade ago. The fuse was lit by the article "The Issue of the 'Legitimacy' of Chinese Philosophy," by the well-known Confucian scholar ZHENG Jiadong, then working at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Defoort and Ge 2005: 11–23). More than 100 journal articles and books were subsequently published from authors with broadly divergent background, perspectives, and opinions. The issue of "legitimacy" proved, however, a false lead, thus the vigorous discussion has ebbed away with no conclusions or constructive suggestions. The broad-based and heated engagement in the debate should be attributed, at least partly, to dissatisfaction with the low quality of the field (ibid. 2006: 20–33). Although the debate occurred in China, the issue of quality also deserves attention and discussion in Western circles of Chinese philosophy scholars.

[2]For details of Sima's account of and comments about *Daojia*, as well as a comparison of *Daojia* and the other five thought traditions, see Smith 2003.

[3]See Chap. 20: "Daoism from Philosophy to Religion." For more information about Daoism generally, please see Creel 1970. Readers who are interested in a comprehensive discussion of the meaning of Daoism or features of Daoist religion can consult Sivin 1995 and Raz 2012.

Historically speaking, Chinese philosophy as an academic subject has been around for at least eight decades in China and six decades in the West.[4] And more and more universities and colleges offer Chinese philosophy or related courses in North America today. Accordingly, an ever-increasing number of textbooks, reference works, monographs, and journals in the field are being published all over the world. This volume joins their ranks. There is no authority or basis for proclaiming Chinese philosophy, as a field, illegitimate. Nonetheless there are scholars who only consider certain philosophical approaches, for example, Anglo-American analytical practice, to be the standard of philosophy. Because Chinese thought, including the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions, is quite different from the analytical tradition, it is not considered philosophy. But here the problem is one of different definitions, and has nothing to do with legitimacy.

Still, the debate over legitimacy did raise some meaningful issues: Namely, the questions I began with—just what *is* Chinese philosophy and how can we practice Chinese philosophy with correct academic consciousness? These questions deserve our reflection.

From the very beginning, the discipline of Chinese philosophy has been a marriage of modern Western philosophies—younger strains within the European tradition—and ancient Chinese thought, e.g., Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, still in their traditional garb. This suggests two areas of inherent conflict and tension, between the Chinese and Western, and the ancient and modern. Intriguingly, this marriage seemed so natural when Chinese scholars were eager to learn from the West that few seriously took up the question: Why should and how can we maintain and improve this marriage? Caused by unconscious response to the questions, divergent approaches to the study of Chinese philosophy can be classified into general types according to their purposes and characteristics. These types will be a handy reference in our consideration of what Chinese philosophy is and how to conduct research in this field.

2 Two Approaches: Westernized and Indigenous

The mainstream way to study Chinese philosophy is to reinterpret or reformulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, the Chinese classics and related texts with reference to various Western philosophies, such as Marxist materialism, Kantian idealism, new realism, American pragmatism, analytical and linguistic philosophy, existentialism, and phenomenology, as well as the endless new and potentially

[4] I consider FUNG Youlan's two-volume *History of Chinese Philosophy,* published in the 1930s, and its English translation, published in 1953, as benchmarks in the establishment of the field of Chinese philosophy. Hu Shi's book on the history of Chinese philosophy was published in 1919, and courses on "Chinese philosophy" were offered earlier, but they were not influential and cannot be taken as the practical start of the discipline.

relevant theories generated in newer fields, for example, hermeneutics, psychology, semiotics, anthropology, and mythology. Some scholars believe that through these Western lenses they have found the "truth" or the most accountable perspective on ancient thought, and they believe this is the only legitimate way to approach these materials. In this way, the new interpretations may be accepted as philosophical study but criticized as non-Chinese: namely, their research does not talk about Chinese thought, but uses Chinese materials to demonstrate the strength of Western theories or to fill Western theoretical boxes. FENG Youlan (1895–1990) was representative of this approach; he introduced neo-realism into his interpretation of Chinese philosophy (Lao 1984: 3–4). We can call his approach, for convenience, a Westernized interpretation.

In reaction to the Westernized approach to doing Chinese philosophy, some scholars, especially in the past two decades, have insisted that since ancient Chinese thinkers did not speak modern Western languages and knew nothing of Western terms and theories, we should interpret ancient thought based on indigenous terms and frames. This means trying to exclude all or certain Western or modern concepts and theories, though escaping our own contemporary and Westernized frame may seem a tall order. These kinds of studies try to be more faithful to the Chinese texts and assume that ancient thought is irrelevant to the modern world. This historical and textual approach has invited criticism because it is not really doing philosophy. HU Shi (1891–1962) was considered a representative of this approach by LAO Siguang (1927–2012), despite Hu's book, *A History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy* (Hu 1929), receiving high marks as a breakthrough in modern Chinese academic history.[5] Lao criticized this work as consisting of historical materials interpreted only with common sense, hardly an exercise in the practice of philosophy (ibid., 1–2). We may call this approach indigenous interpretation.

These two contrasting approaches to interpretation focus on *Western reference*, whether or not one may or should use Western philosophy as necessary comparative reference for reinterpreting ancient Chinese thought. This presents a distinct difficulty in the study of Chinese philosophy: it seems that anyone who wants to conduct such research needs double expertise—namely, familiarity with both Chinese cultural traditions and Western philosophical techniques and theories. This "reasonable" condition brings extra complexity not only to academic research, but also to the development of the subject in major Western universities: It is difficult to find someone qualified as a specialist in both Chinese studies and Western philosophy. This is a historical and disciplinary problem, which should not be simply attributed to cultural hegemony.

Although Western reference is indeed an issue in the study of Chinese philosophy, it is merely one of measures and reference; its importance is superficial instead of essential. A more critical issue is the purpose and goal of research and

[5]Hu's work won high praise for a long time. The earliest example is CAI Yuanpei's 蔡元培 preface to Hu's book (Cai 1919), and the latest representative remarks come from LI Ling 李零, who claims that Hu was really a great master (Li 2008: 12).

how that shapes the work. Why do we want to study Chinese philosophy, and what are the true meanings of academic activity? If these primary questions are clarified, the question of Western reference becomes easier to answer, since a study's reference and measure are subordinate to its underlying purposes. To determine that basic motivation we move on to next issue, namely, the *two orientations*.

3 Two Orientations: Historical Truth and Modern Concerns

There are many purposes and intentions that drive studies in Chinese philosophy, but the most basic distinction among those multiple goals can be described as two underlying research orientations. One consists of historical, objective textual concerns, pursuing truths about and in ancient Chinese thought as pure academic work; the second involves contemporary and future-oriented concerns, generates personal, creative, and potentially useful theories for real life, which can be philosophical, political, or quasi-religious. To keep it simple, we can call the first orientation "textual and historical," and the second "modern and creative."

In the first orientation, the term "truths" indicates that I do not believe a text can contain *the* truth or have only one authoritative meaning; however, we cannot deny that among various understandings of a text, a sentence, an idiomatic term, or a technical concept, some are more reliable and acceptable than others. We cannot suppose that all understandings and interpretations are equally valid. Thus, the first orientation actually pursues a fair and faithful reading and a solid understanding of its subject. Although I use the word "creative" for the second orientation, it does not follow that the first orientation requires no creativity. To devise more convincing and enlightening methods by which to unlock a text and propose reliable explanations takes creative thinking. However, this creativity lies in discovering new technologies of assessment rather than presenting new ideas directly.

Some think that the distinction between these research orientations is not necessary and we can just combine them. But this position and practice are problematic. Yes, we see the value in "killing two birds with one stone," but who can simultaneously aim at two birds in two directions? And in fact, uncertain, indefinite, and intermingled purposes have hindered Chinese philosophy from attaining maturity and sophistication as a modern discipline, though it is legitimately established as an academic field.

The orientation issue addresses researchers' self-conscious, rather than objective, judgment about what kind of understanding is reliable and acceptable. Self-consciousness is decisive and necessary in any academic activity. Common orientations are necessary grounds for academic exchange and discussion in order to advance the quality of research. A research project without clear orientational consciousness is a boat navigating at sea without direction and purpose: It might go anywhere but is still nowhere.

This proposition of two orientations is not a contrivance, but reflects the state of the Chinese philosophy field. Many scholars, mainly coming from Chinese

Table 1.1 Other expressions of the two orientations

Orientation one	Orientation two
Rediscover the original shape of Chinese philosophy	Endow new meaning to old texts and arouse their latent dynamism
Retrospective interpretation of the Confucian classics	Future-oriented proposals
Respect for the distinctive characteristics of various eras	Reconstitute the classics from a contemporary point of view
Maintain consistency with the original texts	Establish a theoretical system that can guide human life
Take the classic texts as the center	Be commentator-centered
Historicity of the original text	Contemporary concerns embedded in the interpreting

This table is a simplified version adapted from Liu (2009: 63, 2008–2009: 61)

Table 1.2 More examples linked to the two orientations

Orientation one	Orientation two
Objective, historical, and textual focus	Subjective, realistic, and inventive focus
Faithfully read and understand a text	Create and present new ideas
"I annotate the six classics"	"The six classics are an annotation of me"
Exposition that conforms to the texts	Exposition that goes beyond the texts
Focus on objective study	Focus on subjective philosophical innovation
Pure academic research	Realistic concern: inspiration, guidance, elevation, and consolation for human life
Reveal and explain the meaning of classical texts	Establish and express interpreter's own philosophical point of view
Historical inquiry concerning the text and its author	Pondering of contemporary, realistic, and future topics
Philological, linguistic and textual interpretation	Philosophical, theoretical and speculative construction
Dialogue with and questioning of the author for possible truth	Assertion of interpreter's subjectivity and expression of one's thoughts
Concern with methodological hermeneutics	Concern with philosophical hermeneutics
Concern with author's intent	Concern with readers' interpretation

The table is adapted from Liu (2009: 62–3, 2008–2009: 62)

backgrounds, have expressed similar ideas in various statements, though they do not use the term "two orientations." Some of these ideas are listed in the following table (Table 1.1):

Additionally, scholars have drawn distinctions that comport with the two orientations. Some representatives are listed in Table 1.2.

All the contrasting characteristics of orientations one and two in these tables suggest rather different working assumptions and purposes across the many studies of Chinese philosophy. Each author and statement varies in their points and tendencies, and are not necessarily perfectly consistent with my two orientations

concept. But they are sufficient to prove that there is widespread recognition that the field needs to cultivate orientational consciousness. My crystallization of this in the expression “two orientations” just makes this obvious.

Why does this distinction matter so much?

First, the content and object of the study of Chinese philosophy are the intellectual and moral traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, which have constituted the core values of mainstream Chinese culture for more than two millennia. But since this field was newly established in the last century in accordance with the Western model of academic practice and organization, Chinese philosophy has in effect been spliced onto the Western philosophical model, so its references and methods are to some degree determined by that model. Therefore, what Chinese philosophy scholars use as measures and what they study as their subject are not from the same tradition. In other words, there is a cultural and chronological gap between the field’s working tools and the objects it investigates. Academics had not grasped the significance of this gap until the debate about the legitimacy of the discipline exploded. Thus, unlike Western scholars of philosophy, Chinese scholars study their tradition—almost unavoidably—through another cultural framework and concept system. This means they have to be more conscious about investigating the original meaning of indigenous texts to avoid introducing distortions via the foreign references and measures they must use.

Given the transplanted history and background of Chinese philosophy, we need to pay special attention to recovering the original meaning of its ancient intellectual texts. When someone wants to use Marxist, Kantian, pragmatist, or Gadamerian concepts and frameworks to study ancient Chinese thought, they should be alert to the functions of such foreign measures, positive or negative. Thus the textual and historical orientation must be the foundation of the whole edifice of Chinese philosophy. The broader and deeper that foundation, the taller and grander will be the building constructed. This job cannot be accomplished by arbitrary or accidental findings; on the contrary, it requires serious and conscious effort. Some might harbor suspicions about the importance—and even the possibility—of pursuing historical and textual “truths,” and we will address these concerns below. A key rationale for such suspicions has been Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, which are often misunderstood and misused to challenge the textual-historical orientation and defend a mixture of the two orientations as a legitimate form of interpretation.

But not all scholars must take up textual-historical problems as their task. Some students of Chinese philosophy do not have the temperament for the painstaking, often tedious, work needed to uncover the “truths” of history. Indeed, Chinese philosophical study is not only the excavation of relics of ancient thought. Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism are “orientating philosophies,” that is, traditions of thought that provided politico-moral guidance for traditional Chinese societies.[6] If scholars wish to carry on those conventions to make a contribution to the modern world, their efforts are legitimate—they are simply choosing to work within the second

[6]The words “orientating philosophy” and “politico-moral guidance” are adapted from Lao 2013.

orientation. Still, they too have to pay attention to developments in the historical recovery that slowly clarifies the meaning of ancient thought, although they do not have to undertake such investigations themselves. If they neglect the research results from the first orientation scholarship, they may misunderstand their subject, and making their "creative interpretation" for modern society groundless. For example, JI Xianlin 季羡林 has reinterpreted the idiom "union of heaven and man" (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一) as the harmony of man and the natural world (Ji 1996). However, this interpretation is groundless because there is no textual evidence demonstrating that this phrase ever meant to promote harmony between the human and the natural world. In ancient Chinese texts, *tian* is a complex term most closely related to a transcendent and mysterious power, whose function determined political and moral principles that extended to human society. Moreover, this reading was not a new or significant gift to modern world because the notion of harmony between humans and the environment was already a widely used catchphrase. If someone works in line with the second orientation but pays no serious attention to historical and textual studies, their "creative" interpretations will likely be as mistaken as reading modern common sense into ancient Chinese terms, an enterprise perhaps capable of (ahistorically) attributing new breadth and depth to ancient Chinese culture, but contributing nothing significant to modern societies or the future of the world. If we are satisfied with this kind of interpretation, Chinese philosophy as a discipline can contribute little to its motherland or human history.

The issue of these two orientations should not be confused with that of Western reference. Some may think that Westernized interpretations incline towards the problem of determining the modern philosophical meaning of a Chinese intellectual text, while indigenous interpretation investigates the possible historical truth in the key texts of Chinese thought. These observations are in fact not accurate because indigenous interpretation can also produce ideas for modern society, and Westernized interpretations may be helpful to getting at historical truth. Comparative ideas may even provoke insights about the Chinese past that we otherwise would never have thought of.

The proposition of the two orientations aims to advance the quality of Chinese philosophical studies in both directions: on the one hand, we expect more reliable understanding and interpretation of ancient intellectual texts, on the other, such work extended by careful creative readings can generate substantive new ideas for modern societies' needs. I am confident that this is a critical step toward transforming Chinese philosophical study from the ancient interpretation tradition to modern academic research and theoretical argumentation. Traditionally, significant new theories were often built and presented in the form of commentaries on classics, such as WANG Bi's annotation of the *Laozi*, GUO Xiang's annotation of the *Zhuangzi*, and ZHU Xi's commentary on the *Four Books*. However, according to modern academic rules, scholars' own ideas and their understanding of old texts should be held distinct. Scholars' new theories should be argued and developed clearly and

independently, and are not supposed to be mingled with the ideas of ancient texts, though they can cite from ancient thought to support their own philosophy.[7]

4 Two Quasi-religious Approaches

Up to this point we have been discussing academic issues, but now let's move on to a modern and practical aspect of the field of Chinese philosophy. Two parallel quasi-religious and practical approaches have emerged, both of which fall generally under Confucianism or *Ruxue*. Both are representative of the above-mentioned second orientation.

First is the famous Modern Neo-Confucianist school, which promotes a quasi-religious faith to achieve spiritual and practical goals in Chinese society. Different from indigenous interpretation, which takes ancient thought and texts as its tacit object of investigation for academic purposes, the modern school holds that ancient strains of thought, Confucianism in particular, are still alive and well, and can play a positive role in contemporary Chinese people's lives and in the life of the nation. This approach was initiated and promoted by XIONG Shili (1884–1968), and taken up by MOU Zongsan (1909–1995) and TANG Junyi (1909–1978), the famous core group of "modern Neo-Confucianism" practitioners (Lao 2013: 81–2). However, their take on the status of Chinese philosophy may not be limited to Confucianism, and their true purpose is to inspire and guide China's national renaissance. We will refer to this as the nationalistic attitude in Chinese philosophical studies.

An approach specific to the Western world transforms and promotes Chinese thought as a means to improve and advance the well-being of Western societies. For this purpose, it also practices reinterpretation of ancient Chinese thought in light of Western philosophies and comparative religious studies. This approach seems similar to the Westernized interpretation, but its aim is not purely textual investigation (the first orientation) or intellectual construction (the second orientation), but more practical and religious. It also differs from the nationalistic attitude in that scholars with this attitude believe Confucianism belongs not only to the Chinese or ancient China, but to all of humanity in the modern world, though its concern for the West far outweighs any thought for China. This attitude may be represented by Boston Confucianism (Neville 2000). Though this is not a sweeping movement, it is distinctive and worthy of notice. We may call this tendency the universalistic attitude.

Both the nationalistic and universalistic attitudes are clearly quasi-religious and practical, concerned with the conditions of human beings in the contemporary world. Such efforts are needed and significant, though they are not purely academic investigations. When scholars assume this attitude, they should be very cautious

[7]For further discussion about the issue of two orientations, a topical volume of *Contemporary Chinese Thought: Orientational Issues in Textual Interpretation* might be helpful (Liu 2008–2009).

about claiming that their theories and beliefs constitute the *true meaning* of ancient Chinese thought. They should be sure to clarify the relationship, i.e., the differences and similarities, between their new developments and the theories in ancient Chinese texts, and between faithful reading of old texts and practical needs in modern world.

5 Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Why We Should Talk About Orientations

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has had tremendous influence in the field of Chinese philosophy. Its impact in the academic circles has been both positive and negative. It has brought new ideas, approaches, and inspiration to the discipline, and motivates active and broad research on Chinese intellectual texts under the new term "classical interpretation." New projects, new programs, and new institutes across Asia are producing research of tremendous quality.[8] The study of Chinese philosophy and comparative research has expanded to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Furthermore, Gadamer's theory has provided a novel way to understand and defend the tradition of Chinese intellectual history; i.e., the development of new theories through commentaries and reinterpretations of the classics and related texts (Liu 2009: 29–59). This philosophy also supplies keen weapons to cut through the domination of dogmatism. Simultaneously, however, some of Gadamer's theories, such as the fusion of horizons and effective history, have been oversimplified and misused as new methods in textual studies and as an apology for flabby and sometimes bizarre interpretations. Some scholars have asserted that pursuing their personal or "creative" interpretations before they have been trained with basic knowledge of classical Chinese counts as sufficiently rigorous[9]; this phenomenon has been encouraged by oversimplified readings of Gadamer and other influential postmodern theoretical trends. For example, one American scholar claims that by "explicitly stating our *needs and desires* in the course of our making sense," personal interpretation may be legitimized in academic research (Jensen 1997: 285). Obviously, this claim and practice confuses the principle of conducting academic work with the attitude of being a growing person.

[8]The Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University headed by Professor Chun-chieh HUANG is an typical example. It originated in a hermeneutical project on Asian Confucian texts more than a decade ago.

[9]A typical representative is a commentary on the *Laozi's* thought authored by XIONG Liangshan (Xiong 2003), who studies technology and has no training in classical Chinese. The book was once celebrated by government and media, and even received awards, because it put popular ideas in Laozi's mouth. Nonetheless, the theory of "Creative hermeneutics," presented by the late preeminent philosopher Charles Fu (1976, 1990: 1–46), is itself original, serious, and inspiring, deserving further discussion. But the term has been simplified and misused in defense of irresponsible interpretations.

There are divergent attitudes toward the thesis of the two orientations. Scholars with strong Sinological and historical training tend to take the textual-historical orientation for granted, while others with a modern philosophical background may consider the first orientation impossible and unnecessary, or non-philosophical. Thus we should briefly discuss how best to understand Gadamer's theories.

Above all, we should remember that these theories are not concerned with how to understand a text, but about how human beings exist. Gadamer presents ontological hermeneutics, or a human being's understanding of the world. This is not a traditional methodological hermeneutics about how to understand and interpret a text. Still, scholars have used it in defence of their flaccid interpretations of Chinese thought. Gadamer repeatedly asserts, from his *Truth and Method* to later essays, that his theory is not about method: "The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically *not a problem of method at all*." (Gadamer 1989: xxi).[10] Obviously, his concern is not about interpreting a text, but philosophy per se, specifically, people's existential condition and their life of mutual understanding in a community. He contends: "*Understanding is no method but rather a form of community* among those who understand each other" (Gadamer 1994: x). He is not discussing how to consciously understand certain objects, but what unconsciously happens to human beings in their activity of understanding. Thus, he said, "[For philosophical hermeneutics,] the question is not what we do or what we should do, but what happens *beyond our willing and doing*" (Gadamer 1976: xi). "What happens beyond our willing and doing" is vividly distinct in his philosophical theory from any methodological theory of understanding or interpretation. Obviously, this concern differs from the practice of academic research on Chinese thought, which demands clear consciousness about approach, orientation, and the attitude of a research project.

Gadamer's theory is complex, ambiguous, and in places incomprehensible. For example, Jean Grondin, the author of *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, could not grasp Gadamer's "universal claim of hermeneutics," until Gadamer finally gave him the words "in the verbum interius" in a personal communication. Grondin "was astonished" and wrote, "This is nowhere emphasized in *Truth and Method*, let alone in the secondary literature. The universal claim of hermeneutics is to be found in the 'inner word,' which Augustine discussed and to which Gadamer had devoted a little-noticed chapter of his magnum opus?" (Grondin 1994: xiv). Gadamer was essentially concerned with "the universal" and "inner word" of human beings; he does not point the way for us to conduct research in any academic discipline, let alone Chinese philosophy. Thus, Richard Palmer correctly noted that the title of Gadamer's book *Truth and Method* "contains an irony: method is not the way to truth. On the contrary, truth eludes the methodical man" (Palmer 1969: 163). Therefore, any attempt to use Gadamer's theory as a *new* method is based on an incorrect understanding of the essential theme and purpose of all his theories.

Nevertheless, Gadamer's critical view of traditional objectivism is clear, and this has emancipated many textual interpreters of Chinese philosophy from anything

[10]The emphasis in this and following quotes are mine.

like historical or cultural expertise. But Gadamer is by no means so simple as to encourage unconditional free will and divergence in textual interpretation. He carries on Heidegger's theory and argues, "In the [hermeneutical] circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is *never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions*, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures *in terms of the things themselves* .... All correct interpretation must be *on guard against arbitrary fancies* and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought, and it must *direct its gaze 'on the things themselves'* ..." (Gadamer 1989: 266–67).[11] Therefore, despite his interest regarding the subjective in interpretation, Gadamer aims beyond the subject-object schema. As Palmer has pointed out: "Gadamer's hermeneutics suggests a *new kind of objectivity* grounded in the fact that what is disclosed constitutes not a projection of subjectivity but something which acts on our understanding in presenting itself" (Palmer 1969: 212).[12] Such statements remind us that Gadamer, and Heidegger for that matter, did not encourage unqualified freedom in textual interpretation, and we should not take their theories as methodological latitude for advancing wildly divergent interpretations, even though some have done so.

Our discussion of Gadamer's theory again points to the critical role of faithful textual and historical investigation in the study of Chinese philosophy, though we do not exclude or underestimate the value of the second orientation, or that of other approaches and attitudes. Although our assertions about these aspects of the field are not grounded in statistical investigation, they grow from historical observation and ideal-typical analyses, as well as various evaluations and critiques in and related to Chinese philosophy. Theoretically and logically, these ideal-typical patterns are mutually exclusive and conflicting; however, some works and practices do entangle the different orientations and approaches. A typical example comes from the Modern Neo-Confucian movement, which borrows Kant's themes and framework to analyze and reform Confucianism (Westernized interpretation) and claims that only in this way can the truth of historical Confucian doctrines be revealed (the first orientation), while at the same time promoting a quasi-religious attitude to guide modern societies and life and save the world from Western cultural and political domination (the second orientation, nationalist attitude). This blend of purposes and approaches persists in spite of other scholars' suspicions and criticisms. Furthermore, the "blending" scholars insist that their way follows Chinese cultural conventions, by combining religion, philosophy, and morality. But there is controversy around the Modern Neo-Confucian school: Their work is followed and respected by some, but others think it does not conform to the standards of modern academic research.

[11]Emphases are mine.

[12]Emphasis is mine.

So here we have mapped out the field of Chinese philosophy with an introduction to its two interpretational approaches (Westernized, indigenous), the two research orientations (historical and textual, modern and creative), and two quasi-religious attitudes (nationalistic, universalistic). In this map, young scholars will have a brief and comprehensive guide to the field—its history, features, concerns, difficulties, divergences of approach and method—so they may easily find their position and interest, and decide just what to take for their starting point.

* * *

Returning to this particular volume, our goal is not to reinterpret Daoist theories through Western philosophical lenses, though we do include chapters that compare Daoism and Western philosophy. Rather, we approach an indigenous interpretation, though we are discussing Daoist traditions in English. We try to be faithful to the texts and to introduce reliable and useful knowledge and research, as well as works with varying methods and positions. But we leave the work of transforming Daoist tradition for modern society to other books. Our work here is primarily a project of the first orientation, namely the historical and textual, though we do not exclude modern concerns.

All the characteristics and problems mentioned above with regard to Chinese philosophy are applicable to the study of Daoist philosophy, but certain aspects are distinct, such as a wider spectrum of differences of understanding, fewer devoted professional scholars and more enthusiastic general public, and the various surviving historical versions of key texts. Some scholars have tried to set up a Modern Neo-Daoism, after the manner of Modern Neo-Confucianism, but their effort has not gained much traction.

In general, Daoist philosophy is more difficult because its basic texts are obscure and divergent, its ways of communicating are often mysterious and drifting, its thought is both erudite and unfathomable, and its theoretical issues are puzzling and all-encompassing. These problems are all considered in this volume, and they should prove thought-provoking and rewarding for bright curious minds and sincere scholars. With the assistance and guidance of this volume's authors, we are confident that some of today's students will become tomorrow's accomplished Daoist scholars. We sincerely hope and believe that future generations will dramatically advance the quality and sophistication of the field of Chinese philosophy, including the study of Daoist intelligence and wisdom.

6 Introduction to Chapters in This Volume

Now let's give a preview of each of the chapters, to give a better sense of the book and how to make use of it. The *Daoist Companion* is divided into five parts. **Part I** concerns the *Laozi*, or *Daodejing*, in addition to introducing the most recently excavated bamboo-slip texts.

Chapter 2 discusses older scholarship and issues around the earliest text of Daoism. It reexamines A.C. Graham and D.C. Lau's arguments about the *Laozi*'s dating, demonstrating the fallacy of their speculation, hypotheses, and argumentation. Comparing verse features of the *Laozi* with the *Shijing* and *Chuci*, LIU Xiaogan presents new statistical linguistic evidence that pertains to the possible dating of the classic, such as intensiveness of rhyming, mixed rhyming patterns, rhyming sharing patterns, repetition within and between chapters, sentence patterns, and interchangeable rhyming, which shows that the general features of the *Laozi* belong to an earlier period than some scholars have hypothesized. The author argues that there is more evidence to support a dating prior to the *Zhuangzi* than the other way round. He also proposes ways to improve the academic sophistication of textual studies.

Following on the discussion of textual issues, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, in **Chap. 3**, contributes an informative essay that surveys critical topics and themes in studies of the *Laozi* in recent decades. This is tremendously useful and convenient for beginners and non-specialists alike. When discussing the *Laozi*'s primary term Dao (or Tao), he correctly claims: "It is difficult to be confident that [Dao's] multiple appearances really connote a single concept." He argues that the question of whether the term "*dao*" should be equated with a key Western concept, or which Western concept, tells us quite a bit more about the translators than about the *Laozi*. His many cautions are meaningful for Chinese philosophy in general, as well as the study of Laozi's philosophy. In addition, he introduces important new foci in Laozi studies, such as mysticism, politics, gender, science, and ecology.

Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive and coherent analysis of the central concepts and theories in the *Laozi*'s thought, such as *ziran*, *wuwei*, *Dao, de*, and the theory of transformational oppositions. Based on an analysis of these terms and theories, this chapter proposes the reconstruction of a possible system within the *Laozi*'s philosophy as a methodological experiment. The author asserts that the statement "Dao models itself after *ziran*," puts *ziran* in the highest position of all values and principles. Laozi wants people to understand and be able to pursue *ziran*, the natural harmony in a civilized society, which is an ideal state of the world. The author emphasizes that the theoretical aspects of Laozi's thought should not be understood as separate or isolated. They are associated in a roughly coherent system in which they support and interpenetrate each other.

In the late twentieth century, Chinese archeologists excavated numerous bamboo-slip and silk manuscripts, among which the *Hengxian* and "Taiyi sheng shui" are two completely unknown texts in the received Daoist literature. In **Chap. 5**, XING Wen produces a painstaking, informative, and suggestive analysis of these two texts. Due to the lack of background information and references to them in the received corpus, their study has proved difficult and yielded widely divergent interpretations. In addition to presenting a detailed discussion of those various readings, Xing offers his own meticulous analysis of the texts, in particular their key terms, such as *hengxian*, *taiyi, sheng*, and *fu*. Based on these critical concepts, Xing lays out for us new Daoist cosmogonies of the Warring States period, a project that is intriguing and inspiring. His careful translations of the two texts are certainly convenient and will be most useful for further study.

Part II consists of four chapters that deal with textual issues in the *Zhuangzi*, philosophical research into Zhuangzian philosophy based on the Inner Chapters, and the transformation of Zhuangzi's thought among the three groups of Zhuangzi's followers based on the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters.

Chapter 6 examines and analyzes five positions on the *Zhuangzi* that consider its authors, classification, completion date, and evolution. Working from new internal evidence, the author proposes two principles for textual studies: (1) We should not simply ignore or deny the value of textual conventions, to do so would allow text-based discussion to devolve into free imagination or purely logical speculation with no historical or textual basis. (2) We should look for new evidence in both received texts and archeological findings, and re-assess conventional "fulcrums" as objectively as possible. The author also presents a relatively systematic and comprehensive picture of the *Zhuangzi* that accounts for the grouping of its chapters.

In **Chap. 7**, Steve Coutinho finds that materials from the *Zhuangzi* chapters 1 and 2 suggesting relativism and skepticism have received the most scholarly attention. This is due to the Western philosophical lenses through which the text is almost inevitably understood. After a detailed survey of research by A.C. Graham, Chad Hansen, Paul Kjellberg, and Lisa Raphals, Coutinho proposes a new interpretation, which shifts the focus more directly to issues in the philosophy of language, logic, and phenomenological ontology. In conclusion, Countinho argues that it is only the conceiving of fixed identities that creates loss. Zhuangzi's insight allows us to identify with transformations—so that identity itself becomes fluid and penumbral, and is no longer perceived as something that can be lost.

In **Chap. 8**, the author takes an experimental approach, observing the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy as a coherent system of three dimensions. This historical and text-based orientation aims to approximate the construction of Zhuangzi's thought by looking at internal evidence, rather than create a modern reconstruction. The first dimension is the mundane world of predicaments and inevitability (*ming*), from which Zhuangzi wants to escape. The second is the kingdom of spiritual freedom, which is where Zhuangzi can enjoy himself in transcendent carefree wandering (*xiaoyao*). The third dimension provides argumentation about the questions of why and how one can ascend from the mundane dimension to the transcendent one. This third dimension is comprised of the theories of equalizing things (*qiwu*) and not-knowing (*buzhi*). Throughout these three dimensions, one can see the penetration of Dao's function and features.

Based on the classifications worked out in Chap. 6, **Chap. 9** introduces three groups of followers likely responsible for the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, namely the transmitters, the anarchists, and the Huang-Lao students. Each group carried on, developed, and transformed the Inner Chapters' ideas and style to various extents. The transmitters seem to consciously imitate and expand on the Inner Chapters' content and style, developing the concept of Dao as the source-root of the universe, the theory of not-knowing and true intuitive knowing, and making observations on the equalization of things. The anarchists argue that only inborn nature is authentic human nature, and on this they base their political critiques and

utopia ideals. The Huang-Lao students synthesize Daoism with Confucianism and Legalism, and advocate rulership by a non-active lord who is supported by active ministers.

Part III focuses on Huang-Lao doctrines, an important subgroup, which represented the Daoist mainstream in the early Han dynasty.

Chapter 10 presents a general introduction to Huang-Lao conventions. Authors CHEN Li-kuei and Winnie Sung begin by discussing the meaning and origin of the Huang-Lao tradition, as well as relevant works such as the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, *Guanzi*, *Zhuangzi, Huainanzi, shenzi* 慎子, and *Shenzi* 申子. Although Huang-Lao is considered a form of Daoism, it actually incorporates elements from different strands of thought and contains a system of theories with its own distinctive features. For example, *wuwei* went through substantial renovation in Huang-Lao thought, where it pertained only to the highest ruler and was related to the concretized Dao, which embodied order and hierarchy. In addition, ideas like *shu* (technique), *fa* (law), *xingming* (forms and names), *ren* (humanity), and *yi* (righteousness) were also absorbed from Legalism and Confucianism.

Chapter 11 authored by outstanding Daoist scholar Harold D. Roth, focuses on the *Guanzi*, a complex collection of texts generally attributed to the Jixia Academy of the state of Qi around the late fourth century BCE. Among those texts, four—*Neiye* (*Inward Training*), *Xinshu Shang, Xia* (*Techniques of the Mind, I and II*), and *Baixin* (*The Purified Mind*)—are classified as Daoist or Huang-Lao. After introducing various theories about their dating, authors, and features, Roth presents a clear and seminal analysis of the four texts. He asserts that their theories are grounded in a concept of Dao as a transcendent yet immanent, imperceptible yet graspable, universal force that shares many features of Dao in the *Laozi*. This is a reminder that Daoist scholars should still pay attention to these less central texts.

Chapter 12 is contributed by Carine Defoort, an expert on the *Heguanzi.* This book did not gain recognition until the discovery of the Mangwangdui silk manuscripts in the 1970s. It is a complex and obstacle-laden text, difficult to read and explain, but, DeFoort identifies three significant themes: the experience of a frustrated hermit as political idealist; the relation of Dao and the One and the concepts of unification, uniformity, or uniqueness; and the modeling of human responsibility on Heaven. The author concludes: Despite textual corruption, philosophical inconsistencies, and the likelihood of multiple authorship, there seems to be a consistent voice speaking in the book, which expresses a need for unification and stability, and a belief in the heavenly power of the sage-ruler to bring this about.

Quite a few chapters mention the "Mawangdui silk manuscripts," and this is the specific focus of **Chap. 13** by Griet Vankeerberghen. She refers to them as *The Four Lost Classics*, though they are also known as the *Huang-Lao Silk Manuscripts* or *The Four Classics of Huang Thearch*. The author takes an original approach to analyzing the thought of the four texts, namely, she conceives of four "windows" that reveal the significant themes of the texts. They are (1) the two visions of the

Way, (2) the Way of violence, (3) the Yellow Thearch and canonization, and (4) sex and the sexes. The author hopes this new perspective will revive interest in the texts—interest that seems to have waned a bit—so more readers will be moved to include these texts in their explorations of the thought and history of Daosim and Huang-Lao doctrines.

Another recently excavated text, the proto-*Wenzi*, is introduced by Paul van Els in **Chap. 14**. The transmitted *Wenzi* was once influential, but was judged a forgery after the Tang dynasty. The bamboo-slip *Wenzi* is incomplete but its segments are identical with the transmitted version. According to van Els's analyses, the bamboo-slip version presents four themes, namely, (1) Dao as both the source of all things and as political doctrine; (2) the four guidelines: virtue, humanness, righteousness, and propriety; (3) sageliness and wisdom; (4) the five instigations to warfare: righteousness, reaction, aggression, greed, and arrogance. In his conclusion, van Els argues that the proto-*Wenzi* was profoundly influenced by the *Laozi*, but it also deviates from its principal source, espousing concepts and promoting ideas that the *Laozi* rejects.

Chapter 15 is a comprehensive study of the *Huainanzi,* which contends that "Careful analysis of its philosophical positions demonstrates the priority it gives to a cosmology and method of self-cultivation found in the Laozi and Zhuangzi, and argues for its not merely being part of a classical Daoist tradition, but the most complex and sophisticated philosophical expression of that tradition." It also argues that the *Huainanzi* is primarily Syncretic with a Daoist cosmology and inner cultivation theory as the context for using ideas from the other main intellectual traditions of the Late Warring States and Early Han. The text shares the cosmology of Dao and its *de* or potency as well as common practices of self-cultivation, but they diverge in applying these ideas to government. However, the Daoist ideals promoted in this text ultimately failed because of the vagaries and political struggles of its time.

Part IV comprises four chapters concerned with Wei-Jin *xuanxue*, also known as arcane or profound learning. The Wei-Jin era (220–420) is another highpoint in the development of Daoist thought, when the construction of new philosophical systems based on annotations of ancient classics really takes off as an intellectual practice.

Chapter 16 considers works by China's youngest philosopher, WANG Bi. In this highly informative essay, Richard John Lynn, an expert in Chinese literature, presents a detailed historical background of Wang's family, then analyzes various themes in Wang's thought, such as the sage and emotion, something (being) and nothingness (no-being), advocates and opponents, the substance and function of nothingness, nothingness and principle, the many and the One, Daoist nature and the Confucian human world, and issues related to the functions and limitations of language. These issues are all derived from Wang's extant works, including his annotations and interpretations of the *Classic of Change*, the *Analects*, and the *Laozi*. Wang's theories are important not only in the later development of Daoist philosophy and religion, but also in the construction of Neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty.

GUO Xiang was another philosopher who worked out his system of thought through annotations for which he grew famous. In **Chap. 17**, Brook Ziporyn undertakes a deep analysis of Guo's theories. The topics in this essay, deriving from Guo's commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, are unique and intriguing, and so is Ziporyn's discussion. Themes include the self as self-forgetting, the self-so (that key value, *ziran*) as causelessness and inalienable value, and as the unchangeable but constantly changing nature of each entity. vanishing of self into things, the spontaneity of the non-spontaneous, morality and politics, just to name a few. In conclusion, Ziporyn contends that Guo's thinking, though complex and counterintuitive, and further complicated by its commentarial form, was hugely influential in varying ways in many schools of later Chinese thought: in religious Daoist mysticism, in Chinese Buddhism, and in Neo-Confucianism. Indeed, Guo's distinctive theories deserve more serious study.

In **Chap. 18** Yuet Keung LO discusses the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove. This epithet refers to a small group of men who are believed to have pursued a lifestyle modeled on the Daoist philosophy of spontaneity. The label does not represent the group's self-identification, and its members may not have shared much in their worldviews other than a nonconformist attitude toward hypocrisy and illegitimate rulership. Among them, JI Kang left us the largest corpus of writings on the how to nourish life, the influence of residence on longevity, and the nature of sound and music. XIANG Xiu was a scholar and thinker with many works, only fragments of which have survived. RUAN Ji was a lonely poet. Among later generations, he was primarily celebrated for his poetry, in which he poured out his soul, often in notoriously cryptic fashion. The Seven Sages were not cohesive, but they shared a common interest in synthesizing Confucianism and Daoism.

A very special text known as the *Liezi* is covered by June W. Seo in **Chap. 19**. This text has generated much speculation over the centuries, but some of recently excavated text fragments suggest that the *Liezi* contains some earlier materials. Philosophical issues in the *Liezi* are mostly expressed indirectly, hidden under interesting stories that show off the compiler's literary skill. Issues in the book are rich and broad, such as the ontological conditions of transcendental beings, knowability and unknowability as ontological conditions, metaphysical reality and the unreal, dreams and waking life, the emptiness of human knowledge, fate and acceptance, and even hedonism. Some themes are rarely discussed in mainstream scholarship and deserve more attention, though working with this text is by no means an easy task.

Part V is an expanded section that deals with broad issues related to Daoist philosophical studies. These are essential comparative studies between Daoism and cultural traditions in China and the West.

Although this volume concerns the study of Daoist philosophy, we suppose that readers might appreciate a view of the whole landscape of Daoism. Thus we include **Chap. 20**, which introduces its other dimensions, in particular the religious movements that developed from this heritage. Here we briefly discuss the differences and associations between Daoist philosophy and religion, and

introduce briefly the origins and transformations of Daoist religion, its religious theories and practices, major masters and scriptures, as well as its movements and transformation. There are additional positions on the relation of Daost religion and philosophy, but this chapter hopes to provide basic information and analysis. In an appendix, we also briefly lay out the complicated relation between Daoist religion and *fengshui* 風水 (geomancy).

In **Chap. 21**, Karyn Lai discusses the relation between Daoism and Confucianism. She explores the theme at three levels: the individual and the environment, the socio-political world, and the cultivation of the self. Due to limited space, she focuses only on the pre-Qin period, though the transformation of the relation between these two major traditions is complicated and deserving of further study. Thus, readers are encouraged to explore the continuing engagement between the two philosophical traditions as they continued to evolve in Chinese intellectual history. Lai's discussion highlights the need for more detailed comparisons of the concepts, themes, frameworks, and interaction across Chinese traditions. Such studies will provide a more comprehensive and solid understanding of Chinese intellectual history.

Chapter 22 is a brief and insightful comparison of Daoism and Buddhism by Zhihua YAO. The first section looks at Daoist nothingness (non-being) and Buddhist emptiness (*śūnyatā*), representative concepts of the two traditions. The more essential concepts, Daoist *wuwei* (non-action) and Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, are discussed in the second section. Based on conceptual analyses, Yao concludes: "For the Daoist and Buddhist philosophers who realize the ultimate reality, the dilemma between speaking and not speaking is unavoidable. Because both these traditions, among all the major philosophical schools East and West, have adventured into the domain of negativity, ultimate reality—be it Dao or nothingness, *nirvāṇa* or emptiness—has to be expressed in negative terms. Moreover, this reality is negative in its very nature, in the sense of withdrawing from our approach and retreating to itself. To that end, we have to keep silent."

Chapter 23 gives an account of comparative studies of Daoism and Greek philosophy as surveyed by Lisa Raphals. She begins with Daoist-Greek comparisons based on presumably universal concepts, such as truth. Next she turns to modes of knowledge, since epistemology has been a focus of Daoist-Greek comparisons. For example, there has been heated discussion about whether or not Zhuangzi's philosophy can be fairly said to reflect skepticism and relativism. The third section addresses a more practical aspect, ethics through Daoist and Greek recommendations about how to live. In these comparative studies, many divergent and even competing approaches, perspectives, methods, and conclusions have emerged; thus Raphals emphasizes the need for rigorous, informed, and clearly specified attention to both comparanda. She concludes that this field is a fruitful area for future research.

Finally, **Chap. 24** tackles the relation between Daoism and science. Here Lisa Raphals first asks what we mean by Daoism and what we mean by science. She then addresses Daoist approaches to health and well-being in the broadest possible terms,

including self-cultivation practices, medicine, and longevity techniques. Thirdly, she turns to the association of early Daoism with various technical disciplines such as astronomy, mathematics, and cosmology. Instead of looking to the *Laozi* or Han theories of yin-yang—based "correlative cosmology," Raphals focuses on the relation of Daoism to the qualitative sciences of medicine and astronomy, and their relations with early Chinese philosophy overall. She concludes that new research and the evidence presented by recently excavated texts are transforming our understanding of the scientific aspects of Daoist thought.

As editor, I want to remind readers that the authors of this volume rightly have their own positions and preferences, so there are obvious divergences among chapters that I do not try to make consistent. In other words, there may be conflicting or divergent standpoints on an issue, or a different understanding of a text, or various translations of the same terms. For example, *xuanxue* is translated as "arcane learning," or "profound learning," or "mysterious learning"; the four Mawangdui silk manuscripts are referred to as the *Four Lost Classics* or Huang-Lao manuscripts or the *Four Classics of Emperor Huang*, the term *de* is rendered as virtue, power, or potency. In addition, authors have different positions about the authorship and dating of some texts, and take different versions of certain texts. The causes of these divergences are complicated and multifold, and I think they should be tolerated because of academic democracy and the importance of the scholar's independence. Students might be confused about which one they should follow. My answer is that each position has its basis and it is acceptable for a student. For researchers, these divergences can serve as a good starting point for further study. All are welcome to compare the different arguments and make their own judgment as to which position is more reasonable and solid. Serious scholars are certainly encouraged to find a better way to advance the present research and resolve these differences as appropriate.

Although I say divergences can be a positive starting point for further study, I do not think unqualified divergences are in themselves good. There are some scholars who think that as long as they present different opinions, they can claim they are doing research or practicing philosophy. I do not think this attitude is correct or productive. Divergence in itself is not the same as producing academic research or practicing creativity. New academic findings and constructions must proceed from clear purposes, correct methods, solid grounds, and convincing arguments; thus just not any divergent opinion deserves a stamp of academic research or philosophical construction.

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Part I
The *Laozi* and the Bamboo Texts

Chapter 2
Did Daoism Have a Founder? Textual Issues of the *Laozi*

Xiaogan Liu

Was there a founder of Daoism? If we are concerned with Daoism as a tradition of thought or philosophy, our question must address the historical position of the *Laozi* 老子 (or *Lau-tze*), which later came to be known by the title *Daodejing* 道德經 (or *Tao-te-ching*; Eng., *The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*). This text was circulated, cited, discussed, and transmitted for centuries before the earliest religious movements, which worshipped Laozi as a kind of god and immortal, emerged at the end of the second century CE.[1]

So was there an originator of Daoist thought? This seems a simple enough question, but the answer becomes complicated if we want to get at historical truth. Traditionally, people believed that a person known as Laozi was the first Daoist thinker, based on an account in the earliest official history, the *Historical Record* (*Shiji* 史記, Sima 1975). This earliest wisdom, however, fell into doubt and underwent serious scrutiny in the twentieth century. Many alternative and competing hypotheses about Laozi and the key text that bears his name have emerged.

Some scholars, especially Westerners, do not believe there was a specific person named Laozi; they have argued that the text that bears this name had no single initiator and was created by many anonymous authors from different ancient states across the Chinese heartland over hundreds of years (Moeller 2006: 1–3; Graham 1990; Kohn and LaFargue 1998). This may be quite true for the much later Daoist scriptures, but the *Laozi* is different. It contains nothing about divine revelation, and is instead a brief text of groundbreaking thought organized in a roughly coherent

[1] See Chap. 20: "Daoism from Philosophy to Religion."

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system of inventive concepts and theories. The common word *dao* 道 is used as a stand-in for the ineffable source and ground of the universe, which is claimed to precede God or gods.[2] *Ziran* 自然 (naturalness) is presented for the first time as the highest principle and core value embodied by Dao. Another new principle, *wuwei* 無為 (non-action), is described as being practiced by sages, following the principle of Dao, to create better political order and prosperous societies. The theory of transformational oppositions is repeatedly expounded and applied in many of the chapters.[3] It is difficult to imagine that this short text, with its brief but roughly coherent system of thought, was completed by many strangers over centuries in distant antiguity when communication was terribly difficult.[4]

More strikingly, bamboo and silk versions of the text dating from the third or fourth centuries to the second century BCE have been excavated by archeologists in different provinces.[5] These discoveries prove that SIMA Qian did indeed have good grounds for his account, which was compiled from historical literature we would never know otherwise. This is significant for our understanding of the life of texts in antiquity, and these new discoveries prompt us to reexamine our "conclusions" about ancient Chinese texts, especially the methodologies and reasoning from which we have derived mistaken judgments. Our new investigations are squarely academic: They are aimed at correcting prevailing assumptions in Chinese textual studies based on the latest scientific discoveries, which can improve the sophistication of our arguments and the bases of the questions we ask. Serious scholars and researchers—Asian, European, and North American—can all benefit from this effort to promote academic quality in the study of Daoism and Chinese philosophy generally.

Why should we discuss historical and textual issues in a philosophical companion? Because we need a bridge between philosophy and Sinology that will provide philosophers convenient access to fundamental and complex arguments specific to the Chinese philosophical literature. That literature has been dramatically renewed by an abundance of texts recovered by archeologists over the last few decades. Most of these fall outside the scholarship of received texts and thought—we simply have never heard of them! Only a few appear to be identical to items listed in the traditional bibliographies of antiquity.

Any philosophers who want to borrow the *Laozi*'s ideas as a resource in developing their own theories may not need to know the historical background of the

[2]There was no concept of God in the sense of monotheism in ancient China. In early Chinese culture, God or gods were related to ancestral worship.

[3]The term "transformational oppositions" was suggested by Prof. Douglas L. Berger in a personal communication.

[4]The hypothesis that the *Laozi* has no author or many unconnected authors confuses the roles of textual initiator and later transcribers, editors, and revisers. We will discuss this point at the end of this essay.

[5]For a translation of the Guodian bamboo slip version, see Henricks 2000; for translations of the two silk versions, see Henricks 1991. For a recently published Western Han bamboo slip version, see Beijing University Institute of Archeologist Literature 2012. An English translation of this last may not be available.

text; however, if they want to interpret and comment on Laozi's thought seriously, then a general acquaintance with the latest discoveries and new scholarship is useful. Otherwise, they might merely repeat popular but obsolete opinions or read modern ideas into the *Laozi*.

The issues of the text have been importantly shaped by the reading and understanding of the earliest biography of the figure Laozi, that featured in the *Historical Record* of SIMA Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BC). In the twentieth century, serious debates raged and opinions proliferated about the authorship and dating of the *Laozi*, based on the diverse readings of that early biography. For convenience of discussion, we may roughly classify the various opinions on the date of the text into three groups, though some scholars think the person Laozi could be earlier, while the eponymous text might be later:

1. the early, or Laozi-and-Confucius (551–479 BC) theory;
2. the middle, or before-Zhuangzi (369–286 BC?) theory;
3. the later, or after-Zhuangzi theory.

The Mawangdui 馬王堆 silk manuscripts of the *Laozi* discovered in 1973 and the Guodian 郭店 bamboo-slip edition excavated in 1993 generally seem to support the early theory, though the evidence they provide is not sufficient to overturn and sweep away the others. Therefore, further analyses of the biography and discussion of methodological issues remain necessary and helpful.

The divergent hypotheses and theories about the book and its author that emerged solely from readings of the Laozi biography were based on little hard evidence, but now these conjectures and once-popular theories can be reexamined in light of new information and scholarship derived from recent archeological evidence.

1 A Survey of the Three Theories

Let's return to the three theoretical positions regarding Laozi and his book. Scholars who trust for the most part in the historicity of Sima's record ascribe to the "early theory." This theory is based on both traditional literature and new investigations, which suggest that the core themes of the *Laozi* text represent the thought of Laozi, a senior contemporary of Confucius. Modern scholars CHEN Guying (陳鼓應), YAN Lingfeng (嚴靈峰), ZHANG Yangming (張陽明), and BAI Xi (白奚) are representative of this group. It seems no Western scholars belong to this camp. After a re-examination of the arguments, and encouraged by archaeological discoveries, the leading scholars ZHANG Dainian (張岱年) and XU Fuguan (徐復觀) have also returned to this position. Our reexamination in this chapter of Sima's biography of Laozi is generally favorable to this theory.

Scholars who do not trust Sima's account have tried to build new theories based on the story about Taishidan 太史儋, another name mentioned in the *Historical Record* biography; these scholars belong to the "late theory" group, which claims that the *Laozi* text actually followed the traditionally later *Zhuangzi* text (the second

key text of Daoism) or at least postdated the *Zhuangzi*'s core Inner Chapters. QIAN Mu (錢穆) and A.C. Graham are representatives of this position. The Qian and Graham views have been seriously challenged by the recovery of bamboo-slip editions of the *Laozi*. The tomb from which the slips were unearthed has been dated to before 278 BCE, and it is thus reasonable to suppose that master copies from which the bamboo versions were transcribed may well have existed before 300 BCE. Therefore the completion of the *Laozi* is less likely to have come after Zhuangzi, who is believed to have lived between about 369 and 286 BCE.

Still other scholars who do not entirely credit Sima's biography but do not go as far as the "late theory" fall into the "middle theory" group, which assumes that Laozi probably lived later than Confucius but before Zhuangzi. This position arose from a synthesis of the early and late theories and is a position represented by D.C. Lau, FUNG Yu-lan (FENG Youlan 馮友蘭), and XU Kangsheng (許抗生). Schwartz and many other Western scholars also take this position. This middle theory includes the position that we should separate the historical figure Laozi from the text *Laozi*; that is, the figure could be early but the text may well be late.

Why have the early Guodian bamboo editions not resolved the conflicts among these three lines of argument? Because the proponents of each theory can find certain facts in the slips that support their own hypotheses. Naturally, much depends upon how one evaluates the *Laozi* bamboo slips. Archeologists and most scholars in Chinese philosophy assume that the Guodian versions are three excerpts from an earlier and relatively complete text. This suggests support for the "Laozi and Confucius" theory. The evidence for this position is that Bamboo A and Bamboo C each has a section that is easily recognized as the second half of Chapter 64 in the received versions; yet these passages exhibit certain differences in wording. These slight differences suggest that the two bamboo versions were inscribed from two different, earlier editions of the text, which in turn had an ancestral edition. If content in the bundles of slips matches chapters or passages in the received versions, their ancestral edition must be the text later known as the *Laozi*. The theory agrees with, and is supported by, historical literature about Lao Dan, the reputed author of the text. But it fails to explain why the slips have no counterparts to Chapters 67–81, that is, the last fifteen chapters of the received versions. It seems plausible that the scribes who wrote the slips selected just those chapters and passages that suited their or their patrons' needs and preferences.

Some scholars have assumed that the Guodian bamboo slips represent the earliest complete text of the Laozi for keeping their late-theory. The difficulty with this assumption is the above-mentioned repetition with slight variations between the A and C versions of Chapter 64. Still other scholars assume that the bamboo versions represent the middle phase of a process carried out by compilers and editors over a long period of time. This assumption might support either the "before-Zhuangzi" or "after-Zhuangzi" theory. The argument is that only sixteen of the thirty-one chapters found in these slips are complete, which suggests that later compilers and editors may have added other sayings. Yet, these claims are based on inferences from and speculation about the isolated texts and do not take into account the historical literature and other records. Scholars making these claims typically have

to devise a story to explain why this short coherent text took many people a long time to compose and work around, and why all pre-Qin texts attributed the doctrines preserved in the received versions of the *Laozi* to a person called Lao Dan, who some skeptics say never existed.

Most of the articles in this debate have been published in Chinese, and according to my observation, many Chinese scholars who study Daoism incline to the early theory. Not many oversea scholars seem to have taken this position, at least in their publications. Few Chinese scholars have followed QIAN Mu to champion the late theory, so its most influential advocate has been A.C. Graham. For a long time, Chinese and Western academic worlds were isolated from each other due to issues of politics and language, but in recent decades the gap between these academic circles is gradually shrinking, though it is still not likely to disappear in the near term.

2 How to Read the Earliest Biography?

According to SIMA Qian, Laozi hailed originally from the hamlet of Qurenli 曲仁里 in the village of Li 厲鄉 in Ku 苦County, in the state of Chu 楚.[6] His family name was Li 李, his given name was Er 耳and he was styled Dan (聃). As an adult, he had charge of the royal archives in the capital city of the Zhou 周dynasty (Sima 1975: 2139).

Now Sima's narrative shows that he believed that the three names—Laozi, LI Er, and LI Dan—refer to the same figure. Once, Confucius (551–479 BCE) went to Zhou and consulted with Laozi about the performance of rites. What did Laozi tell Confucius? Here is a brief excerpt:

> [A] good merchant hides his stores in a safe place and appears to be devoid of possessions, while a gentleman, though endowed with great virtue, wears a foolish countenance. Rid yourself of your arrogance and your lustfulness, your ingratiating manners and your excessive ambition. These are all detrimental to your person. (Sima 1975: 2139–43)[7]

Upon leaving, Confucius told his disciples, "Today I have seen Laozi, who is perhaps like a dragon." Although the wording and rhetoric skill here and in other places in the story, might well be Sima's, the content and denotation must be based on the documents and local literatures Sima and his father had spent years collecting. That Sima's *Historical Record* was based on numbers of lost documents we cannot know or even imagine has been repeatedly supported by the excavation in recent decades of hitherto unknown oracle-bone inscriptions,

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[6]Ku 苦 County originally belonged to the state of Chen 陳, which was taken over by Chu 楚 in 478 BCE. Therefore Laozi was not of Chu by birth.

[7]The "Biography of Laozi" is from *Shiji*, vol. 63. The translation of *Shiji* in this chapter is adapted from Chan (1973: 36–7), Henricks (2000: 133–34), Lau (2001: x–xi), and Niehauser (1994: 21–23).

and silk and bamboo-slip texts. It is worth noting that the meeting and dialogue between Laozi and Confucius are echoed and confirmed in two other biographies in the same *Historian Record*, namely "Confucian Lineage" (*Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家) and "Biographies of Confucian Disciples" (*Zhongni dizi liezhuan* 仲尼弟子列傳). Obviously Sima was serious and confident about the event, hence his tone in these narratives is unmistakably assertive. Also worth noting, the spirit of Laozi's words to Confucius is consistent with philosophical themes found in the received *Laozi*. Sima then continues:

> Laozi cultivated Dao and De (virtue). In his studies he strove to conceal himself and be unknown. He lived in Zhou for a long time, but seeing its decline, he decided to leave; when he reached the pass, the keeper there was pleased and said to him, "Sir, you are about to retire. You must make an effort to write us a book." So Laozi wrote a book in two *pian* (篇, sections) setting out the meaning of Dao and De in something around five thousand characters, and then he departed. None knew where he went to in the end (Sima 1975: 2141).

Here the author seems to have honestly recorded what he knew and what he did not know. Despite his uncertainties, his statement about a book of two parts concerning *dao* and *de* in more than 5,000 characters perfectly matches the received and silk-manuscript editions of the *Laozi and the Beida Bamboo version*, which have been transmitted and circulated for more than 2,000 years. These passages make up the largest and most authentic part of the biography, and they provide our main clues to Sima's understanding of the figure Laozi.

Sima also recorded hearsay seemingly related to Laozi and his work: "Someone said there was a Laolaizi 老萊子 who was *also* a native of the state of Chu. He wrote a book in *fifteen pian* 篇 setting forth the applications of Daoist teachings and was contemporary with Confucius" (Sima 1975: 2141).[8] Obviously, the word "also" means this is a different person. Moreover, Laolaizi's book of fifteen *pian* has nothing to do with the received *Laozi,* which has only two. Sima clearly realized that Laolaizi and Laozi were not the same. He wrote in the "Biographies of Confucian Disciples": "Those whom Confucius regarded reverently as mentors: *Laozi* 老子 *in Zhou* 周, QU Boyu 蘧伯玉 in Wei 魏, YAN Pingzhong 晏平仲 in Qi 齊, *Laolaizi* 老萊子 *in Chu* 楚, ZI Chan 子產 in Zheng 鄭, and MENG Gongchuo 孟公綽 in Lu 魯" (Sima 1975: 2186). It is clear that when Confucius visited them, Laozi was in Zhou while Laolaizi was in Chu. Sima was not confused on this point. So we can see from the two mentions of Laolaizi that Sima was an honest historian: he recorded information, including relevant hearsay, which he carefully distinguished from the main thread of his account. Another instance of hearsay he reports:

> One hundred and twenty-nine years after the death of Confucius,[9] as the scribes have recorded, Grand Historian Dan (Taishi Dan 太史儋) of Zhou had an audience with Duke

[8] In this article, all emphases in quotations are mine.

[9] According to WANG Quchang 王蘧常, the number 129 years should be 105 (Wang 1993: 48, n. 5); however, this is not an important issue and neither number can be convincing because the historical record is insufficient to support a judgment one way or the other.

> Xian of Qin (Qin Xiangong 秦獻公) during which he said, "In the first instance, Qin and Zhou were united, and after being united for five hundred years they separated, but seventy years after the separation a great feudal lord is going to be born." Some say this Dan was actually Laozi; others say no. Nobody knows which side is right. Laozi was really a gentleman who lived in retirement from the world. (Sima 1975: 2142)

Because one character in the name and style of these men share the similar pronunciation "Dan," and both men served as officials in Zhou, this Taishi Dan has been confused by some with Laozi. But according to Sima's earlier, more assertive, record, they should not be considered the same person. First, Taishi Dan lived in the middle period of the Warring States (475–222 BCE) and could never have met Confucius. Second, his statement bears not the slightest resemblance to what Laozi says in the core part of his biography and from what we read in the received *Laozi*. Thus, Taishi Dan could not be Laozi or Lao Dan. Obviously Sima did not buy this suggestion. He certainly ignored it when he arranged the chronological biographies: Laozi's is the third chapter of *Liezhuan* (列傳, general biographies), appearing among five figures from the late Spring and Autumn period (Confucius is listed among the *shijia* 世家, a different section on noble families), while the "Confucian Disciples" chapter follows as seventh, with Mencius as fourteenth (Chen and Bai 2001: 9; Niehauser 1994). This is consistent with the key information presented in the main passages of the Laozi biography.

The last sentence, Sima's exclamation that "Laozi was really a gentleman who lived in retirement from the world," echoes the earlier comment that "In his studies he strove to conceal himself and be unknown" and "None knew where he went to in the end." It is also a fair explanation of why people knew so little about his personal life save his official position as court curator in the state archives of Zhou and his meeting with Confucius. But this does not mean that Sima had no documents from which to compose the biography. In Sima's time, careful footnoting and a bibliography were not required of a scholar and historian.

Sima's statement and narrative are for the most part plain and decisive; he only becomes hesitant in his recounting of additional stories and rumors. Here is another illustration: "Laozi probably lived to over 160 years of age—some even say to over 200—since he cultivated the Way and was thus able to live to a great age." The word *probably* is a translation of the Chinese character *gai* (蓋), used to introduce a sentence and suggest that what follows is conjecture or an inference. Sima clearly did not take this assertion as historical fact.

As part of his narrative structure, Sima offers a concluding remark:

> Today followers of Laozi degrade Confucianism and students of Confucianism also degrade Laozi. This may be what is meant when it is said, "People who follow different *dao* (ways) never have anything helpful to say to one another." Li Er [holds that the Sage] "takes non-action (wuwei) and [the people] of themselves are transformed"; [he] "loves tranquility and [the people] of themselves become correct." (Sima 1975: 2143)

In the end, Sima's text refers back to the biography's opening paragraph and confirms that Laozi is LI Er, who is styled Dan. This last sentence, where LI Er and Chapter 57 of the *Laozi* are explicitly linked, is no accident.[10]

To sum up, Sima's biography of Laozi can be characterized thusly: of its 454 characters, three-fourths (340 characters) present an affirmative narrative that its author believed reports authentic facts, and one-fourth (114 characters) provides two additional bits of hearsay that Sima seems to have felt was marginal. These two additional stories indicate that the author tried to make his account comprehensive and discerning. Although Sima did not specifically cite his references, we cannot conclude from this that he had no sources whatsoever, and that his biography is fiction. Archaeologists have found evidence that proves the record in Sima's history and other Han literature was indeed based on then-extant texts and documents, though most of them are no longer available to modern scholars (Liu 2001: xx–xxiii; Li 2002a, b; Qiu 2004).

Based above reading and analyses, we realize that Sima did indeed have a clear position about just who Laozi was and when he lived. We may not accept or believe all the details of the biography, but we cannot say that Sima has no certain position in the matter, or no grounds in the historical literature. We should not abandon his account, simply because it may not be perfectly accurate.[11] It is especially important, moreover, to recognize the differences Sima saw between an authentic account and marginal hearsay from which speculation and hypotheses have subsequently developed, with no further documentation or evidence.

3 Reexamining the Methodology of Lau and Graham

I turn now to the methods used to support arguments for the middle and later theories. My purpose is not to criticize them nor to reach an exact conclusion, but to encourage rethinking general methods often employed in textual studies. My examination focuses on D.C. Lau (1921–2010) and A.C. Graham's (1919–1991) argumentation because their works have been influential and broadly accepted, yet they deserve serious rethinking before we can accept their hypotheses.

[10] Chapter 57 of the *Laozi* reads: "I take non-action (*wuwei*) and the people of themselves are transformed. I love tranquility and the people of themselves become correct" (Chan 1973: 166).

[11] Some scholars think the *Shiji* is not a reliable history, but a literary work. This view obviously exaggerates the literary element of this work and is neither comprehensive nor objective. Archeological discoveries have repeatedly proved that Sima Qian's records have historical worth. Certainly literary skill and imagination are helpful in understanding and writing to reveal historical truth. Even modern academics write history that relies on certain literary techniques. For example, the books Jonathan D. Spence and Ray Huang wrote on Chinese history became bestsellers partly thanks to their storytelling skills and literary talents, which in turn strengthened their historical interpretations rather than weakened their works' trustworthiness.

D.C. Lau has said, “I am inclined to the *hypothesis* that some form of the *Laozi* existed by the beginning of the third century BC at the latest” (2001: 140). Lau maintains that SIMA Qian “had difficulty even with Laozi’s identity. He explicitly suggests that [Laozi] was probably the same person as Dan the historian, though the latter lived more than a century after the death of Confucius.” (2001: xi). Here Lau has misread the biography: he neglects the distinction between the positive aspect of Sima’s affirmative statements and his uncertainty with rumor; Lau takes one of the hearsay accounts seriously ignoring that this position faces greater difficulties than the traditional one. The words “explicitly suggests” are used to support his hypothesis, but they are not true. Lau omits key points: “Some say this Dan was actually Laozi; *others say no. Nobody knows which side is right.*” In addition, Lau ignores both the irrelevance of Dan’s prognostication to the ideas in the *Laozi* and the tenor of the comments in the meeting between Laozi and Confucius, which are repeatedly cited in pre-Qin and Han literature. Lau’s hypothesis conflicts more with historical documents than do the key parts of Sima’s biography. We cannot help wondering why Lau believed the hearsay in Sima’s record while dismissing his positive statements.

Lau shows admirable honesty when he says, “Indeed my whole account of Laozi is *speculative*, but when there is so little that is certain, there is not only room but a need for speculation” (2001: 132). Unfortunately, students may mistake this speculation as a conclusion, and even as license for further speculation. Here we should ponder whether speculation is more reliable or useful than an imperfect historical record. Is any written history flawless?

A.C. Graham devised a brilliant maneuver to attack the problem left by Sima. His hypothesis supports a late Warring States dating, based on an *absence of evidence*. This argument emphasizes the fact that no books prior to the *Zhuangzi* had quoted the *Laozi*, and so this constitutes “evidence” that the *Laozi* probably appeared after the *Zhuangzi*. Graham claims, “Since the ‘Inner Chapters’ [of the *Zhuangzi*] show no clear evidence of acquaintance with *Laozi*, the book is *conveniently treated* after *Zhuangzi*, although there is *no positive proof* that it is later” (1987: 217–18). This convenient assertion with “no positive proof” should not be mistaken for a conclusion.

Graham’s method of argumentation resembles that of Herbert A. Giles (1845–1935), who once contended that the *Laozi* was forged in the early Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE). Giles’ argument was based on his claim that Confucius, ZUO Qiuming 左丘明, Mencius, Zhuangzi, Xunzi 荀子, Huainanzi 淮南子, and SIMA Qian 司馬遷 never saw or claimed to have seen the text of the *Laozi*.[12] Hence Giles came up with the hypothesis that the *Laozi* was forged in early Han times.

[12]When Giles mentions Hanfeizi’s work, he writes “[Hanfeizi] devotes the best part of two whole sections to ‘Explanations of Laozi’ and ‘Illustrations of Laozi’; and, in two places, writes *as though* he were consulting a written document” (Giles 1886: 231–32). (In this Giles quote I replace his Wade-Giles romanization with pinyin, and the emphasis is mine.)

This theory was forgotten and definitively put to rest after the discovery of the Mawangdui silk versions, which have been confidently dated to before 195 BCE (Silk A) and 169 BCE (Silk B). Giles' reasoning and argumentation were proved invalid, but few scholars have drawn lessons from his failure. Graham actually drew on Giles method when he based his hypothesis on no positive evidence, but on *lack of evidence* and a neglect of conventional literature.

Giles was a seasoned and serious scholar, and his arguments seemed logical given the evidence; however, his conclusion was clearly a mistake. What was wrong with it? Or where is the pitfall in his argumentation? The answer is this: his problem lay not in his reasoning, but in his presuppositions. They were:

1. all ancient books should be recorded or mentioned in other books;
2. all those other books should have survived over two millenia to be available to us today;
3. as long as we cannot see X, we have grounds to suppose that it never existed.

However, the great numbers of unearthed texts have repeatedly proved these three presuppositions to be groundless, and so they should not be the basis for textual analysis. Giles method is only valid for a defined and known objects, but the realm of ancient books has proved an infinite, unknown kingdom. Graham shared Giles method and presuppositions, so his conclusion must also be viewed as suspicious.

In the past decades abundant, though formerly unknown, silk and bamboo-slip texts have come to light; not only are they new discoveries, but they reveal a simple truth: the extant texts we have today represent only a tiny part of the historical legacy of ancient China. The bibliography section ("Yiwenzhi" 藝文志) of the *History of the Western Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書) mentions 57 Confucian books, of which only seven have survived; 37 Daoist texts, with only five are extant; and ten Legalist books, only two of which survive today. Furthermore, between 80 and 90 % of the texts recently excavated were not recorded in the various bibliographies of antiquity. But historians in Han China must have seen many more texts and records that predated them than we can hope to do. Certainly they may have made mistakes, but they did not dream up historical figures and bibliographical matters. Newly excavated texts show that the histories and bibliographies from Han times are much more reliable than previously acknowledged. We simply do not have the resources and references to argue with them about the authenticity of ancient works, though our reasoning may be more consistent (Liu 2001: xx–xxiii, 2009, 2010).

A key piece of evidence that can settle the dating of the *Laozi* is the encounter between Laozi and Confucius, which suggests that the two were contemporaries. This event is referred to repeatedly in various versions, in not only three of the biographies in the *Shiji*, but also in an eclectic anthology of the period, *Lüshi chunqiu* (呂氏春秋), and in Confucian works such as the *Liji* (*Book of Rites* 禮記), *Hanshi waizhuan* (*Practical Annotation of Han's Book of Songs* 韓詩外傳), *Kongzi jiayu* (*Confucian Family Teachings* 孔子家語), and *Shuoyuan* (*Collection of

Anecdotes 説苑).[13] (We can leave out the *Zhuangzi*, which also records this event, because it is written as an explicitly literary account and is probably not suitable to rely on for historical fact.) Given the multiple records of this event, it is difficult to ignore it completely and simply place Laozi in an era sometime after Confucius.

Lau and Graham, however, insist on a mid- or late Warring States dating by explaining away this very encounter. They contend that the event was probably created in the service of the struggle between Confucians and Daoists. Intriguingly, Lau presumes that Daoists created the story to make a mockery of Confucius (Lau 2001: 130); while Graham proposes that it was the Confucians who invented the legend to praise Confucius (Graham 1990). Graham even "proposes a scheme of five stages in the evolution" of the meeting of Laozi and Confucius, which sounds like an amazing imaginary fiction (Graham 1990: 124). Both Lau's speculation and Graham's scheme cannot pass the test offered by the historical literature. We find no signs of struggle or conflict between Confucian and Daoist groups in the pre-Qin period. The term "Daoism" had not even emerged at that point. The term "Daoist" 道家 was first used by SIMA Tan (司馬談), SIMA Qian's father, in the early Han era.

One has to read the record to understand the context and atmosphere of the meeting between Confucius and Laozi. Here is one representative piece of historical literature. The "Zengzi wen" (questions from Zengzi 曾子問) section of the *Book of Rites* or *Liji* 禮記 contains four passages that record Confucius' recall of Laozi. Under the influence of the so-called "Doubting antiquity" 古史辨 movement of the twentieth century, this work was considered an unreliable Han text. However, after the discovery of Guodian bamboo-slip texts, academic societies have recognized that it includes reliable historical materials and at least some sections may preserve pre-Qin works. Confucius' memories in the four passages revolve around details of ritual, the major topic of his conversation with Laozi, and are parts of an explanation of how to deal with specific issues in funerary practice. One of them goes like this:

> Zengzi asked: "Anciently when an army went on an expedition . . . " Confucius replied: "When the son of Heaven (king, 天子) went on his tours of inspection . . . *I heard the following statement from Lao Dan* (吾聞諸老聃曰): 'On the death of the son of Heaven or the prince of a state, it is the rule that the officer of prayer should take the tablets from all the other shrines and deposit them in that of the high ancestor. When the wailing was over . . . ' *So said Lao Dan* (老聃云)." (Legge 1968: 324–25; Sun 1989: 545–46)[14]

Another reads:

> Zengzi asked, "At a burial, when the bier has been drawn to the path leading to the place, if there happens to be an eclipse of the sun, is any change made or not?" Confucius said: "Formerly, *along with Lao Dan*, I was assisting at a burial in the village of Xiangdang

[13] *Kongzi jiayu* and *Shuoyuan* were traditionally considered apocryphal, "false books." However, numerous bamboo slips from an early Han tomb unearthed in 1973 at Ding Xian 定縣, Hebei 河北, contain passages identical to those in both those works. This suggests that the contents of these books were collected from pre-Qin or early Han sources.

[14] The translation of *Liji* is adapted from Legge 1986 with minor amendments for readability and accuracy.

> (昔者吾從老聃助葬於巷黨), and when we had got to the path, the sun was eclipsed. *Lao Dan said to me* (老聃曰): 'Qiu, let the bier be stopped on the right of the road; and then let us stop to wail and wait till the eclipse has passed.' When it was light again, we proceeded." (*He*) *said*: "This was the rite." When we had returned and completed the burial, I said to him: "In the progress of a bier there should be no returning . . ." *Lao Dan said* (老聃曰): "When the prince of a state is going to the court of the son of Heaven, he travels while he can see the sun . . ." *This is what I heard from Lao Dan* (吾聞諸老聃云). (Legge 1968: 338–39; Sun 1989: 545–46)

These example are sufficient since the other two passages are very similar. All utterances mentioning Laozi cite what he said to Confucius regarding the practical details of funeral ceremonies. We find no signs of praise or deprecation between Confucius and Laozi. Furthermore, we detect no expression of the author's like or dislike of Confucius or Laozi from the text. If we read seriously and without bias, we cannot agree that the meeting between Confucius and Laozi is merely a story created to praise or belittle either figure. Interestingly—and meaningfully—the *Laozi* makes only one mention of rites in a positive sense, and that treatment is reserved for funeral rites.[15] Is this merely coincidence?

We must concede that both Lau and Graham did not know of the discovery of the bamboo-slip versions of the *Laozi,* and they knew nothing about the Guodian texts at all.[16] But the point here is to reflect on the methodology of textual studies for future research. If we want to make more mature analyses of Chinese texts, we must learn from our great predecessors' mistakes.

4 The Weakness of Sample Argumentation and a New Linguistic Approach

Some might raise the reasonable question, Even if we accept that Laozi could be a contemporary of Confucius, the text that bears his name might still be a later work or created by someone else. And some scholars do take this position. These suppositions belong to the theoretical groups two and three, which contend that the *Laozi* was written or compiled in the middle Warring States period or even later.

Before responding to this problem, we might well consider the strategies that have been used in the Laozi debates. Why have these debates been so broad, engaging both Chinese and English scholarship and lasting more than a century without reaching any reasonable result or even moving toward resolution or accommodation? There are two reasons for this: (1) a lack of objective material evidence and textual proofs; (2) little reflection on the methods deployed in these debates. For the first, we can do little outside of the accidental discovery of fresh

[15]Chapter 31: "For a victory, let us observe the occasion with funeral ceremonies." (Chan 1973: 155) 戰勝則以喪禮居之(竹簡本) (Liu 2006: 334).

[16]The Guodian bamboo texts were published in 1998, by which point Graham had passed away and Lau was seriously ill.

evidence such as the Guodian bamboo editions. The second aspect, methodological issues, must be the focus for advancing the discussion and the quality of our textual analyses.

This century-long speculation and debate have certainly been fueled by the dearth of objective evidence, but flaws in reasoning and argumentation have also contributed to the endless disputes. Based on a survey of published articles and books, the major method in these debates can be termed *sample argumentation*. In this method, scholars select certain characters, terms, sentences, or ideas as samples from which to argue their various positions or theories. In most cases, the isolated samples are not adequate to proving anything about the big picture, and so these arguments are not convincing. We can call this a *weakness of sample argumentation.*

Here is an example of this technique. Chapter 63 of the *Laozi* has a sentence that calls for "repaying hatred with virtue" (抱怨以德). This is a saying unique to pre-Qin texts. Interestingly, there is a dialogue directly opposing it in the *Analects*:

> Someone said: "What do you think of *repaying hatred with virtue*?" (以德抱怨) Confucius said: "In that case what are you going to repay virtue with? Rather, *repay hatred with uprightness* and repay virtue with virtue" (以直報怨, 以德報德). (Chan 1973: 42)

That someone asked Confucius about "repaying hatred with virtue" suggests that this idea was something in circulation that Confucius had not yet discussed. So the dialogue seems to prove that the *Laozi* was in some sense antecedent to Confucius. It seems very probable that what Confucius refuted here were ideas in the *Laozi*, but that is not sufficient to prove the existence of the text in that period. Such evidence has been dismissed by scholars of the middle and late theoretical groups, first, because the number of supporting examples is small, and most of the samples offered by the early theory group are not as strong as this one. Second, we cannot exclude the possibility that someone else in that period had the same idea. This is actually the greatest weakness of all similar samples.

Likewise, some have used common terms such as *renyi* (humanity-righteousness 仁義) or *wancheng* (ten thousands of chariots 萬乘) to support middle or late theory. Because expressions like these appeared widely in texts of the middle Warring States period they have argued that the *Laozi* could not be of earlier vintage. This argument might be right, but it is still not valid for the following reasons: (1) Although we see the word *renyi* in the Warring States text *Mencius*, we cannot conclude that there were no earlier usages. (2) It is possible that certain words, terms, and phrases were added or modified by later editors or scribes, so the occasional appearance of later expressions is in itself not a convincing basis for judging the whole text. These problems show that it is quite difficult to establish the historical truth of a whole text based on isolated samples from it unless we know that the text is absolutely homogeneous.

Once the weakness of sample argumentation becomes clear, we have to find a better way. How can we best investigate features of the *Laozi* as a whole, so that isolated examples from it will not distort a holistic investigation? After many years of trial and error, a promising approach has been found: a comprehensive linguistic analysis that pays special attention to the rhyming patterns throughout.

Table 2.1 Linguistic features of verse

Linguistic features		*Book of Odes* 詩經 (%)	*Laozi* 老子 (%)	*Songs of Chu* 楚辭
Rhyming patterns 韻式	Rhyming in each sentence 句句韻	27	47	0
	Mixed Rhyming pattern 混合韻	48	35	0
	Rhyming alternately 偶句韻	25	18	100 %
Rhetoric 修辭	Repetition 迴環往復	90	94	0
Sentence Patterns 句式	Four-character sentence 四言為主	94	50	14 %[a]

[a]The pattern of four-character sentences in the *Songs of Chu* is different from those in the *Laozi* and the *Book of Odes*. They are actually seven-character sentences plus an auxiliary particle (*zhi* 之, *xie* 些, *xi* 兮) at the end, therefore becoming two four-character clauses in a row to complete one meaningful sentence. This is different from *Shijing*'s four-character sentence, in which the meaning of each such sentence is complete (Liu 2005: 20–23)

We know that the *Shijing* (*Book of Odes* 詩經) dates to before the sixth century BC, while *Chuci* (*Songs of Chu* 楚辭) is from the fourth and third centuries BC. By taking advantage of poetic stylistic analysis and comparing the verse features of the *Laozi* to those of the *Shijing* and *Chuci*, we can look for indirect evidence that could provide dating clues. Just which theory this investigation and its statistics would favor was unknown before the project was completed. The results such a holistic analysis would yield must in any case be more objective than sample argumentation, which relied on identifying examples that supported one or another standpoint. The results of our analysis of verse style can be summed up in two tables.

Table 2.1 demonstrates the similar and different features of verse passages among the three texts. The factors under analysis here are broad, including: (1) rhyming intensity and frequency; (2) various rhetoric styles, for example, word and phrase repetition within and between chapters, rhyme changes by reversing word order 倒字換韻, and anadiplosis 頂真; (3) sentence patterns, such as four-character sentences. The table shows a clear-cut statistical result: the verse style and patterns in the *Laozi* are more similar to those in the *Book of Odes* and different from the *Songs of Chu* in all categories, without exception. Now let's consider Table 2.2, which shows the sharing of rhyming groups.

Table 2.2 compares the interchangeable rhyming in the three texts, and shows that this pattern is broadly common to the *Laozi* and the *Book of Odes*.[17] We can see that six groups of the rhyming words shared by the two texts are not found in the

[17]Feng Shengli found that while a fixed dipodic prosody was used in *Shijing*, a caesura-based prosody was developed in *Chuci*. According to his findings, the *Laozi*'s prosody is close to Shijing instead of *Chuci*. See Feng 2011.

Table 2.2 Comparison of interchangeable rhyming

Interchangeable rhyming 合韻	*Book of Odes* 詩經	*Laozi* 老子	*Songs of Chu* 楚辭
Zhi and Yu 之魚	5	2	0
You and Hou 幽侯	3	1	0
Xiao and You 宵幽	4	1	0
Wu and Jue 屋覺	2	1	0
Yue and Zhi 月質	8	1	0
Zhen and Yuan 真元	1	5	0

Songs of Chu. Again, there is no opposite case, in which interchangeable rhyming groups are only shared by the *Laozi* and the *Songs of Chu*. These common elements in the *Books of Odes* and the *Laozi* strongly suggest that the *Laozi* completed toward the end of Spring and Autumn period, when the *Book of Odes* was compiled and its rhyming styles were still dominant.

Evident from all this linguistic statistical data is the *Laozi*'s striking similarity to the *Book of Odes* and difference from the *Songs of Chu*, which suggests that the core or major part of the *Laozi* may have been completed when the *Book of Odes* style was still prevalent. The advantage of this approach is that it is whole-picture oriented and is not distorted by exceptional inconsistencies. We have no evidence that every piece of the text was written at one time by one author, but the core or major parts of the text share the same style. We do not have a reliable standard by which to pick out sentences or words that were modified or added by later editors, though some scholars argue that might be done according to criteria they have set up. These include some sentences not quoted in the *Hanfeizi*, some chapters not found in bamboo-slip versions, and some terms prevalent in the middle Warring States, etc. These so called criteria, all based on subjective assumptions, are difficult to prove valid.

Now we must face two challenges. First, it is possible that differences between the *Book of Odes* and *Songs of Chu* are regional/cultural in nature rather than chronological. But there is an answer to this question that is based on historical fact. Historians and archeologists have found and proved that in the Western Zhou 西周 dynasty, northern and southern China already maintained close communications and had ready transportation between regions. There was no cultural gap (Hsu 1984: 17, 309–11). As for poetic style, it is well known that in the *Book of Odes* era envoys from the southern state of Chu fluently used poems from the *Odes* in their diplomatic debates and communications, and extant Chu poems from the Spring and Autumn era carried on those same styles and patterns. Moreover, middle–Warring States poetry from the northern states of Yan 燕 and Zhao 趙 share sentence and rhyming patterns with the *Songs of Chu*.[18]

[18]For detailed arguments, see Liu 2005: 7–65; for a brief English version see Liu 1994: 172–86.

The second challenge arises from speculation that later writers chose to imitate the *Book of Odes* style to shape the so-called *Laozi* text. This thinking is not unreasonable; nevertheless, we find no examples of, and can see no motivation or benefit to, someone of a later era writing such a text in the *Book of Odes* style. We can only answer this speculative question with speculation. Why would someone want to imitate the poetic style of the *Book of Odes*? If the writer were pursuing fame, why name the text after another person? If he wanted the text to be recognized as having its origin in the *Book of Odes,* why imitate its verse passages in only in 63 % of the chapters? And why do only half the verse sentences have the four-character sentence pattern, which was used in over 94 % of the *Odes*. Why would this imitation be so well hidden that some modern scholars would believe the text followed the *Songs of Chu* instead of the *Odes*? With all the difficulties this imitation theory presents, it is perhaps more plausible to consider the core part of the *Laozi* text to have been formed under the influence of the song style of the *Book of Odes* or *Shijing*, though we cannot use this to decide the specific dates of its author and compilation lacking further evidence.

There are certainly different opinions and approaches to this problem. William H. Baxter demonstrates differences between the *Laozi* and the *Shijing* using rhetorical and phonological examples (Baxter 1998). I fully accept his points, and in fact I believed that there were differences between the two texts even before reading his examples. His points do not affect the thrust of my investigation, since my arguments are not based on the hypothesis that the *Laozi* was meant to be the same genre as the *Shijing*, though I do find linguistic similarities between them. I am pleased that Baxter comes to the same conclusion, if from a different angle: "From a phonological point of view, improvements in Old Chinese reconstruction make it possible to see that the *Lao-tzu* preserves a number of distinctions in pronunciation which the *Ch'u-tz'u* [Chuci] and the 'Inner Chapters' of the *Chuang-tzu* [Zhuangzi] have lost, and this suggests that it may be earlier than they are, and *closer to the time of the Shih-Ching* [Shijing]"(ibid. 249).[19] This is exactly my own conclusion. However, I must point to the possibilty that the *Laozi* was composed much earlier than many scholars believe. I cannot date it within a specific century because we cannot be sure we have its earliest version, and we lack sufficient references and other evidence. Baxter, for his part, dates it to "the mid or early fourth century." I am not sure what prevents him from dating it even closer to the time of the *Book of Odes* based on his phonological analyses.[20] My position, however, is to remain open to a prudent early theory, even without decisive dating.

[19]The emphasis is mine.

[20]Baxter seems to hint that the *Laozi* also shares generic aspects with parts of the *Guanzi*. This is not really helpful because (1) the dating and authorship of the *Guanzi* are more difficult to decide, and (2) the *Guanzi*'s style is obviously different from that of the *Laozi.*

5 Extended Discussion and Concluding Remarks

One of the causes of divergence on the origin of the *Laozi* is confusion between initiators of thought and concepts and later transcribers and editors. Certainly the text has a long history of transformation, with many people taking part in its transcription, circulation and modification from different states and provinces across the ancient Chinese heartland. But should they be considered authors or even co-authors? According to a comprehensive examination and comparison of different versions of the Laozi from the earliest Guodian bamboo slips of the third century BCE to current received versions (the Wang Bi and Heshang Gong versions), we find no editor or modifier of the text who qualifies to be counted an author or co-author (Liu 2003, 2006). Let us consider a typical instance of textual change from the ancient to received versions that includes the very latest Beida-published edition of bamboo slips (Table 2.3).

This table compares the last phrases from Chapter 64, from the earliest to the received versions. There are three steps in the gradual transformation from line 1 to line 6.

1. The fullest version appears in line 1, which structurally contrasts *able* 能 and *unable* 弗能. This suggests a clear division between what the sage should and could do, namely, he can assist myriad things to develop naturally, but he cannot

Table 2.3 Historical transformation: a passage from chapter 64

1.	Guodian A	Therefore the sage is ***able*** to support the naturalness of myriad things,	but is ***unable*** to take action.
	郭店簡甲	是故聖人能輔萬物之自然	而弗能為
2.	Guodian C[a]	Therefore . . . is *able* to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But *dares not* take action.
	郭店簡丙	是以能輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
3.	Silk A and B	Be ***able*** to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But *dare not* take action.
	帛書甲/乙	能輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
4.	Beida Bamboo[b]	. . . to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But *dare no*t take action.
	北大漢簡	以輔萬物之自然,	而弗敢為
5.	Fuyi	. . . to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But *dare not* take action.
	傅奕	以輔萬物之自然,	而不敢為也
6.	Heshang, Wang	. . . to support the naturalness of myriad things,	But *dare not* take action.
	河上/王弼	以輔萬物之自然,	而不敢為

[a]There are three batches of bamboo slips of the Guodian version, named A, B, and C. Usually we take them as one Guodian version because for the most part they do not include the same chapters. However, the second part of Chapter 64 has two different versions, in A and C, respectively, thus we have two rows from the Guodian version in this table, namely Guodian A and C
[b]Indicating Beijing University Institute of Archeological Literature (2012)

(or should not) *wei* 為, that is, take regular action such as common rulers do. This language makes crystal clear the sage's responsibility and principles; it is not merely a description.

2. In lines 2 and 3, the structural contrast has vanished because the word *unable* is replaced with *dare not* 弗敢, thus we lose the clearly oppositional relationship between *able* and *unable*, and the relation between *able* and *dare not* becomes less sharp.
3. In lines 4–6, the word *able* disappears, too. So the key verbs and contrast of earliest version have vanished completely. The original thrust asserting the principle of the sage's leadership has become a mere description of sagely actions.

There are dozens, even hundreds, of instances like this in the long history of the transformation of the text, and though some are more significant, most are trivial. Certainly many agents took part in making the alterations and modifications. Most of them tried to follow the original ideas and features to improve and strengthen the original language of the text, though sometimes they actually made the text weaker or unnecessarily obscure. Over time, for example, the frequency of the word *dao* increased from 72 to 76, the mentions of *wuwei* increased from 9 to 12, and use of the four-character sentence also significantly increased (Liu 2003: 352). Instances of serious distortion of the text, however, are rare (ibid. 371–373). Based on such comparisons, do these modifying agents rate the status of initiators of this line of thought? Do they qualify as collective co-authors of the text? It is unlikely that we can conclude "yes" if we stand by the accepted meaning of the word "author."

Another significant implication of textual transformation in the problem of ascribing origins is that we have no way to access or even conclusively identify a first version. The versions we have for linguistic comparison are samples from the *Laozi*'s transformation history, all of which have been modified, more or less, by later agents; the results of our dating based on phonological analysis have not helped us arrive at an accurate date for the original text, though they do improve our knowledge about ancient texts generally.

In sum, the later theories of the *Laozi*'s origin have been proved wrong by the discovery of the Guodian bamboo versions and phonological and linguistic studies. The middle theories have provided no positive evidence either, and are merely a compromise between the puzzling traditional position and the scepticism of the later theories. Comparatively, an *open* or prudent early theory enjoys the support of textual, linguistic, historical, and archeological findings; it is a position with which the other two theories cannot compete in light of this positive evidence.

That said, we can return to our early question: Was there a founder of Daosit philosophy? The answer remains, it depends.

If our word "founder" means one who builds an institution or school, then there *was no* such person for Daoism. If, however, we hold that a founder could have originated this system of thought and the core part of the *Laozi* was probably written by someone who went under that name before the emergence of the *Zhuangzi* text,

that Laozi seems a fair candidate. If we take a different position, we may find ourselves forced to say there was no founder of Daoism at all, because there is little evidence to support the possibility that the later thinkers Yang Zhu, Liezi, or Zhuangzi were the first to formulate Daoist ideas.

Finally, we concede that there is no simple approach or standard by which to reach a decisive resolution of this problem. Still, there are ways to improve the quality of our discussion and research: We may read texts and historical records more faithfully and seriously; we can examine and compare various theories based on historical records, archeological discoveries, and linguistic features; and we may develop more comprehensive and holistic insights by avoiding positions that are based on mere samples or on beautiful but untestable conjecture.[21]

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Chapter 3
Thematic Analyses of the *Laozi*

Mark Csikszentmihalyi

Academic study of the *Laozi* has long been carried out in the shadow of a thriving industry of amateur translation and aficionado explanation. Since at least the Western Han dynasty, the *Laozi* has been seen as an object of popular interest that was, as a result, frowned upon by some classical scholars because it occupied a different set of social locations than other early texts. During the reign of Emperor Jing 景 (r. 157–141 BCE), this tension was evident in the dismissive reply of Master YUAN Gu 轅固生, a court expert in the *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), to Empress Dou's 竇 request that he teach her about the *Laozi* (*Shiji* 121.3123). Yuan considered the text nothing more than *jiaren yan* 家人言 "the words/theories of people in the household"—referring to servants or family members—signifying that it did not belong in the sphere of the court. The distinction between the status of the Classics and that of the teachings of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor (i.e., Huang-Lao 黃老) has been read as having its origin in differences of region, class, political faction, and philosophy, but whatever the origins of the divide, serious scholars like Master YUAN Gu were not interested in crossing it.

Some of the same considerations have shaped the modern international reception of the text. J.J. Clark, Stephen Bradbury, and Julia Hardy have written treatments of the diverse ways that, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a variety of religious and secular motives brought the *Laozi* to the attention of Europeans and Americans. Its reception was colored by factors that include the early perception of a hidden Christian message (Hardy 1998: 165–66) and its later perception as an ecumenical alternative to Christianity (Bradbury 1992: 24). The recent proliferation of translations of the *Laozi* led Stephen Durrant to declare that "the popular market is now flooded" and, at least partially in jest, to propose "a decade-long moratorium on further *Tao-te Ching* translations" (1991: 82). Because the

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text has played an important role in multiple areas of society across history, its many locations have made giving a truly comprehensive account of its content and significance a challenging task.

The goal of this chapter is to weave together some exemplary approaches to the *Laozi* in Western languages and summarize key perspectives on the origins and nature of important concepts in the text. Keeping in mind the above comments about the academic and social locations of the text, and how perceptions of its location have colored its reception, the chapter will focus on conceptual analyses of the text in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both inside and outside China. This project was often either consciously or unconsciously affected by the categorization of the text itself, and by the implicit cross-cultural comparisons that resulted from that categorization. Two families of approach will be distinguished: those that focus on certain of the *Laozi*'s key terms—*dao* 道, *de* 德, *wuwei* 無為, and *ziran* 自然—and those that relate it to larger cross-cultural categories such as mysticism, politics, gender, and ecology. Since other chapters deal with issues like text formation and transmission, discussion of these topics will be limited to their role relative to the key religious and philosophical themes of the text.

1 The Study of Key Terms

In discussing the central concepts of the *Laozi*, it is important to draw a distinction between those concepts and the key terms of the various Daoist traditions considered more broadly. While it is tempting to look at the use of the term *dao* 道 (Way) as a constant across all strands of the different types of Daoism, and portray it as the conceptual core of Daoism, this ignores the way the connotations of that term have varied over time and across contexts. So, too, with the use of that term in the *Laozi*.

1.1 Dao

The term *dao* appears in 36 of the *Laozi*'s 81 chapters, one third of the total. Yet the concept behind the term was read very differently at different times. WANG Bi 王弼 (226–249) emphasized how hard it is to perceive the *Laozi*'s Dao, in a way that HESHANG Gong 河上公 did not (Chan 1998a, b: 104), while the authors of the later texts like the *Commands and Admonitions for the Families of the Great Way* 大道家令戒 spoke of a Dao whose immanent manifestation in history actually penned the *Laozi* itself (Bokenkamp 1997: 149–85). If we open ourselves to the possibility of projecting *dao*'s diversity of connotations back into the period when the *Laozi* was composed, it is difficult to be confident that its multiple appearances really connote a single concept.

With this contrast between term and concept in mind, it is worth looking at the way different authors have tried to distinguish between the shades of connotation

in the *Laozi*. Perhaps the most influential typological approach was that of FENG Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), whose "A Preliminary Draft of New Essays on the History of Chinese Philosophy" 中國哲學史新編試稿 distinguishes between several senses of the term: (1) the origin of the myriad phenomena (e.g., chapter 4, "as if it were the founding ancestor of the myriad things," *si wanwu zhi zong* 似萬物之宗), (2) the origin of all transformations (e.g., chapter 42, "Dao gives birth to one, one to two, two to three, three to the myriad things," *Dao sheng yi, yi sheng er, er sheng san, san sheng wanwu* 道生一,一生二,二生三,三生萬物), and (3) the imperceptible transcendent, that is, the one thing that does not transform (e.g., chapter 25, "it proceeds in a cycle without ever tiring," *zhou xing er budai* 周行而不殆, see Hu 2006: 64–65). Of the first sense, in this early work from the 1960s, Feng writes that phenomena must be produced according to a "basic principle" (*yuan li* 原理), and that is Dao. Here, the examples Feng chooses tend to relate Dao to the phenomenal world in a temporal or developmental sequence (e.g., chapter 25, "Something came forth chaotic and complete, born prior to Heaven and Earth," *you wu huncheng, xian tiandi sheng* 有物混成, 先天地生). Yet other sections of the *Laozi* promote a second, more abstract sense of Dao that is distinct from both the concrete world of phenomena and the world (presence, *you* 有) that gives birth to them in the manner of the first sense. Instead, this second sense of the term is the realm of absence (*wu* 無) that gives birth to that world (e.g., chapter 40, "the myriad things in the universe are born from presence, and presence is born from absence" *tianxia wanwu sheng yu you, you sheng yu wu* 天下萬物生於有, 有生於無) and therefore lies outside time and space. Finally, the last sense defines Dao through negation, expressing its meaning not by its relationship to the phenomenal world, but rather by denying basic contrasts, such as between this (*ci* 此) and that (*bi* 彼). Indeed, the first two senses of the Dao—as an originating principle for the creation of the phenomenal world and as an entity outside of both principle and phenomena and so responsible for their creation—are both, in this third view, things that can be named and therefore are not Dao (cf. chapter 32, *Dao chang wu ming* 道常無名, Hu 2006: 70–71). Feng does not explicitly explain the reasons for the multiple connotations of the important term *dao*, but his language indicates that the meanings in these different chapters are related but not mutually interchangeable.

More recently, CHEN Guying 陳鼓應 recognizes multiple senses of the term *dao*, a word he says "assumes different dimensions in different contexts." To wit, he distinguishes between three senses of the term: (1) a metaphysical reality that cannot be named (as in chapter 1, "What can be named is not the constant name" *ke ming fei changming* 可名非常名), yet is independent and unchanging (as in chapter 25, "established on its own and unchanging" *du li bu gai* 獨立不改); (2) a system of self-regulating principles that encompass circular alternation (e.g., chapter 58, "Disaster is that upon which fortune relies," *huo xi fu zhi suo yi* 禍兮福之所倚) and the laws of nature (e.g., chapter 77, "What is excessive is diminished, and what is deficient is augmented" *you yu zhe sun zhi, bu zu zhe bu zhi* 有餘者損之, 不足者補之); and (3) a standard for human behavior. Chen does not give examples of the third category, but it likely refers in part to strategies based on the

second meaning of Dao, like *wuwei* 無為 "non-action" and *zhizu* 知足 "knowing sufficiency," (Chen 1992: 2–15). Like Feng, Chen has created a typology both more flexible and better suited to a text with composite characteristics than a single rote translation or definition.

Despite the differences between FENG Youlan's and CHEN Guying's typologies, some aspects are shared by both. Both authors arrange the various senses of *dao* along a conceptual continuum, along axes of concrete to abstract, immanent to transcendent, and expressible to ineffable. These different categories of meaning are also linked to the different themes they express in context. To illustrate this, let us look closely at passages associated with each level of Chen's typology and generalize about the messages the *Laozi* uses them to convey. The metaphysical Dao is ineffable (that is, too overwhelming to be described in words) and is linked to the deepest layer of skepticism in the text, since ultimate truth is not accessible to those who rely on sensory knowledge. The *dao* of natural systems is neglected by those who live in society and central to passages in the text that are most often concerned with critiques of conventional values and language. Finally, the *dao* of human behavior is most concerned with political and bodily security and is rarely connected to skepticism about language or knowledge. Whether the diversity of concepts connoted by this one term can be accounted for by recourse to the historical argument that the text is composite or to an intentional targeting of different messages to the contexts in which they are most relevant, it should be no surprise that a term like *dao* has multiple connotations.

Because Dao has long been seen as the core concept of the *Laozi*, translators have tended to equate it with core concepts from traditions they saw as similar or complementary. The translation of the opening lines of chapter one (道可道非常道) by G.G. Alexander (1895) is the most explicit: "God (the great everlasting infinite First Cause from whom all things in heaven and earth proceed) can neither be defined nor named." Perhaps out of a conviction that Alexander's parenthetical qualification was insufficient, in 1905 E. H. Parker changed this to "The Providence which could be indicated by words would not be an all-embracing Providence" (1905: 271). Perhaps in turn uncomfortable with Alexander's equation of Dao and God, Lionel Giles (1875–1958) pointed out a close likeness between Dao and Plato's "Idea of the Good" (1905: 16), and in some of his translations used the term "First Cause" to translate Dao.

These choices perhaps show the sense in which these early writers recognized the way that Dao "acts as a formal operator, or placeholder, systematically excluding any differentiating description or predicates that might be proposed," according to Wayne Proudfoot (1985: 127). Proudfoot writes that the history of religions has many instances of such terms arising in different traditions, and in this sense there is perhaps a limited justification of parallels between Dao and God, Providence, or First Cause. On a literal level, however, these are poor translations because they go much further than simply implying that Dao is a placeholder that can function the way "God" does, for example, in some Christian traditions; rather they seem to tell the reader that the *Laozi* is theorizing about "God." Indeed, disagreements

around the start of the twentieth century were not over whether the term *dao* should be equated with a key Western concept, but which Western concept was most appropriate, something that tells us quite a bit more about the translators than about the *Laozi*. It is hard to imagine the verbs of which Dao is sometimes the object—"use" (*yong* 用, chapter 4) or "enact" (*wei* 為, chapter 65)—being applied to God. Similarly, in light of the chapter 5 statement that the universe treats people like "straw dogs" (*chugou* 芻狗), it is extremely difficult to credit a translation of Dao that assumes it is providential. Even if one accepts Proudfoot's thesis that terms like Dao and "the numinous" function similarly within their traditions, surely the only case where one would automatically equate two things that share a function is when one has already decided on their equivalence.

Yet it is easier to rule out early translations of *dao* than it is to provide a definition of the term that is consistent with all of its occurrences in the work. The standard translation, "way," has the advantage of being close to the etymology of the graph *dao* (道) and provides an intelligible translation in most instances. However, as some of the more astute translators have noticed, a uniform translation papers over some of the very real differences in the ways—no pun intended—the term is used even within the *Laozi.* The dilemma is whether one should always translate it as "way" and so indicate unerringly all instances of the term *dao*, or translate so as to nuance different connotations by shading with modifiers "natural/cyclical" or "indescribable," or finding synonyms like "watercourse" or "path." Perhaps the one translation that managed to evade these alternatives was that of the famous UC-Berkeley sinologist, P.A. Boodberg, whose translation of *dao* as "Lodehead" was based on the etymological element *shou* 首 "head," although he notes that this meaning is "perilously near" to the Greek First Cause (1957: 599).

Indeed, when modern authors strive to explain how Dao is key to the *Laozi* they often resort to methods that allow them to describe the term as embracing multiple inconsistent characteristics, such as applying something like the classical substance/function (體用) distinction. In "The Philosophy of Taoism," a brief introductory essay to his translation *The Way of Lao Tzu,* Wing-Tsit CHAN (CHEN Rongjie 陳榮捷) defines *dao* in terms of other intellectual structures, drawing on commentarial traditions that define it in terms of *wu* 無"non-being," albeit a non-being that is "not negative but positive in character" (1963: 8). GU Mingdong tries to accept both horns of the dilemma in a similar way: "In Laozi's conception, 'nothing' is the ontology of the *Dao* while 'something' is its function" (2005: 75). These readings of the text fit John B. Henderson's description of commentaries that draw a "modal distinction" to reconcile seeming contradictions in the text. Robert Henricks, in his article "Re-exploring the Analogy of the Dao and the Field," argues that the term is used in three key senses: a cosmic reality, a personal reality, and a way of life (1999: 161). In his analogy of *dao* to a field, he uses different aspects of the image to bridge the different senses of the word in the text. This flexible approach also represents improvement over the quest, a century ago, to tie the term *dao* to a single corresponding word in English.

1.2 De

Dao is not the only term that operates on multiple levels in the text. Chapter 1, the first chapter of the section that came to be known as the "Dao" part of the *Laozi* as early as the Western Han in the Mawangdui exemplars, begins with a distinction between two levels of the word *dao*. So, too, chapter 38, the first chapter of the section known as the "De" part of the *Laozi,* makes a similar distinction between levels of *de* 德 in the text: *shang de bu de, shi yi you de* 上德不德, 是以有德 "highest virtue is not virtuous, and this is how it has virtue." This passage is among the most contested passages in the entire text, with *bu de* 不德 "not virtuous" being explained as "not being conscious of his virtue" (Chan 1963: 167), "not manifesting extrinsic" virtue (Chen 1977: 188), and "not keeping to virtue" (Lau 1963: 99). Regardless of which of these things the person of highest virtue does not do, this chapter's distinction between different senses of the same word clearly presents *de* in a light similar to the way chapter 1 presents *dao.*

The key term "virtue" appears in 16 of the *Laozi*'s 81 chapters, all but four of them in the second section of the work. Perhaps because the parallel titles of the two sections of the text, or because of the similar way the words are used at the start of those sections, there has been a strong tendency to read *de* as closely related to or as a manifestation of Dao since the time of WANG Bi 王弼. Max Kaltenmark was building on Henri Maspero's view of *dao* and *de* as general efficacy and particular manifestation as it becomes real when he wrote: "Tao and Te are thus quite close to each other in meaning, but the former is universal indeterminate order, while the latter is a virtue or potency enabling a man to accomplish particular actions," (1969: 27). This same conception is behind Arthur Waley's translation of *daode* 道德 as "Way and its Power" in the title of his translation of the *Laozi*. This way of reading *de* in terms of *dao* seems to assume that the former term is consistently used in the *Laozi* in a way that is conceptually dependent on the latter term, that is to say, that the author's intention was for the *de* passages or section to be linked with the *dao* passages or section.

Since *de* had a long history prior to the *Laozi*, however, it is also plausible to view the two terms as separable and look at *de*'s connotations independently. This is what Michael LaFargue does when he writes that by the time of the *Laozi*'s composition, the term had become a generic description of good character, and the authors of the *Laozi* used it for "their summary for the highest kind of human goodness, sometimes hypostatized as a quasi-independent energy or force that one 'accumulates' internally through self-cultivation" (e.g., chapter 26, "Repeatedly accumulating virtue, there is nothing he fails to overcome," *zhong ji de, ze wu bu ke* 重積德則無不克). LaFargue notes that this is partly based on "its older connotations of power/charisma" because of "the subtle but powerful influence that the ideal ruler or administrator exerts on those under him" (1992: 247). With this kind of meaning, there is still no doubt a relationship between *dao* and *de*, but *de* is read as an independent concept rather than as a manifestation of Dao.

The ruler's personal charisma is also an older meaning that P.J. Ivanhoe draws on when he adopts a similar strategy for analyzing the role of *de* in the *Laozi*. Ivanhoe looks at the ways in which the *Laozi* both preserves and alters three traditional characteristics of the persons with *de*: attractive power, potential to exert a distinctive effect on people who come into their presence, and ability to apply *wuwei* in the sphere of government. But the *Laozi* fills in the specifics of these characteristics in unique ways. For example, attraction is accomplished by placing one's own person last: "Desiring to lead the people, one must, in one's person, follow behind them," (Chapter 66, *yu xian min bi yi shen hou zhi* 欲先民必以身後之). The sage's *de* exerts a distinctive effect, but the object of this effect is to "empty, unravel, and settle them," (Chapter 3, "empty their minds and fill their stomachs," *xu qi xin, shi qi fu* 虛其心, 實其腹). Finally, a virtuous ruler does not use *wuwei* as an administrative strategy, but rather employs it to liberate people from their false consciousnesses by eliminating "the artificial desires foisted upon his people through the insidious influence of socialization and human 'cleverness'" in favor of a contentment that comes from living simple lives (e.g., Chapter 80, *le qi su* 樂其俗, Ivanhoe 1999: 242–50). Instead of defining the *Laozi*'s *de* in terms of *dao*, Ivanhoe portrays it as a development of a relatively independent concept that is crucial to a number of early Chinese texts.

1.3 Ziran and Wuwei

Several of these characteristics of *de* are related to two other terms that are usually seen as keys to understanding the *Laozi*: *ziran* 自然 "naturalness" and *wuwei* 無為 "not acting, non-action." These are often linked because naturalness describes the way the sage acts to let things take a course consistent with the Way, while artifice characterizes actions that interfere with such an outcome. In chapter 57, the first-person subject's ability to avoid action allows the people to transform themselves (*wo wuwei er min zihua* 我無為而民自化). This strategy is what LIU Xiaogan describes as "modeling oneself on naturalness … following along with the development and transformation of external things without interfering" (1999: 221). It is worth noting that this is not unlike what Shun does in *Analects* 15.5 by "merely placing himself gravely and reverently with his face to the south, that was all." Facing south as the Pole Star does, Shun's lack of interference allowed the smooth functioning of society's systems. In the Confucian tradition, these systems are ritualistic and administrative, while for the *Laozi* they are natural.

The exact mechanism of the *Laozi*'s connection between naturalness and ruling through not acting has been the subject of debate. LIU Xiaogan puts an emphasis on the way people of the highest virtue "do not act and do not have ulterior motives" (chapter 38, *wuwei er wu yi wei* 無為而無以為). In other words, true *wuwei* is not simply an action but an action combined with the proper precipitating attitude. He writes: "They not only do nothing, but they are also free from internal striving

or ulterior motives . . . casual and entirely natural *wuwei* is better than intentional *wuwei*" (1999: 226). Hans-Georg Moeller makes a similar connection, linking *ziran* and *wuwei* in the psychology of the individual ruler: "The emotional and cognitive inactivity of the sages is the very condition not only for an impartial rule of the state but, more importantly, for their ability to not interfere in what goes on 'self-so' (*ziran*)" (2006: 139). These observations make an important point about *wuwei* in the *Laozi*: acting in a non-purposive way out of the wrong motives is not genuine *wuwei*, but rather is artificial in the worst and most socially harmful sense of the term.

These are examples of scholars using the terms *dao* and *de*, *wuwei* and *ziran* to unlock the complex text of the *Laozi*. By relying on vocabulary intrinsic to the text itself, this approach avoids the explicit imposition of universal categories. However, as we have seen, in arguing about the proper definition and translation of this vocabulary, such impositions end up being made implicitly.

2 Mysticism

When the *Laozi* says that "the Way that can be spoken is not the eternal Way" (*Dao ke dao fei changdao* 道可道非常道) and "those who know do not say, while those who say do not know," (*zhizhe bu yan, yanshe bu zhi* 知者不言, 言者不知) are we to take this as a categorical indictment of the ability of language to express truth? If so, the *Laozi* shares at least one important feature with other religious texts that use the language of "unsaying" to convey the message that truth in ineffable. William James, whose 1902 *Varieties of Religious Experience* popularized the use of the category of mysticism, defines it in terms of four components: ineffability, noesis, passivity, and transiency. Putting these two lines from the text together with James' definition, it is clear why there has been a long history of reading the *Laozi* as a mystical text.

This perspective has been forcefully argued by a number of scholars who hypothesize an historical connection between the *Laozi* and the experience of practicing mystics. Max Kaltenmark highlights the way the senses of sight, hearing, and touch cannot discern the Dao as a description of mystical experience. Kaltenmark writes: "What we have here, surely, is an indication of one of the phases in the experience of the mystic, who, in order to encounter the absolute, must first experience absence. He must make a radical renunciation of the senses; if he tries to conceptualize the Tao, it vanishes, for it is none other than the primordial unity of chaos, the unity anterior to the formation of the world" (1969: 36–37). This relatively simple proof depends on the assumption that the text was written to describe the experience of mystics.

Going several steps further than Kaltenmark, Harold Roth uses a comparison of the vocabulary of the *Laozi* with that of contemporaneous texts to reconstruct stages of meditation practice. Examples include "block your openings, shut your doors" (chapters 52 and 56, *sai qi dui, bi qi men* 塞其兑, 閉其門) meaning limiting

the senses, "untangle knots" (Chapter 56, *jie qi fen* 解其紛) meaning removing attachments to aspects of the self, and "the sage is for the belly, not the eye" (Chapter 12, *shengren wei fu bu wei mu* 聖人為腹不為目) meaning limiting senses and focusing on breath circulation (Csikszentmihalyi and Ivanhoe 1999: 71–72). Roth draws connections to related vocabulary in other early texts like the "Neiye" 內業 chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子 and concludes that *Laozi* "is not an isolated product but was part of a greater tradition of lineages that shared a common meditative practice as their basis … these experiences are the likely basis of the distinctive cosmology and political theory of sage rulership for which the *Laozi* is renowned" (Csikszentmihalyi and Ivanhoe 1999: 85). Other scholars like Donald Harper have argued for evidence of breathing techniques in chapter 5 of the *Laozi* (1995).

Sometimes a comparison to Buddhism is implicit in laying out the stages of attaining mystical knowledge in the text. Roth, for example, notes that advice about "the attainment of numinous mystical knowledge" in early Daoist texts "is found in other traditions of mediation and is especially clear in Buddhism" (1991: 618). An early example of reading the *Laozi* in light of Buddhism is the way that LIANG Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929) explicated the text vis á vis the early medieval Chinese work *Discussion of Awakening of Mahayana Faith* (大乘起信論, Skt. *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra*) attributed to the second-century writer Aśvaghoṣa (MA Ming 馬鳴). Liang explicitly opposes what he calls the materialistic European conception of the mind with that of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy, which he understands according to the doctrine of "one mind with two aspects." While the *Discussion of Awakening of Mahayana Faith* describes these two aspects as the mind's purity and changelessness (which leads to enlightenment) and its arising and ceasing (the unenlightened mind of everyday life), Liang likens these to the "basic substance" aspect of the Way, which is above the world (e.g., Chapter 25, "Heavens model on the Dao, the Dao models on the self-so" *tian fa Dao, Dao fa ziran* 天法道, 道法自然) and the "name and phenomenological reality" aspect of the Way, according to which Dao may only be described in terms of its imperceptibility. Just as the *Discussion of Awakening of Mahayana Faith* reconciled the two models of mind—tathāgatagarbha (incipient Buddha nature, *rulai zang* 如來藏) and ālayavijñāna (storehouse consciousness, *alaiye shi* 阿賴耶識)—so too Liang used this discursive strategy to reconcile what he saw as the active and presence-oriented aspect of Dao with its passive and absence-oriented aspect. The comparison with Buddhism that is explicit in the writing of Liang and Roth is often implicitly operative in writing about the *Laozi* as a mystical text.

A gap between experience and text lies at the heart of attempts to question the applicability of the mysticism category to the *Laozi*. Livia Kohn notes that there is nothing intrinsic to the text that marks it as the product of mystical experience: "it conspicuously lacks concrete descriptions of mystical methods, physical or otherwise," even while acknowledging that at times in history, it was read as a mystical text (1992: 40). In "Mysticism and Apophatic Discourse in the *Laozi*" the present author has problematized the distinction between text and practice by examining claims that paradoxical descriptions of Dao are evidence

of its ineffability. The reception history of the *Laozi* shows that while some commentators have read such paradoxes as producing contradictions that portray Dao as beyond language, others have seen them as simply directing one to search for the Dao in unconventional places. In other words, there is no internal indication that supposedly mystical descriptions were actually to be read in a "mystical" way. In the end, even the presence of accounts of mystical experience in the text does not make it a product of such experience or a "mystical text." Instead the *Laozi* may also be seen as "less an expression of an experience of an ineffable Dao than a compilation of attempts to describe it" (Csikszentmihalyi 1999: 52).

Roth's position on meditation practice in the text is not strictly incompatible with this model, considered apart from his claims about such practice being the source of other ideas in the text. If the *Laozi* is a compendium of references to different manifestations of a Dao that is beyond ordinary ways of knowing, descriptions of it in the context of meditation practice certainly fit comfortably beside descriptions of it in contexts such as statecraft and early history, or next to descriptions of its social and military manifestations.

Debates over the relationship between the *Laozi* and the matrix of movements and practices known as *Daojiao* 道教 are also closely related to the debates over mysticism. While some scholars who see the *Laozi* as mystical contrast this characteristic with the goal-oriented aspect of later Daoist practice, others see these rather different historical phenomena as two sides of the same coin. The latter view may be seen in early writers like Max Weber (1864–1920), who viewed Daoism as "a world-denying mysticism" (1951: 190). To the degree that the "noetic" character of mystical experience is explained by James, it lacks perceptual and intellectual characteristics but rather depends on "states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for aftertime" (James 2004: 282). This is perhaps the sense in which Kristofer Schipper argues for continuity in that "the works of the mystics are among the most ancient documents that have come down to us, but they also, in fact, represent the culmination of the Taoist system. They must be restored to this rightful position" (1994: 15).

3 Politics

Although the political dimension of the *Laozi* is one that many commentators have subordinated to its philosophical themes or mystical substratum, some writers have emphasized the work's political dimensions. "Government" and "War" are two of the nine sections in Lionel Giles' 1905 work *The Sayings of Lao-Tzu*, and it is in the area of politics that the British Museum's noted sinologist observed its historical impact: "The great political lesson of *laissez-faire* is one that the Chinese people have well assimilated and perhaps carried to excess; it may even be said to impregnate their national life more thoroughly than any doctrine of Confucius.

From two great evils of modern civilization—the bane of over-legislation and the pest of meddlesome and overbearing officialdom—China is remarkably free; and in few other countries does the individual enjoy such absolute liberty of action. Thus, on the whole, the Chinese may be said to have adopted Lao Tzu's main principles of government, with no small success" (1905: 14). Whether or not the "impregnation" of national life by the political lessons of the *Laozi* should be considered a positive thing, a century ago Giles drew a strong parallel between the *Laozi*'s political and economic views and those of *laissez-faire* advocates.

An early connection between Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought and the economic and political principles of *laissez-faire* was also made in China. In his 1916 selective commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, the scholar and noted translator YAN Fu 嚴復 (1854–1921) drew parallels to the French Physiocrats François Quesnay (1694–1774) and Jean Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay (1712–1759). These French theorists argued that the ideal society was one that did not impose human laws, but instead allowed the unfettered operation of the "power of nature" through policies of *laissez-faire et laissez-passer. Laissez-faire* as an economic doctrine is primarily concerned with restraining government action, but it is clear that for the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, the target is both broader and more abstract. A few years later in 1919, the philosopher HU Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) in his *General Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* 中國哲學史大綱 compared the idea of *wuwei* in the *Laozi* to the political application of the concept "Law of Nature" that he associated with Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Hu read passages such as Chapter 73, "Heaven's way is to, without contending, excel at overcoming," (*tian zhi dao, bu zheng er shan sheng* 天之道, 不爭而善勝) as expressing the "severity of Nature's Law," a phrase perhaps alluding to Spencer's "survival of the fittest."

Yet there is an important distinction between the political and economic applications of *laissez-faire*, as the noted historian of Chinese philosophy Benjamin Schwartz has pointed out. Schwartz writes that the key motive underlying the *Laozi*'s political vision is "to reduce to a minimum all the projects of civilization," hence "if it is *laissez-faire*, it is a *laissez-faire* which has nothing to do with economic enterprise" (1985: 213). Nevertheless, the connection to economics highlights how the Physiocrats connected their concept of nature to a system of governing, much like that outlined above between *ziran* and *wuwei* in the *Laozi*. This does not mean, however, that people have not tried to oversimplify the *Laozi*'s argument. Writing seven decades after HU Shi, in his January 15, 1988 State of the Union address, U.S. President Ronald Reagan cited "an ancient Chinese philosopher, Lao-tzu . . . 'Govern a great nation as you would cook a small fish; do not overdo it.'" Reagan used this reference to the opening lines of chapter 60 as a summary of his own vision of America, in particular of "ideas like the individual's right to reach as far and as high as his or her talents will permit; [and] the free market as an engine of economic progress." These two interpretations of the text, from opposite ends of the twentieth century, represent the strong tendency to describe the *Laozi* in a way that is consistent with the political and economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*, and make it consistent with a single view on the modern political spectrum. Leaving aside for the moment the difficulties inherent in portraying a

set of political imperatives that predate even the centralized government of the Qin in the third century BCE as consistent with a philosophy developed in eighteenth-century France, Giles and Reagan both sought a venerable precedent for their points of view and found it in the person of the ancient sage Laozi. These readings of the politics of the *Laozi* as economic *laissez-faire* are just the most notable of several political readings that have been influential over the last century.

Other writers have, following the example of Schwartz, analyzed the political philosophy of the text comparing it to a system that has minimal governmental interference in the lives of individuals. The occurrences of *wuwei* in the *Laozi* generally fall in the context of rulership, and this is one reason that interpreters have linked it with ideologies like *laissez-faire*. This is not the only reading of *wuwei* as an explicitly political strategy. For Hans-Georg Moeller, "The ideal of government in the *Laozi* is certainly not 'democratic.' Even the ruler refrains from ruling and from forming a political will. One important function of his restraint is that it prevents his people from developing ambitions and corresponding 'political' means for getting their interests recognized at the cost of others." This is the sense in which, Moeller argues, chapter 7 speaks of keeping one's own interests separate and thereby preserving them (*wai qi shen er shen cun* 外其身而身存). There is a connection for Moeller between the reduction of desires and the cessation of political ambitions, which allows for successful rule (2006: 62). This more psychological interpretation of the political strategies of the *Laozi* recognizes that while the impact of the *Laozi*'s strategies in terms of policy that might resemble *laissez-faire*, the mechanism that brings the policy about is fundamentally different.

4 Gender

Chapter 8 of the *Laozi* uses the metaphor of water to describe an optimal style of behavior (*shang shan ru shui* 上善如水). Is this thematically related to the injunction to "know the male, hold onto to the female" (*zhi qi xiong, shou qi ci* 知其雄, 守其雌) in chapter 28? The complex of textual elements that are today enlisted to talk about women and gender in the *Laozi* include water metaphors, the value of pliancy (*rou* 柔 and *ruo* 弱) and the female animal (*mu* 牧 *or ci* 雌), references to the "valley" (*gu* 谷), and the attribution of motherhood and "traditionally feminine virtues" such as caring to the Way. These topics may be related to a variety of issues that, each in its own way, is related to gender and sex. Some have been read as evidence of a particular Warring States construction of the "feminine," others as a political strategy that entails acting against a conventionally normative "masculine" type, and still others as an appreciation of or advocacy for the biological or social woman of the time. Taken together, are they evidence of that rare animal, a consciously expressed and coherent reflection on sex and gender in classical China?

To the extent that Dao is more often associated with biologically female characteristics and socially female virtues, a number of scholars have pointed out that, at least relative to other texts of the same period, the *Laozi* is unique.

Others have gone further, arguing that the text exalts distinctive female roles in sex and childbirth as models for normative practices like *wuwei* and descriptions of the Way. Benjamin Schwartz, for instance, takes the lines in chapter 6: "The spirit of the valley does not die, and this is why it is called the mysterious female," (*gushen bu si, shi wei xuanmu* 谷神不死, 是謂玄牧) as a reference to the "sexual and generative role of the female," who "'acts by not acting' in both the sex act and in generation," and so "is the epitome of *wuwei*" (1985: 200–201). Here, it is worth cautioning that the description of female sexuality in ancient China is perhaps as much a projection of the *Laozi* as it is based on empirical evidence. Arguing that the text expresses the veneration of motherhood in traditional China, for instance, Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn write that the passages that liken Dao to the womb or the mother of the myriad things imply that "people who attained the [Way] consequently have total trust in it as their universal mother" (2003: 7). They caution, however, that this aspect of the feminine is balanced in the *Laozi* by another aspect, "the way to overcome and balance the dominant mode of the world." As such, the text "reflects the mainstream ideal of Chinese culture, where women in general were secreted in the inner chambers and encouraged to develop virtues that made them easy to control, such as chastity, modesty, meekness, and obedience .... But it also modifies these attitudes by placing a positive value on the female and contrasting it with the male, ruthless and scheming, ways of the world" (2003: 8).

These approaches to the text are based on matching characteristics of historical conceptions of the female social role in China to characteristics associated with the feminine in the *Laozi*. It is important to note that Despeux and Kohn argue that the *Laozi* fundamentally accepts a binary scheme in which the female role is defined differently from the male one, and even Schwartz observes that there is "no indication that this exaltation of the female has any implications for Taoist 'social philosophy'" (1985: 442n33). So even those who would relate the text to conceptions of gender would, for the most part, not see the text as advancing the social position of women.

Some scholars reject the very idea that the text valorizes female social roles. Hans-Georg Moeller has argued that the *Laozi* is not interested in gender concerns at all. For Moeller, the sexes are "not *socially* but *cosmically* defined. It is not the difference between men and women that serves as the guideline" (2006: 26). While the Way is associated with motherhood, he also points out that the Way is likened to "fatherhood" in chapter 21 (that is, the "father of the multitude" *zhong fu* 衆父). Instead of being concerned with gender, he argues, the *Laozi* is interested in the "presexual" (2006: 28). In many ways, Moeller may be understood as extending the argument of Roger Ames, who wrote that the ideal of the text is not feminine but androgynous, and promotes an ideal that "reconciles the tension of opposites in sustained equilibrium and harmony" (1981: 33). These perspectives on the text come from scholars who are, in general, not as interested in reading the *Laozi* for values linked to the historical construction of sex roles in China as in reading it as an expression of a consistent philosophical position.

Each aspect of the text that has been enlisted to talk about views of women and gender tie into different perspectives on women, but it is difficult to relate

all of them to any single perspective. And it is even harder to claim that the text contains a socially progressive viewpoint in terms of women's role in society. Further, J.J. Clark makes the useful point that even advocating a balance of a binary dualism perpetuates "an uncritical binarism where genders are stereotyped and reified by means of paired lists of personality traits" (2000: 112). As such, neither relating the text's values to sex roles at the time of its composition nor generalizing a philosophical position consistent with the overall imperative to eliminate distinctions, should be confused with the claim that the *Laozi* is a Feminist text. That neither is sufficient to describe the *Laozi* using a term that did not predate the eighteenth century should not be surprising, in the same way that *laissez-faire* economics does not make sense applied to the primitive agrarian society of the *Laozi*.

5 Science and Ecology

In perhaps the thorniest conceptual analyses of the *Laozi*, a number of writers have sought to formally relate it to a particular position on science in general, and on ecology in particular. Interestingly, the circumstances of the two approaches could not be more different. In the 1950s and 1960s a rich debate over the text broke out among writers in the People's Republic of China; the terms of the debate were heavily influenced by Marxist materialist views of science. By contrast, articles written about the text's positions on ecology grew out of renewed interest in the last two decades with finding a vocabulary to address environmental concerns in the texts of the world's religious traditions. Needless to say, these two sets of scholars understand science in almost diametrically opposed ways.

In the discussion of the *Laozi*'s politics above, we noted that parallels to Darwinians like Spencer go all the way back to HU Shi at the start of the twentieth century. REN Jiyu's 任繼愈 (1916–2009) approach to Laozi was also influenced by Darwin, albeit as read through the lens of the Friedrich Engels (恩格斯, 1820–1895), the co-developer of Marxism. Much of the scholarship on early Chinese religions in the People's Republic of China centered on the Marxist opposition of materialism and idealism, with many of the most politically influential scholars such as GUO Mouruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), HOU Wailu 侯外廬 (1903–1987), and Ren arguing that the *Laozi* was materialist. Particularly important in their analyses was the opposition between the spiritual and deistic pictures of the early Zhou and passages like "penetrate the most subtle, preserve the steadfast quiescent," (Chapter 16, *zhi xu ji, shou jing du* 致虛極守靜篤), which was seen to reflect the prevailing materialism of the fifth century BCE (Hu 2006: 269). Arguing against this position were LI Taifen 李泰棻 (1897–1972) and GUAN Feng 關鋒 (1919–2005), who described Laozi as an "objective idealist" instead. Li pointed out that the lack of a deity was not a sufficient argument to make the *Laozi* materialist, and ended up arguing that the *Laozi* has a dualistic approach, pace LIANG Qichao (Hu 2006: 227–31). In his *Laozi tong* 老子通, completed in 1984 and published in 1991, Guan

argues against wide interpretations of Dao as, for example, the natural world, as primordial *qi*, or as something akin to Anaxagoras' *nous*—the ordering mechanism of the cosmos.

In his 1983 *History of Chinese Philosophy* 中國哲學史, however, Ren brings nuance to the position that the *Laozi* is materialist in an interesting way. He writes that passages such as chapter 47 "Without leaving one's door understand the world, without looking out of the window know Heaven's Way, so that the farther one goes, the less one knows," (*buchu hu, zhi tianxia, bukui you, jian tian Dao, qi chu mi yuan, qi chu mi shao* 不出戶知天下, 不闚牖見天道, 其出彌遠, 其知彌少) privilege the development of theory over direct scientific observation. He argues that this is an important counterpoint to Engels' view, which draws strongly on the rhetoric of science to defend his particular views of Marx's "scientific socialism." Ren quotes "Notes to Anti-Dühring" of 1877–1878, published in English and in Chinese as part of "Dialectics of Nature" (*Ziran bianzhengfa* 自然辨證法), where Engels systematically stresses the importance of the discovery of systematic laws of nature as part of his response to a recently published work by the German Botanist Karl von Nägeli (1817–1891) on the limits of natural selection. "Matter is nothing but the totality of material things from which this concept is abstracted, and motion as such nothing but the totality of all sensuously perceptible forms of motion .... Hence matter and motion *cannot* be known in any other way than by investigation of the separate material things and forms of motion, and by knowing these, we also *pro tanto* know matter and motion *as such*" (Engels 1934: 848). Ren, of course sees this as a deficiency for which he gives a historical explanation: that Laozi's scientific exposure was through astronomy, and early celestial observation was often indirect. This led the *Laozi* to value indirect observation as through the "dark mirror" of Chapter 10: "Cleaning and purifying the dark mirror, can you be without blemish?" (*tiaochu xuanlan, neng wu ci hu* 滌除玄覽, 能無疵乎). Instead of relying on direct observation, there is a degree of almost Gnostic insight required, effectively limiting the thirst for empirical knowledge. He writes that the *Laozi*'s mistake was to break away from the "investigation of the separate material things and forms of motion (i.e., energy)" and choose to try to directly understand "matter and motion *as such*" (Hu 2006: 270).

If we move forward in time to more recent discussions of the text, scholars are very interested in detecting a different attitude toward the natural world in the *Laozi*. Complicating the project of relating the *Laozi*'s view of the cosmos to modern concepts of Nature and ecology is the fact that there is no single accepted way of defining "Nature" in the West. Writing in 1912, Carl Henry Andrew Bjerregaard (1845–1922), chief of the reading room of the New York Public Library, distinguished between several Western conceptions of Nature, including its portrayal by Matthew Arnold and Tennyson, whose view of it as cruel was a result of "misconceptions that inhered in the first presentation of the doctrine of Evolution." Bjerregaard contrasted this Naturalism with Nature-Mysticism, and concluded that the *Laozi* is consistent with the latter but not the former. Indeed, Rorty's study of the changing conceptions of Nature and the way these changes generated different notions of value, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* emphasizes the degree to

which the conceptualization of Nature is one of most important and contested notions in the modern history of Western philosophy. When one attempts to pin down the *Laozi*'s attitude to nature, as Bjerregaard observed, the question of *which* nature is not an insignificant one.

This difficulty is not always acknowledged in the substantial body of writing on the topic of the relationship between human beings and Nature that singles Daoism out as a tradition with either an "ecological" ethic, or as one with resources adequate to re-orient ethical thinking and promote ecological goals. Many of these sources draw heavily on the notions of *wuwei* and *ziran* in the *Laozi* as support of this identification. In *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Way on Earth*, Peter Marshall (1994: 9) singles it out as the first expression of an ecological ethic, and writes that Daoism "offered the most profound and eloquent philosophy of nature ever elaborated and the first stirrings of ecological sensibility." This connection was also the focus of a 1998 conference called "Daoism and Ecology" that was held at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. In the preface to the subsequent conference volume, the organizers praise indigenous Chinese religions as being rooted in an "anthropocosmic" worldview that takes the aim of personal cultivation "to be in harmony with nature and with other humans while being attentive to the movements" of the Way (Tucker and Grim, in Girardot et al. 2001: xxiv). The conference itself, however, bears testimony to plurality of views on just how consistent the *Laozi* is on the issue of "harmony with Nature" and in what sense it may be said to evince an "ecological sensibility."

There is little question that on numerous occasions the *Laozi* draws a contrast that is reminiscent of the modern dichotomy between Nature and culture, and where it does it favors the side that is closest to "Nature." The passage that is perhaps most often cited in this regard is from chapter 64, which contains both a couplet about *wuwei* ("For this reason the sage takes no action and therefore does not fail/He grasps nothing and therefore he does not lose anything . . . ") and a couplet about *ziran* "naturalness" ("He learns to be unlearned, and returns to what the multitude has missed/Thus he supports the naturalness of the myriad things and dares not take any action.") Liu Xiaogan reads this naturalness as an obvious resource for an environmental orientation: "The natural development of the 10,000 things indicates the harmonious relationship of all creatures in the universe. This is the essence of naturalness and the ideal of Laozi's philosophy. Obviously, this is also an ideal ecological environment for modern people" (Girardot et al. 2001: 328). Commenting on the same passage, however, Michael LaFargue sees not an equal harmony with the 10,000 things, but rather a harmony achieved on the terms dictated by the human ruler: "Thus, the 'naturalness' (*ziran*) of the society which he 'helps along' does not represent society as it would function if it had no ruler at all. It is what we would perhaps think of as rather a 'romantic' notion of naturalness, a state both in accord with the spontaneous impulses of the community, but also in accord with some human being's notion of an ideal society" (Girardot et al. 2001: 52).

These two readings of Chapter 64 capture a tension that was present at the conference, one that has generated an important debate about ecology in the *Laozi*. On the literal level, this difference in interpretation comes down to the sense in which the graph *fu* 復 "supports," "maintains," or "returns to" was intended to be read. On another level, however, the two interpretations grow out of the respective scholars' different commitments regarding the nature of the text. LaFargue notes that the chapter advocates non-intervention, but comes back to his view that the "*Daodejing* is (among other things) a manual for ruling well" (Girardot et al. 2001: 50). By contrast, Liu does not see the text as primarily concerned with human world, but sees the human world as integrated into a broader cosmology: "Heaven, Earth and Man and their phenomena are often used analogously as the philosophical foundation of theories about human life, moral and political" (Girardot et al. 2001: 327). Proceeding from their respective assumptions about whether the key cosmological model of the text is anthropocentric and hierarchical or cosmocentric and non-hierarchical, their readings of the above character *fu* are entirely consistent. In other words, in this case the reading of the *Laozi* 64 prescription grows out of more general understandings of the relationship between the human and the non-human realms in the work as a whole.

Besides the question of what the *Laozi* meant in its own time is the broader question of how the *Laozi* shaped thinking about nature through Chinese history or, indeed, how it might be enlisted to combat the scourge of environmental degradation. These are important questions, since it is not clear that injunctions against certain behaviors in religious traditions actually reduce those behaviors in society as a whole. Holmes Rolston III, for example, has contended that whatever texts like the *Laozi* say, they do not necessarily result in a worldview that supports positive environmental attitudes. Yet this is perhaps an inappropriate standard to apply to a text. Whether Rolston's contention about the inability of "Eastern" religions to affect Chinese attempts at environmental conservation is true or not, this debate is ultimately not so much about history as it is about a version of Orientalism that arises when one puts the round peg of Daoism into a square hole of something like a "guiding theory of the relationship between human beings and nature." It makes the same reductionist error that Max Weber did when he argued that Confucianism was the reason that East Asia lacked capitalism.

Assuming an almost ecumenical outlook, numerous scholars have turned to traditional religions as "resources" for cultivating attitudes that engage a more balanced ecological approach to the world. As LIU Xiaogan has shown, the concept of naturalness in the *Laozi* does indeed provide such a resource, although others are also correct to point out that this does not make it an "ecological" text. It is worth recalling J.J. Clark's caution that treating Daoism "as a 'resource' that can be manipulated and reconstituted in accordance with our will, is mired in precisely those exploitative and masculinist attitudes for which Daoism has been billed as the cure" (2000: 88).

6 Conclusion

One pattern we see in the conceptual analysis of the *Laozi* is that, implicitly or explicitly, the text is often read in comparison to another work. We have seen how Buddhist, Christian, Marxist and other views have shaped the work of analysis and translation at a variety of stages in the text's modern reception. In many cases, the *Laozi*'s reputation as "counterpoint" to the mainstream Confucian picture positions it as a natural counterexample—dualistic to the mainstream monism, mystical to the mainstream rational humanism, materialist to the mainstream idealism. To properly appreciate the trends in conceptual analysis of the *Laozi*, one should consider them in dialogue with the study of other early texts.

A tension that arises again and again in this survey is that between writers who are willing to draw distinctions between multiple voices in the text on a particular theme and those who are intent on discovering a hidden thematic unity. Because of the nature of the *Laozi*, however, this is more than the usual conflict between "lumpers" and "splitters." As a concluding note, then, it seems appropriate to examine how assumptions about the text's composite nature affect its thematic analysis.

The tradition of the *Laozi* as the product of a single author, and the connection between a historical Laozi and the author or authors of the text, are long-contested topics that continue to be subject to debate. One aspect of the debate widely accepted in modern reception studies is the historical tendency of texts without authors to cast biographical shadows of themselves. This is what Michel Foucault called the "authorship function," which has been modified in the case of the Western reception of Asian religions into what historian Tomoko Masuzawa has called the "founder function." In conjunction with the development of the category "world religions" in the late nineteenth century, each tradition came to be identified with "an extraordinary yet historically genuine person as the founder and initiator of the tradition." Masuzawa notes that this function could also be "served by a figure with an uncertain historical status and with mostly historical endowments, such as Zoroaster, the founding prophet of Parsiism, or Lao-Tzu, the mythic 'old master' of Taoism" (2005: 133). A slightly later instance of this phenomenon is Max Weber's application of his theory of ideal types, where founders were divided among categories that did not allow for a religion without an author. For Weber, Laozi was, like Zoroaster, an "exemplary prophet" (as opposed to an "ethical prophet" like Buddha), that is, a figure that said "nothing about a divine mission or an ethical duty of obedience, but rather directs itself to the self-interest of those who need salvation, recommending them to follow the same path as he himself walked" (1963: 55). The existence of a founder like Laozi, then, was an article of faith for early historians of religion, and the lack of specific ethical injunctions in the *Laozi* meant that he was a prophet whose actions must have been intended to speak louder than words.

There are numerous alternatives to this view, the most radical of which is the denial of any historical existence for a Laozi. Yet while that position has served as a useful lightning rod, many other more nuanced hypotheses question the existence of a single author and speculate that the text is a composite of multiple-authored

fragments organized by a single editor. Still others posit an accretion model that leaves little room for either editors or a significant degree of author intentionality. To understand the enterprise of reading the *Laozi* for its thematic messages, we must appreciate the degree to which even arguing for thematic unity requires bracketing these various alternatives to the single author or strong editor theory. There is a close relationship between a scholar's willingness to temporarily suspend concerns about the internal consistency of the text and the ability to find thematic unity in it. This is not to argue that such suspension cannot be productive, but rather to say that many of the debates about the *Laozi* may be better understood by appreciating that not only do they arise out of differences in interpretation, but they are often shaped by underlying disagreements about the very nature of the *Laozi* itself.

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Chapter 4
Laozi's Philosophy: Textual and Conceptual Analyses

Xiaogan Liu

The *Laozi* or *Daodejing* is a fascinating, compelling, inspiring, and elusive work. Indeed, its themes and doctrines have been interpreted in radically different ways. Its ideas have been taken as treatments on metaphysics, ontology, ethics, social philosophy, political strategy, the arts of statesmanship and military strategy; it has been reckoned a source for the art of *qigong* (vital force exercise), the religion of immortality, and even a theory of feminism. Divergent interpretations of the *Laozi* have developed various, even opposed, strands of thought such as theism, atheism, and pantheism; idealism and materialism; rationality and mysticism; naturalism and humanism. Can we accept all these divergent and conflicting readings and impressions as equally valid approaches to the text? If not, how should we think about them? There is certainly no straightforward approach to judging between different standards of interpretation. After all, texts can be interpreted in as many ways as there are readers. But if we are interested in pursuing a faithful understanding of Laozi's thought, we cannot assume that all interpretations are of the same accuracy and trustworthiness. It appears to me that the most reliable interpretation of the *Laozi* can only be achieved by approaching the text meticulously and comprehensively in its linguistic, social, and historical contexts.[1]

[1]Some passages in this chapter are adapted and altered from Liu 2009b.

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1 An Experimental Approach

In the humanities, a faithful reading is always the primary approach and a prerequisite for academic study and interpretation; thus, it is actually a critical preparation for research and interpretation. Textual analytical knowledge and a circumspect attitude can build a foundation of close familiarity with the text and more accurate interpretation of Laozi's philosophy, which in turn lays the groundwork for creative interpretation and philosophical construction. In this way, the difference and connection between newly created ideas and original textual meanings will be demonstrated clearly, unlike the traditional approach, which mixed an interpreter's new ideas and textual explication. In this chapter, I will concentrate on close reading and contextual understanding, leaving creative interpretation and modern reconstruction to other works. Here I will consider the *Laozi* text as closely as possible and investigate its basic meaning, so that we may have a better foundation for modern comparison, reconstruction, and application of its ideas to today's world. To take account of the various surviving versions of the *Laozi*, I consult and compare its bamboo slip, silk manuscript, and received versions, with the aim of staying as close as possible to the most ancient text to identify its most plausible meanings.[2]

While the Chap. 2 of this volume surveys the various approaches and interpretations in Laozi studies, this chapter introduces a more comprehensive and coherent analysis of three central concepts in Laozi's thought. They are *ziran* (自然 naturalness), *wuwei* (無為 non-action), and Dao.

When we wrestle with concepts from ancient Chinese thought in English, there is the issue of working through the Western philosophical terminology available to us. As long as philosophical discussion is concerned, no matter if it is Chinese, Indian, or African, we can hardly avoid using Western terms, though there is no philosophical vocabulary appropriate for all locations and periods. Faced with this issue, we are careful in our use of ready Western terminologies and theoretical frameworks in the discussion of Laozi's philosophy, and when we need and have to use them, we try to be sensitive to the areas of discrepancy between them in their Western framework and in the context of Laozi's thought. Thus, our policy is this: (1) we try not to apply ready Western concepts to Laozi's text; (2) we will coin new phrases where possible to convey the unique meaning of a Laozian concept, for example, "civilized naturalness"[3]; and (3) we indicate the difference between

[2]This comparison of the various versions becomes easy and convenient with the publication of *Laozi Gujin* 老子古今 (Liu X. 2006b). For the transformations of the various versions over two millennia, see Liu 2003.

[3]The Chinese word *ziran* in ancient times meant only "natural" or "naturally," in an adjectival or adverbial sense, even if it was used grammatically in a subject or object position. *Ziran* has nothing to do with the idea of Nature, and it was not translated as that until the early twentieth century (Lin 2009). The new term "civilized naturalness" was recently invented so that the *Laozi*'s *ziran* would indicate the naturally harmonious state of *civilized* human societies, in hopes of

Western terms and Laozi's ideas when use of a Western term is unavoidable. For example, when we use metaphysics to discuss Laozi's Dao, we do not mean to suggest that Dao is metaphysical in the platonic sense: namely, it does not suggest any dichotomy between the physical and metaphysical worlds, since the world is all of a piece in Laozi's Daoism.

In this chapter, we will try to reveal a relative coherent system of Laozi's thought, which consists of three key terms and theories in the *Laozi,* namely, *ziran* (natural order in civilized societies), *wuwei* (imperceptible yet effectual action), and Dao (the source and ground of the universe). They are associated in a roughly coherent body of theories in which they support and interpenetrate each other.

2 Ziran: *The Core Value of Laozi's Philosophy*

Unlike most studies of Laozi's philosophy, which usually focus on the concepts of Dao and *wuwei*, this chapter will first highlight *ziran* 自然, introducing it as the core or highest value in Laozi's philosophy.[4] The *Laozi* text asserts that "Dao models itself after *ziran,*" which puts *ziran* in the highest position of all things. Using this highest concept, Laozi wants people to understand and be able to pursue the ideal state of the world through his idea that Dao is the model for man, earth, and Heaven.

In the compound *zi-ran*, "*zi*" 自 denotes "self", "*ran*" 然 denotes "so"; thus, *ziran* seems literally to indicate the state of "self-so" or "so-in-and-of-itself," suggesting the spontaneous existence and development of things without artificial interruption or arbitrary control. However, the translation "self-so" or "so-in-and-of-itself" is possibly misleading, because in *ziran*, "*zi*" does not necessarily denote a person or agent who might cause or initiate something. "*Ziran*" in most situations indicates that something exists or happens without any known cause or agent.[5] It is different from the English word "self," which usually indicates subjectivity or agency; thus, the translation of "self-so" may mislead some into an individualist interpretation of *ziran*. Even though its literal meaning is clear, its implication and connotations are complicated and obscure, and we discovered many divergent and strange interpretations. Some of them will be discussed and clarified later. Because there is no simple word that accurately and fully captures *ziran*, we will temporarily use *naturalness* as a token for narrative convenience.

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preventing confusion with the natural world, the state of primitive societies, the "state of nature" as in Hobbesian theory, or the like.

[4]I learned the term "core value" from Wei-ming Tu who was teaching Confucianism at Harvard University when I was a visiting scholar there in the late 1980s.

[5]Actually, all terms in which *zi*自 used as an adverb cannot be understand as "self" per se, such as self-transformation (*zihua* 自化), self-correct (*zizheng* 自正), self-prosperous (*zifu* 自富), (*zipu* 自樸), self-equilibrium (*zijun* 自均), self-obedience (*zibin* 自賓), and self-stabilization (*zi-ding* 自定). In these compound terms *zi* should not be understood as if a person or entity is a conscious agent of action.

There are many levels of difficulty to getting at an understanding Laozi's *ziran*. First, based on our investigation of extant texts and documents, Laozi must be credited with invention the term, but he did not provide a definition or explanation of its meanings. Second, scholars and commentators right through history have repeatedly reinterpreted Laozi's *ziran* according to their own logic and viewpoint, a practice that prevents later readers from gaining an accurate understanding of Laozi's meaning. This is especially the case since modern scholars seem inclined to follow later interpretations, especially that in WANG Bi's commentary. We will deal with these two difficulties by textual analysis later. But generally, we should consciously try not to read later interpretations into the original text. We are, in a sense, engaging in conceptual archeology.

The third level of difficulty derives from the translation. The Chinese word *ziran* and the English word "nature" are often translated one for the other. Accordingly, modern scholars are inclined, consciously or unconsciously, to understand Laozi's *ziran* through the meanings of the English "nature." This is a serious problem that deserves to be reexamined and clarified.

2.1 Is Ziran Equal to Nature?

Raymond Williams has noted that for English "nature is perhaps the most complex word in the language" (Williams 1985: 219); "it is necessary to be especially aware of its difficulty" (ibid.: 224). The complexity of the English word "nature" dramatically aggravates the difficulty and divergences that crop up when it is employed to stand in for the Chinese *ziran*. Therefore, to clarify the meanings of *ziran*, we first have to be clear about the meanings of "nature." From this judgment we can better decide if that is the best way to translate and interpret Laozi's *ziran*.

Williams has distinguished three areas of meaning. Nature is:

(i) the *essential quality* and character *of* something;
(ii) the *inherent force* which directs either the world or human beings or both;
(iii) the *material world* itself, taken as including or not including human beings. (Williams 1985: 219)[6]

He further asserts, "It is usually not difficult to distinguish (i) from (ii) and (iii); indeed it is often habitual and in effect not noticed in reading" (ibid.: 219). For example, the common phrase "human nature" could be used in all the three areas: (i) human nature as essential quality and character of human beings; (ii) human nature as directing inherent force of human beings; and human nature as "one of the variants of sense (iii), a fixed property of the material world, in this case 'natural man'" (ibid.: 220). Another common phrase, "state of nature," whose

[6]According to Williams, in English, sense (i) is from century 13, sense (ii) from century 14, sense (iii) from century 17 (Williams 1985: 219). The italics in the quotation are mine.

meaning is varied and "could be contrasted—sometimes pessimistically but more often optimistically and even programmatically—with an existing state of society" (ibid.: 223). Intriguingly, all these meanings of nature, human nature, and state of nature can be found, explicitly or implicitly, in modern interpretations of Laozi's *ziran*.

Obviously, there is little chance that an understanding *ziran* derived mainly from the varied meanings of "nature" can be more accurate than a close reading and analysis of the text itself. What is worse, such improper interpretive practices are not confined to the world where English is the first language. It was also prevalent in Chinese intellectual circles around 1905 when Chinese accepted Japanese scholars' transformation of *ziran* into a noun in parallel with "Nature" (the material world), even though the word *ziran* had originally been imported from China to Japan (Lin 2009).[7] This translation represented a radical change, since *ziran* had been, for two millennia in China, a basically adjectival marker that described a character or feature of a state of things or movement, even it sometime grammatically functioned as a noun. *Ziran* had been used to translate only "natural" or "naturally" before twentieth century (ibid.). In classical Chinese *ziran* had never been used as a noun that denotes or connotes the material world. In pre-modern China, words like *tian* 天, *tiandi* 天地, or *wanwu* 萬物 denoted the material world In a way equivalent to the sense (iii) of nature. Similarly, *ziran* was never used to indicate senses (i) and (ii) of nature. For sense (i), Chinese had used the indigenous word *xing* 性 to denote the essential quality and characteristic of a thing or phenomenon since ancient times.

However, ever since *ziran* was use to translate "nature," the variants and complex mean of "nature" have been mapped onto the Chinese word. Gradually, some Chinese scholars came to accept the varied senses of "nature" as native meanings for *ziran*. Consequently, they take it for granted that Laozi's *ziran* can be fairly understood by reference to the complex meanings of "nature." Hence we find that clearly modern meanings of the word "nature" have been carelessly read into Laozi's *ziran*—not simply the physical world, the nature of myriad things, the biological nature of human beings, the state of uncivilized societies, doing nothing so that nature may take its course—but even the Hobbesian "state of nature." A key purpose of this chapter is to do the linguistic archeology work necessary to discover the historical truth of Laozi's terms and concepts buried beneath modern and Western languages and theories. Needless to say, our approach to this goal must be faithful analysis that is grounded in the text's own historical and linguistic background, which is different from interpretations of modern-concerned orientation (Liu 2008–2009, 2009a).

[7] According to LIN Shujuan 林淑娟, it is not until 1905, after a century's hesitation, that *ziran* was finally used to translate the material sense of nature under the influence of the Japanese. See Lin 2009, which provides most useful information of the history of the translation between *ziran* and nature.

2.2 Ziran: *The Model of Dao*

To understand Laozi's *ziran*, we might first go to the last passage of Chapter 25, which says:

> Man takes his models from Earth (*ren fa di* 人法地),
> Earth takes its models from Heaven (*di fa tian* 地法天),
> Heaven takes its models from the Dao (*tian fa dao* 天法道),
> and the Dao takes its models from *Ziran*. (*dao fa ziran* 道法自然). (Lynn 1999)[8]

Obviously, the four sentences follow the "subject–predicate–object" structure, so that "man," "earth," "heaven," "Dao," separated into four sentences, act as subject, "takes (models) . . . " is the common verb, and "earth," "heaven," "Dao," and *ziran* are the four objects of the verb *fa* (法), though *ziran* is not an entity, unlike earth, heaven, and Dao. This is the conventional straightforward reading, and it accords with syntactic analyses, admits no redundancy, and unfolds step by step from human to Dao without distorting the grammatical parallelisms and coherence. Therefore we believe this conventional understanding is correct and better than other strange readings.[9] The meaning of the passage here is that human beings should attend to the world to recognize the principles of Heaven; Heaven in turn operates in accordance with the principles of Dao, and Dao operates according to the principles of *ziran*. Grammatically *ziran* is a noun, though its meaning here is "natural" or "a situation developing naturally." Therefore, Richard Lynn's translation of *ziran* as "the Natural" is better than other translations and acceptable.

However, some have translated *ziran* as Nature (Chan 1963) or claimed that *ziran* indicates the natural world and phenomena. One astonishing interpretation reads: "[*Ziran*] is various phenomena of the natural world: sun, moon, and stars; wind, rain, thunderstorms, and lightning; lunar and solar eclipses, mountain and earth cataclysms; and the births and deaths of all living things" (Yin 1998: 342). Above we mentioned that the use of *ziran* to denote the natural world started in the twentieth century, so this interpretation is obviously lacking historical and linguistic grounds. Besides, the text repeats the verb *fa* 法 (model after) four times to emphasize that human beings should ultimately model themselves after the principle of *ziran*. If *ziran* denotes the natural world and phenomena, then why and how people should model themselves after natural changes or even cataclysmic events? It doesn't make sense. Although scholars may not agree with this ridiculous interpretation, they are still inclined, if unconsciously, to be influenced by the conceptualization of *ziran* as

[8]Lynn translates *ziran* as "the Natural." With some exceptions, translations of the *Laozi* in this chapter are mostly adopted with modification from Chan 1973; Henricks 1991, 2000, Ivanhoe 2000, Lynn 1999, and Lau 2001 with notes of chapter numbers, but no specific citation. The Chinese version is mainly based on Liu X. 2006b. In this chapter, the translations from the *Laozi* are used mainly for convenience of argumentation and narrative, and chosen for their accuracy in matching the Chinese meaning, structure, and grammar; thus readability is not the first concern.

[9]For information about the other two alternative readings, see Liu X. 2006b: 288–89 and Wang 2003: 229.

natural world as they try to understand and interpret Laozi's thought. If people want to comprehend Laozi's *ziran* faithfully, they must get past the modern association of *ziran* with the natural world. Thus, we occasionally use *naturalness* as a stand-in for *ziran* because this approach steps back from the idea of *ziran* as a kind of entity and instead forefronts its adjectival quality, if in nominative form. Still, this is not an accurate translation and could be misunderstood. For example, some might think the sentence "Dao takes its model from *ziran*" means Dao exerts no function and just lets everything follow its own nature or naturalness.

This understanding is problematic and requires further discussion. The critical question for understanding Laozi's *ziran* is the scope of its concern. Does it concern single beings or the general situation of human beings, as well as the universe? Let's analyze the text seriously. Laozi arranges the "four greats" in an ascending row, from man, earth, Heaven, through Dao, the source and ground of the universe. This clearly points to expanding human insight beyond people's own existence to the whole of the universe, with special concern given to the ultimate condition of mankind. This evokes nothing about any specific being or single entity in the empirical world. So we should not understand Laozi's *ziran* as pertaining to any single entity, although WANG Bi (226–249 CE) did suggest this individualist interpretation in his famous and popular commentary on the *Laozi*. Wang's commentary reads: "Dao avoids acting contrary to *Ziran* and so realizes its own nature (*xing* 性). To take models from *Ziran* means that when it exists in a square, it takes squareness as its model, and when it exists in a circle, it takes circularity as its model: it does nothing that is contrary to *Ziran*" (Lynn 1999: 96). According to Wang, Laozi's *ziran* concerns even individual beings, relating to each one's own nature (*xing* 性). Thus, Wang's *ziran* falls into each individual being's character (squareness or roundness) and carries no sense of transcendence. Actually, Laozi wants human beings to go beyond their limitations by taking models from earth, heaven, and the ultimate, Dao, while Wang makes Dao, Heaven, and earth common singularities in the physical world. Wang was the first author who began to see Laozi's *ziran* from the perspective of personal nature, in part reflecting the interests of his historical period, though he does not say that *ziran* is one's nature. Personal nature was a central concern of the Neo-Daoism and Profound Learning (*xuanxue* 玄學) movements of the third century. Wang thus failed to understand Laozi's philosophy in a faithful and accurate way, but he succeeded in creating a new and influential philosophy.

Based on Chapter 25, as well as other chapters, we could recognize that Laozi's *ziran* is about neither the natural world nor about human nature and individual inclination. Dao is the ultimate source and ground of Heaven, earth, and people; thus, Laozi's claim that *ziran* is the object after which Dao models itself promotes *ziran* to the very highest status, as both a positive value and a central principle for human beings. Thus, Laozi's *ziran* suggests an idealist state of human societies and of the universe, without conflicts, oppression, or chaos. In short, Dao not only has universal force and function, it also promotes and embodies the highest values for

human societies. As the model for Dao itself, *ziran* here is advanced as the central value at the highest, most holistic stratum.[10]

2.3 Ziran: *Between Sages and People*

In Chapter 25, Laozi contends that humans should take models from earth, heaven, Dao, and finally *ziran*. However, it is not the common people but sages who should first practice and embody the principle of *ziran*, the core value and highest principle of Laozi's philosophy. Still, sages' existence and function have direct relation to the common people. Chapter 17 presents these features of the sage. Fortunately, we have not only the received version of this text, but also the two most recently unearthed versions, namely, the bamboo and the silk manuscripts recovered from tombs in the 1970s and 1990s, respectively. Logically, these recovered versions should be nearer the oldest or original version. After analysis, the antique versions indeed proved superior in terms of their content and thought. The bamboo version reads:

The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to subjects,

Next comes the ruler they love and praise;
Next comes one they fear;
Next comes one whom they insult ... ...

(1) Hesitant, [I (voice of the sage)] do not utter words lightly
(*Youhu qi guiyan ye* 猶乎其貴言也),
(2) when [I] have accomplished my task and done my work
(*chengshi suigong* 成事遂功),
(3) Then the common people all say that I [(the sage) have realized] the principle of *ziran*.
(*er baixing yue wo ziran ye* 而百姓曰我自然也).

Here the best ruler does not force people to do anything and makes no display of his own kindness or capability—the people only know of his existence and have no need to pay attention to him, let alone express gratitude and eulogy. This is the "empty throne" ruler, the Daoist ideal. The next best ruler acts in ways that excite the admiration and affection of the people; this is the sagely ruler according to conventional or Confucian ideal. The next best ruler instills fear in his subjects; this is what is commonly referred to as a benighted ruler. Even worse is the ruler who inflicts hardships upon his subjects and earns himself nothing but insults and abuse. This is what is referred to as a tyrannical ruler. The sage, the Daoist ideal model of leadership, is unhurried and at ease, a person of few words. He has accomplished tasks to his satisfaction, and yet the people do not realize that he has done a thing, but admire him for his practicing the principle of *ziran* or naturalness.[11]

[10] In chapter 51 *ziran* is also invoked at this level, described as the key feature of Dao.

[11] This kind of admiration is obviously different from regular eulogy mentioned for the second best rulers.

Obviously, *ziran* has nothing to do with natural world and primitive societies, it is derives from and used for a civilized society. Again, here *ziran* focuses on general state of the society or groups of people, instead of issues concerning single beings.

There is a problem of interpretation with regard to this chapter. Most scholars have been of the opinion that *ziran* here does not indicate that the ruler did nothing, but rather that his actions were accomplished imperceptibly without the people being aware of them, or that his actions were accepted as something that had developed of its own accord. This raises an important issue: whether or not the value of *ziran* can allow for the effect of external force, for example, from a sage. According to traditional commentaries, the application of external force counts as natural as long as people are not directly aware of it. If one accepts this interpretation, then *ziran* would not preclude the exertion of external force or acquiescence to the influence of such force, it just precludes the use of external force in a *coercive* manner. Thus, to practice the principle *ziran* suggests a principle that the leadership should be efficacious yet attract no attention or notice.

Another problem in interpreting this passage is discerning just who is speaking. My reading, which is further supported by the bamboo and silk versions, is different from popular commentaries. There is no subject in lines (1) and (2), but I assume the subject is "I", the author and the representative speaker for the sage. This pattern is also seen in Chapter 43: "Thus *I* know the advantages of *wuwei* (non-action). *The teaching that is without words*, the advantages of *wuwei*, few in the world attain these." Here "I" practice teaching without words, similar to line (1): "[I] do not utter words lightly." Chapter 2 also reads: "[The] *sage* abides in the business of non-action and *practices the teaching that is without words*." Thus we can assume that "I" is used for the voice of the sage. This is common and more examples could be found in chapters 20, 57, 67, and 70. My reading of line (3) "Then the common people all say I have realized the principle of *ziran*" is similar to "The whole world says that I am great" (silk version, Ch. 67).[12] In this sentence, the subject "I" cannot be changed by 'people in the world' (Liu X. 2006b: 207–10). According to this reading, *ziran* is a concept to promote sagely principles in the treatment of people and the world. Chapter 17 discusses the relationship of the sage and the community, covering the significance of *ziran* or naturalness at the middle level, namely, the community stratum. Chapter 23 mentions that "To be sparing with words is in accordance with *ziran,*" which also belongs to this stratum. *Ziran* in chapters 17 and 23 concerns the sagely principle of leadership and advances more sophisticated social management; therefore, *ziran* has nothing to do with primitive societies or the dark side of culture as some scholars have criticized.

Now we move on to the foundational and individual stratum of the principle of *ziran* or naturalness. Chapter 64 develops the concept of *ziran* from the perspective of the relationship between the sage and the myriad things. The received version is:

Therefore the sage desires not to desire,
And does not value goods that are hard to come by;

[12]The sentence in the received version is "The whole world says that *my Dao* is great."

He studies what is not studied,
And makes good the mistakes of the multitude.
He just *assists* the myriad things' *ziran* and *dares not to act*.
(*Yi fu wanwu zhi ziran er bu gan wei* 以輔萬物之自然, 而不敢為)

The key point is lies in the last sentence: the sage *assists* the myriad creatures to realize their natural prosperousness, but *dares not to act* generally in the manner of the common people. However, the relation between "assist" and "not to act" is unclear, for we may understand that assisting is also a kind of acting, so there appears to be a kind of contradiction here. Another translation reads: "Thus he supports all things in their natural state but does not take any action" (Chan 1963). Here *does not take any action* may trump the sages' act of *assistance* or *support*. At very least the relation between the two phrases is confusing. Fortunately, this relation is presented clearly and forcefully in the bamboo versions A and C.[13] Bamboo A might be earlier, based on the handwriting style, but here the sentence is more complete, and its meaning is more readily comprehensible:

And so the sage is *able* to assist the myriad things's *ziran*,
but is *unable* to act [in the common manner]
(*Shigu shengren neng fu wanwu zhi ziran er funeng wei*
是故聖人能輔萬物之自然, 而弗能為).[14]

This earliest version forefronts the contrast between "able" and "unable," which in turn illuminates the relation between assisting and acting. We can finally make out that Laozi does not mean "assisting the myriad things' *ziran*" to be the usual sort of "action" we might expect of mundane people. Instead it demonstrates that Laozi does not value the common actions and behavior that comes from regular knowledge and practice, but promotes a special kind of action and behavior that proceeds according to the principle of *ziran*. In other words, the sage is able to assist natural prosperity of the myriad creatures and things, but unable to take action in regular ways.

Here, three critical words deserve our attention. First, *fu* 輔, which can be translated as to assist, help, or support, etc. It is better understood on a spectrum between

[13]For these differences and analyses of the various versions, see Liu X. 2006b: 621–22.

[14]The words *bu gan wei* 不敢為 in received versions are replaced by *fu neng wei* 弗能為 or *fu gan wei* 弗敢為 in the bamboo and silk versions, respectively. Although both *bu* 不 and *fu* 弗 are negative adverbs, *fu* 弗usually suggests an omitted objective *zhi* 之 after the verb negated by *fu* 弗. Therefore, *fu neng wei* 弗能為 might read as *fu neng wei zhi* 弗能為之. Lau asserts that 之 indicates *fu wanwu zhi ziran* 輔萬物之自然, and renders the sentence "The sage is able to help the myriad creatures to be natural but he dare not do it" (Lau 2001:164). It is also translated as "[The sage] is able to help the 10,000 things to be what they are in themselves, and yet he cannot do it" (Henricks 2000: 42). These are misreadings, and puzzling in any case. First, Lau dogmatically applies a grammatical rule in this reading and neglects the fact that there are always exceptions to any grammatical regulation. Second, Lau neglects that in this case, after *fu* come the two combined verbs *neng wei*, so this not a regular case with only one verb. Third, Lau seems to believe that *Laozi*'s sage would do nothing, even "to assist the 10,000 things." The next chapter will argue that *wuwei* does not mean doing nothing, but rather "doing" in a more effectual way for the harmony of the natural world and society.

two extremes. One extreme is restraint, manipulation, interruption, interference, exploitation, control, and oppression; the other is pampering, spoiling, indulgence, permissiveness, and over-protection. Thus, *fu* or assistance is the careful and prudent art of sagely leadership; its purpose and objective are completely aimed at benefiting the myriad things, no aspect of which shows off the sage's own importance and intelligence or accrues personal benefits. We will come back to this point when we discuss Laozi's concept of *xuande* 玄德 (profound and mysterious virtue).

Another concept is *wanwu* 萬物, the myriad things. This term seems archaic and has been commonly replaced by Nature or the natural world, but it is rather meaningful for modern societies. *Wanwu* is not an abstract single like "mankind," nor a collective like "students." It features (1) the inclusion of all human beings without exclusion and discrimination, (2) the equality of human beings and all other creatures and things, and (3) a simultaneous indication of both the whole and the sole. That whole is composed of all individual beings and the sole is always part of the whole; thus it is different from the concepts of individualism and collectivism. This concept may inspire new ideas about the whole and the sole among human beings and in the relation between humans and other beings.

The most important concept here, of course, is *ziran*. But the old question comes back again: does *ziran* in this passage concern only the individual nature (*xing* 性). Because the myriad things the sage helps can be taken both as a collective and as individual entities, so the sage's assistance must fall to each individual thing within the collective or else this assertion is a boast and a falsehood. When Laozi makes *ziran* the highest value and principle, it must implicate respect, concern, and loving care for all living things in a peaceful natural order. Not only does the sage's role include nurture and concern with overall development, it means allowing each blade of grass, tree, and person to enjoy conditions that support their natural development. In modern world, it may include each family, household, village, town, and territory to enjoy the environment and space each needs to develop normally. This is the foundation and condition of the overall natural order and a socially harmonious situation alike. Thus, the *ziran* that the sages assist cannot be understood merely as individual nature (*xing* 性), and the passage is better interpreted as sages providing the conditions for the natural prosperity of the myriad things.

2.4 Summary of Ziran

To sum up, here are the key points:

1. Laozi's *ziran* is the highest principle and core value of his philosophy; it is advanced and embodied by Dao, the source and ground of the universe. Laozi's other key concepts, such as Dao of Heaven, *xuande* (profound and mysterious virtue), *wuwei*, femininity, and softness, are all associated with it and purport to help realize it.

2. *Ziran* provides the functional model for Dao, Heaven, earth, and mankind; therefore the scope of its concern is the general and ultimate condition, state, and order of the universe and societies. It is not merely about individual beings, though individuals are included as members of the myriad things.
3. Based on etymological archeology, Laozi's *ziran* has nothing to do with the natural world, human nature, primitive societies, and various notions about the state of nature.
4. Thus, we can say that *ziran* suggests the idealistic natural order of civilized societies and the world. So for narrative convenience we might use *civilized naturalness* or *a natural civilized state* as English stand-ins for *ziran*.
5. *Ziran* as coined by Laozi originally had an ambiguous meaning, rather different from the usage of later Daoists, such as Zhuangzi, Huainanzi, WANG Bi, and GUO Xiang, never mind modern Chinese renditions of *ziran* or the English word "nature." Thus, to understand Laozi's *ziran*, we must work to avoid reading later and even modern interpretations of *ziran* into Laozi's text.

3 *Wuwei*: The Principled Method

Wuwei (無為) and *ziran* are often breezed over and taken to be similar terms in Daoism, but this is not a conclusion based on a serious reading of the *Laozi* text. By careful textual analysis, we can establish that *ziran* is the core value of Laozi's philosophy, while *wuwei* (無為) is a general method by which to realize the value. *Wuwei* is often translated as "non-action," which is not perfectly precise, but we may take it as a convenient token for the sake of discussion, so long as we keep in mind that its true meaning goes well beyond the literal. *Wuwei* has also been rendered as "acting naturally" and "non-purposive action," as well as "effortless action" (Slingerland 2003), each of which reflects certain elements of the term's range of connotations. Additional interpretations include "never over-doing," "no conscious effort," "no set purpose," "non-dual action," and "utilitarian principle that serves the social purpose of winning the world" (Zhu 2002: 53). Unfortunately, no terms or concepts in modern languages coincide with the meanings of *wuwei* in the *Laozi*.

The form of the term *wuwei* is negative. What is the object the term negates? Three items have been proposed: (1) any act, (2) intentions or desires, and (3) forceful action. Based on this classification, J. Liu has developed a comprehensive theory of *wuwei*: "Laozi's notion of *wuwei* incorporates all three functions: (1) when things are running well, do nothing to interfere; (2) when the sage has to do something, let him do it with no personal, selfish desire; (3) in all his acts, the sage should conform to *Dao*, the natural pattern of things, and refrain from introducing human intervention." (Liu J. 2006a: 143–45) This is both a reasonable and a comprehensive explanation, and it helps us to further investigate the meanings of the term and related theories.

Actually, Laozi's philosophy is not a treatise or system of concepts, but a collection of terms, ideas, proverbs, loose passages, poetic sayings, and the like, with a general view of the universe, the world, societies, and the myriad things, as well as their conditions and circumstances. It is neither a systematic monograph, nor a disordered mixture of maxims and truisms. So we should not analyze its concepts or terms with the expectation of modern philosophical order and regularity. We have to ferret out the specific characteristics of its terms and patterns of expression.

3.1 Dual Meanings of Wuwei-like Terms

When we read the text closely and seriously, we find that Laozi repeatedly claims great advantages for *wuwei*, as well as other negatively stated terms such as "no-business" (*wushi* 無事), "not struggling" (*buzheng* 不爭), "not doing" (*buwei* 不為), "not using force" (*buwu* 不武), "not daring" (*bugan* 不敢), "no-anger" (*bunu* 不怒), "no-desires" (*wuyu* 無欲, *buyu* 不欲), "no-possessions" (*buyou* 不有), "no-dependence" (*bushi* 不恃), "no-authority" (*buzai* 不宰), "no-knowledge" (*wuzhi* 無知), "no-selfishness" (*wusi* 無私), "no-body" (*wushen* 無身), and the like.[15] These are merely a handful of the dozens of *wuwei*-like terms and phrases, which in effect form a large family of similar terms. Therefore, our analyses of *wuwei* should simultaneously consider all members of this big term-family.

Before we consider Laozi's idea of *wuwei*, two points should be clarified. First, who can be an agent of *wuwei*? Second, is the sage a ruler like a king or prince? Some scholars take *wuwei* as a general principle of behavior for the common people and consider sages equivalent to rulers.[16] But these readings are not careful enough. If we pay close attention to and investigate these questions, we can arrive at the finding that in fact, in the *Laozi* the sage is never a ruler as in the real world, instead, he is a idealistic model for rulers. Furthermore, in Laozi's thought, only the sage is the agent of the principled method of *wuwei*, though the sage may certainly be seen as a model for the common people who should follow and practice the principled method.

The agent of *wuwei* is clearly the sage, who stands in distinction from regular kings or prices, or any ruler in history. Textual evidence makes this clear. On examining the twelve references to *wuwei* in ten chapters, we find that the sage is explicitly specified as its agent in five of those chapters. For example: "The *sage* says, 'I conduct *non-action* and the people transform themselves,'"(Ch. 57); "Thus the *sage* abides in the business of *non-action* and practices the teaching that is without words" (Ch. 2).[17] In four chapters, we can easily infer that the agent of

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[15]For details, see Liu X. 2006b: 606–9.

[16]D. C. Lau: "When [Laozi] mentions the way of Heaven, or Heaven and Earth, there is an implicit lesson for the sage, i.e., the ruler." Cited in Liu J. 2006a: 146.

[17]To save the space, we omitted the examples in chapters 3, 63, and 64.

non-action is also a sage; for example, Chapter 43 says: "That is why *I* know the benefit of taking *non-action*, the teaching that is without words . . . ." Obviously, here "I" must refer to same agent specified in Chapter 2, since the wording is otherwise the same; so we know that the "I" who knows the advantage of non-action is also a sage.[18] The only exception, where the agent is not a sage, occurs in Chapter 37: "*Dao* consistently conducts *non-action*, but nothing is left undone. Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it, the myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord."[19] Here, Dao is the formal and anthropomorphic agent of non-action. Because the sage is an embodiment of Dao in the human world, we can conclude that Dao-as-agent is in accordance with the sage as agent of non-action. Rulers, such as lords and princes, or kings and barons, should take Dao as their operational model. Therefore, we can comfortably assert that the sage is the essential agent of *wuwei*. This does not suggest that common people should not or cannot learn and practice *wuwei*, but that is not Laozi's interest. If we want to discuss Laozi's *wuwei* instead of the general philosophical theme of *wuwei*, we should not forget that the agent of *wuwei* is the sage, the model of Daoist leadership, instead of a ruler of a state in the world.

Why do we have to argue that the sage is the agent of *wuwei* or non-action? There are two points. First, it accentuates that the *Laozi* is not a book on the practical arts of government (*junren nanmian zhi shu* 君人南面之術); this strain of thinking was only later introduced in Han period Daoism (first century BCE?), also known as the 'Huang-Lao school' (黃老之學). Second, *wuwei* is the ideal practice the sage uses to treat and take care of people, societies, and the world. It is geared to realize a holistic social order and is not a common craft or method for people in everyday life, though the folk can learn its principles from the sage and assume this approach. Again, *wuwei* is promoted to realize *ziran*, the order of a naturally harmonious environment. It is neither an utopian plan nor a matter of practical schemes and techniques, let alone conspiracy or trickery as some scholars have criticized.

If we consider *wuwei* a concept in Laozi's philosophy, we must realize that it is rather different from philosophical concepts in the modern sense. It is not easy to analyze and establish clearly simple meanings because this ancient text was not a work of conceptual analysis. If we read seriously and comprehensively, however, we discover that *wuwei* is actually a dual-meaning term: its surface meaning is *wu* 無 *wei* 為, which seems to denote literally "not any action" as an isolated term; but its actual meaning in its rich contexts promotes an extraordinary Daoist way of action and behavior in leadership and management. This significant meaning, disguised in the surface negative construction, is essential to the unfolding of the whole text and is even more noteworthy philosophically.

[18]More examples are in chapters 10, 38, and 48.

[19]This is from the received version. The silk and bamboo versions are "Dao has consistently no name" and "Dao consistently conducts non-action," respectively. In sum, in most versions, the agent of *wuwei* is Dao.

First we should clarify the purpose of *wuwei*. Does *wuwei* really mean merely doing nothing? It certainly does not. With close reading, we can readily see that Laozi does not promote "doing nothing." *Wuwei* instead is a negation of not all action, but only actions based in "common knowledge and practice," such as control, coercion, competition, exploitation, oppression, strife, and impulsiveness, namely, all actions that run counter to the principle of Dao and civilized naturalness. We touched on this issue earlier when we discussed the statement, "The sage is *able* to assist myriad things' natural prosperity, but is *unable* to act." Obviously, though seeming to negate all actions, Laozi in fact promotes another style of action that common people may never know. Numerous sentences and phrases indicate that Laozi aims to promote the effectual act and behavior in an irregular way; for example, "to retire when *the task is accomplished"* (*gongsui shentui* 功遂身退) (Ch. 9); "it *accomplishes its task* yet lays no claim to merit" (*gongcheng er buchu* 功成而不處) (Ch. 2); "the sage embraces the One and *is a model for the world*" (*shengren boyi wei tianxia shi* 聖人抱一為天下式) (Ch. 22); and "*win the world* by engaging in no activity" (*yi wushi qu tianxia* 以無事取天下) (Ch. 57), to name just a few. The words in italics indicate actions, but they are different from regular action that *wuwei* negates. One side is the result of successful action, such as "the task is accomplished," "is a model for the world," or "win the world"; the other side is an exceptional attitude or approach: "not claim to merit," "embrace the One," and "engaging in no activity," which are things common people cannot do. These two sides constitute Laozi's idea of principled action and behavior, and they also result in "profound and mysterious virtue" (*xuande* 玄德), which we will discuss later. The numerous examples of similar sentences are too many to set out here. For brevity's sake, we can say that Laozi in no way promotes doing nothing or merely withdrawing from a world full of conflicts. His ideas, including *wuwei*, are intended for achieving incomparable results with minimum side-effects by way of exception sorts of action.

3.2 Intending the Positive by Posing the Negative

Again, by negating people's customary values and practice, Laozi aims to reach and realize higher and better goals and results, therefore. All his negative terms have double functions: they directly negate things, acts, and attitudes of the common sort while at the same time effect great results and outcomes. The negating aspect is represented by *wuwei*; and the positive aspect is perfectly represented by the phrase *wubuwei* 無不為 (nothing left undone). Thus we have Laozi's famous proverb "To do nothing yet nothing is left undone" (*wuwei er wubuwei* 無為而無不為) (Ch. 48).[20] Here *wubuwei* is obviously higher and more desirable then *wuwei* itself.

[20]This famous and important phrase appears in all versions of Chapter 48, including the bamboo versions, though in silk version it is missing. In received versions, the phrase is repeated in Chapter 37. For details, see Liu X. 2006b: 483–85.

Thus, Laozi's *wuwei* is not merely a negative term. It suggests a transcending negation or common actions for higher goals and better results. Unfortunately, this more significant side is often neglected by readers and researchers.

Wuwei suggests the cancellation of regular actions in order to realize ideal results, even an ideal state of society and the universe. For example, "The sage makes *no attempt to be great* (*buwei da* 不為大). It is for this reason that he is able to perfect greatness (*guneng cheng da* 故能成大)" (Ch. 34, silk edition, and Ch. 63). Not attempting to be great is the way to achieve true greatness; the negative side is the condition by which to accomplish the higher and better outcome. Similarly, in Chapter 48, following the statement "do nothing yet nothing is left undone," we read: "To gain the world (*qu tianxia* 取天下) one proceeds by having no-business (*wushi* 無事); as soon as one has business (*youshi* 有事), he will fall short of gaining the world." The same idea appears again in Chapter 57. And in Chapter 3, the last sentence reads: "If one goes with non-action (*wei wuwei* 為無為), nothing will be not in order (*wu bu zhi* 無不治)." Through all these concerns with mundane business, we see the pattern of a negative approach achieving positive results, which is actually in accord with the metaphysical model of Dao. Thus Chapter 73 contends: "Dao of Heaven suggests that [Dao engages in] *no fighting* but is *good at victory*, [it has] *no words* but is *good at response*, and [makes] *no call* but things *come of their own accord*" (silk version). All these passages demonstrate that the seeming negative and passive patterns of action and attitude in Laozi's philosophy in fact aim for achieving perfect accomplishment.

The most important positive function of *wuwei* lies in the realization of *ziran* or natural order in civilized societies, whereby myriad things develop and prosper spontaneously and are grateful to no one. Chapter 57 states:

1. Follow what is correct and regular in ordering your state,
2. Follow what is strange and perverse in deploying your troops,
3. Follow *no business* (*wushi* 無事) and gain the world (*qu tianxia* 取天下).
4. How do I know that things are this way?
5. Through this:
6. The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people.
7. The more sharp implements the people have, the more benighted the state.
8. The more clever and skillful the people, the more strange and perverse things arise.
9. The clearer the laws and edicts, the more numerous thieves and robbers.
10. And so sages say:
11. I *do nothing* (*wuwei* 無為) and the people *transform themselves* (*zihua* 自化),
12. I prefer *stillness* (*haojing* 好靜) and the people *correct and regulate themselves* (*zizheng* 自正),
13. I engage in *no business* (*wushi* 無事) and the people *prosper by themselves* (*zifu* 自富),

14. I have *no desires* (*wuyu* 無欲) and the people *become simple themselves* (*zipu* 自樸).[21]

This chapter provides a good illustration of the multiple aspects of Laozi's *wuwei*. The sage practices the principled method *wuwei*, while people enjoy their natural development in a harmonious environment. Lines 1–3 emphasize that the negative action *wushi* 無事 (no business) can achieve the positive result of "gaining the world"; lines 6–9 demonstrate the harmful results of regular values and actions, namely, a poor, benighted and perverse society with more thieves. All items considered valuable by the common people and rulers, such as things clever, clear, sharp, skillful, prohibitions, actually oppose *wuwei* and give rise to actions that destroy the natural order of society. Then the author comes to the conclusion, lines 11–14, to reveal the great consequence of the principled method of *wuwei*, which also involves stillness (*haojing* 好靜), no business (*wushi* 無事), and no desires (*wuyu* 無欲). The results are indicated by four pairs of parallel words that indicate the natural transformation of the people spontaneously, i.e., *zihua* 自化, *zizheng* 自正, *zifu* 自富, and *zipu* 自樸. Other similar terms found in the *Laozi* are self-equilibrium (*zijun* 自均), self-obedience (*zibin* 自賓), and self-stabilization (*ziding* 自定). All these constitute a *ziran*-like term family. All of these desirable effects, seemingly achieved by people themselves or naturally, are the very result the Daoist sage expects and enjoys. This has a kind of resonance with Chapter 17, which claims that "the leader is best when people barely know he exists" (Bynner 1972), and a perfect illustration of the claim in Chapter 64 that "the sage is *able* to assist myriad things' *natural prosperity*, but is *unable* to act." That the sage practices the principle of non-action, no-business, and no-desire, while people of themselves become correct, prosperous, and simple is a quintessential example of Laozi's proverb "To do nothing yet nothing is left undone."

In sum, a simplifying self-transformation of people is the purpose of *ziran*, as is natural prosperity among them and the myriad things, without any need for control or command, and even less any need to feel gratitude to the sage. The sage is the agent of *wuwei*, and people are its beneficiaries. This result, a natural order in the world, is the very purpose of the sage who pursues *ziran* by means of the method *wuwei.* In these natural, harmonious circumstances, the sage realizes his highest ideal and thus is also one of the beneficiaries.

In addition to claiming great achievements via *wuwei*, Laozi also emphasizes *wuwei*'s passive advantage, by which failure is avoided. A passage in Chapter 64 contends:

Those who act on it ruin it;
Those who hold on to it lose it.
Therefore the sage does not act,
And as result, he doesn't ruin things,
He does not hold on to things,
And as a result, he doesn't lose things. (Henricks 1991)

[21]This translation is based on and modified from Ivanhoe 2002. The modification mainly demonstrates the Chinese parallelism and the author's argument, not for readability.

This is the clearest statement of the benefits of *wuwei*, though stated from a passive or negative perspective. Similarly, chapters 22 and 66 argue: “Because they (sages) do not contend, no one in the world can compete with them” (Ivanhoe 2002: 22, 69). And Chapter 8 echoes: “Only by avoiding contention can one avoid fault” (ibid.: 8). Thus, *wuwei* aims not only at an idealistic goal, but proceeds from realistic and prudent consideration.

All the discussion above concerns mainly external action and behavior. This external *wuwei* is just a natural extension of the sage’s internal *wuwei,* which can be represented by the term “no-desire” (*wuyu* 無欲) (chs. 1, 3, 34, 37, 57). As with *wuwei*, no-desire does not mean the negation of all desires, but only the ordinary desires of common rulers and people. In the *Laozi*, no-desire appears five times, in chapters 1, 3, 34, 37, and 57. The sage is a figure of no-desires, and his most characteristic feature is his profound and mysterious virtue (*xuande* 玄德). Chapter 51 introduces this feature:

> Dao is esteemed and virtue is honored without anyone’s order.
> They always come naturally (*ziran*).
> Therefore Dao produces them (myriad things) and virtue fosters them . . . .
> (Dao) produces them but does not take possession of them (*buyou* 不有)
> It acts, but not rely on its merit (*bushi* 不恃),
> It leads them but does not rule them (*buzai* 不宰),
> This is called profound and mysterious virtue (*xuande* 玄德). (Chan 1963)

Here the profound and mysterious virtue belongs to Dao, and it features no-possession, not relying on merit, and not ruling. A similar statement appears in Chapter 2, but the same virtue is attributed to the sage. This proves that the author believed that profound and mysterious virtue is shared by both Dao and the sage. Thus this virtue is at once a feature of Dao, and a prescription for human beings. The sage is an exemplar of this virtue, an intermediary between Dao and mankind, and a model for the people. In addition to no-possession, not relying on merit, and not ruling, Laozi also advances no-body (*wushen* 無身) (ch. 13), no-selfishness (*wusi* 無私) (ch. 7), and no-mind (*wuxin* 無心) (ch. 49), other examples of *wuwei*-like terms. These internal forms of *wuwei* are the foundation of and conditions for externalized *wuwei*.

3.3 *Summary of* Wuwei

Finally, let us summarize our points about *wuwei* in the *Laozi* text.

1. *Wuwei* is the most prominent in a family of negative terms that have dual meanings, that is, literal and intentional meanings. The literal meaning negates common forms of action and behavior, while the intentional meaning points to exceptional results.
2. *Wuwei* suggests measures instead of a purpose. Generally speaking, *wuwei*-like terms aim at higher and greater accomplishments; specifically, *wuwei*’s ultimate achievement is *ziran* or civilized naturalness.

3. The sage is the agent of *wuwei*, whose goal is achieving *ziran* or natural civilized order in society and the universe; this extraordinary end cannot attain by regular ways. Therefore the *wuwei* approach is an inevitable part of Laozi's philosophy.
4. The precondition to practicing *wuwei* is its agent's internal *wuwei*, namely the exclusion of personal desires for such as merit, fame, victory, etc.; otherwise, no one can practice the principle of *wuwei*, or the external *wuwei*.
5. The minimum significance of *wuwei* is as a means to avoid failure or avert harm. This is the negative side of its benefits.
6. Thus, we may propose that Laozi's principle of *wuwei* refers to an *imperceptible form of action that still effects extraordinary results.*[22]

4 Dao: Source and Ground of the Universe

In studies of the *Laozi*, there is agreement that Dao is the key critical term or concept.[23] Dao is commonly described as invisible, inaudible, subtle, formless, infinite, vague, mysterious, oneness, and so on. We are bound to fail, however, to find agreement in academic discussions that try to define and interpret Dao in simple terms and concepts. There is no single word or term, even in modern Chinese, let alone English, that can adequately gloss Dao.

4.1 Inspiration from Divergent Interpretations

HU Shih 胡適 (1891–1962) might have been the first to try to interpret Dao in modern Western terms. Hu thought that Dao of heaven (*tiandao* 天道) is tantamount to the Law of Nature, and Dao is the origin of the world (Hu 1926: 56, 64). This kind of thinking is the root of *cosmological* interpretations of Dao.[24] Hu was followed by FUNG Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), who pointed out that before Laozi, the meaning of the Dao "was always restricted to human affairs, whereas when we come to the *Laozi*, we find the word *Dao* being given a metaphysical meaning. That is to say, the assumption is made that for the universe to have come into being, there must exist an all-embracing first principle, which is called *Dao*" (Fung 1952: 177). Here Fung

[22]Laozi's *wuwei,* "doing nothing yet left nothing is undone," is based on his distinguished philosophical theory, which might be called "transformational oppositions or oppositional transformations" (this term was suggested by Douglas L. Berger in a personal communication). Due to limited space, we cannot deal with it here. For details, see Liu 2005: 184–98.

[23]We find 71 references to Dao in the silk versions and 76 in the WANG Bi version (Liu 2003: 369).

[24]The italics here and following are my highlighting and are meant to emphasize and compare key points among the various interpretations of Dao.

proposed that Dao is an ontological rather than cosmological concept, claiming that Dao "is Non-being, and is that by which all things come to be. Therefore, before the being of Being, there must be Non-being, from which Being comes into being. What is said here belongs to *ontology*, not to cosmology. It has nothing to do with time and actuality. For in time and actuality, there is no Being; there are only beings" (Fung 1948: 96). Hu and Fung should be remembered for setting out the direction of modern interpretations of Dao in Western terminology. Following on their work, countless interpretations and controversies about Dao have mushroomed in China, most of them employing translated Western philosophical terms, such as cosmology, ontology, matter, ideas, principle, reality, substance, metaphysics, laws of nature, materialism, idealism, and so on. None of these terms can encompass the complicated meanings of Dao, thus divergent understandings and interpretations will never end, which may stimulate our further speculation and examination of the true meanings of Dao. Again, our effort must lie with either to approximating the meaning of the Laozi's Dao or creating a more philosophically satisfactory theory of Dao. We can see the mixture of these two orientations in the following interpretations, but this chapter's emphasis remains reaching an understanding based on the faithful reading of Laozi's text.

Interpretation of the *Laozi* developed considerable sophistication when the preeminent scholars CHEN Chung-hwan (陳忠寰 [陳康]), TANG Chun-I (唐君毅), YEN Lingfeng (嚴靈峰), and CHEN Guying (陳鼓應) laid out a spectrum of possible meanings for Dao that ranged from metaphysics to matters of human life. Of these, CHEN Chung-hwan's interpretation raised much discussion and serves as a good foundation for our discussion here. Chen identifies three static and three dynamic senses of Laozi's Dao. We will list the six senses of his interpretations here; the first three are static senses of Dao (lines 1–3), and the last three are the dynamic senses (lines 4–6).

1. The ultimate source from which the myriad things come,
2. The storehouse of the myriad things,
3. The ultimate model of things, non-human, and human beings.
4. The agent or the efficient cause of phenomena,
5. The principle under which the myriad things are produced and sustained,
6. Something active and its activity is reversion. (Chen 1964: 150–53)

Dao is, Chen claims, a unique and universal *binding principle* (ibid.). This generalization and the six senses are based on faithful textual analysis and evidence. Chen is a specialist in Western philosophy, especially Greek philosophy, but he does not use ready and popular Western terms to define or describe Dao. He has discerned the differences, subtle and obvious, between Laozi's Dao and Western terminology.

If we want to more simply state what Dao is, we may take the Chen's sense (1) as the *ultimate source of the universe*, focusing on its generating or producing function; and senses (2) through (4) as the *ground of the universe* or myriad things, including its functions as storehouse, model, and cause of phenomena. These demonstrate that Dao's functions penetrate the whole world, including all manner of things. The fifth sense involves two aspects: principles of production and sustainment,

of which, the former might be attributed to the "source" function, and the latter to the "ground" function. Sense (6) can be understood as the features of Dao's operation and movement not included as function. So the answer the question of what Dao is may be boiled down to this general statement: Dao is *the source and ground of the universe*. Certainly, this is not a definition and omits many features of Dao, but it is simple and catches the essential functions of Laozi's Dao.

In addition, Chen raises an important question that deserves our discussion here. When we read "the Dao once declined" in the Chapter 18, we may wonder, how can the "constant Dao" decline? How can the Dao in decline still be universally binding? Chen answers, "There is no self-contradiction here, for the Dao is so in relation to two different spheres, that of human actions and that of non-human actions." Thus the Dao, the universally binding principle in the sphere of non-human actions, is that to which everything conforms and from which nothing is able to deviate, but the Dao as the principle of human actions is different. Here it has a normative character, it is something to which human actions ought to conform. Dao is, Chen concludes, both axiomatic principle (*sollensprinzip*) and ontic principle (*seinsprinzip*) (Chen 1964: 154, 157). Chen believes "there is no self-contradiction" when he claims that Dao is both normative and ontic because Dao's function covers both spheres of "ought to be" and "is." This seems to be a functionally dual interpretation, which has caused significant discussion.

Unlike the above-mentioned scholars whose interpretations focus specifically on the *Laozi*, one representative philosopher of the contemporary New Confucian movement, Mou Tsungsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995), presents a new theory. He seems to solve Chen's dualist problem by claiming that Dao is not a concept of "metaphysics in the line of being" but "metaphysics in the line of vision." Hence Mou's interpretation or definition of Dao in his own philosophical system refocuses on its "practical ontology," viewing the ontological world and issues through "practical mind-vision" (*shijian tizheng* 實踐體証). Thus Dao is by no means the objective origin of the universe; on the contrary, it is a *subjective vision* (*zhuguan jingjie* 主觀境界), a kind of empty mind of practical subjectivity (Mou 1985: 160–62). This view comes not from a close reading of the *Laozi*, but rather belongs to a great construction that subsumes Daoism and Buddhism into a new Confucian metaphysical system. Mou's interpretation of Laozi's Dao is part of his own philosophical construction of a new Confucianism instead of a faithful understanding of Laozi's text in its own right.

One of Mou's students, Yuan Pao-hsin 袁保新, not satisfied with either Chen's or Mou's interpretations, presents a new theory that asserts Dao is the *metaphysical foundation of the realm of values*. Yuan believes that this avoids Mou's subjectivized definition of Dao and resolves the gap between the ontological and axiomatic spheres in Chen's interpretation (Yuan 1991). Whether or not we agree with Chen or Yuan, the issue remains: why may human actions deviate from the principle or course of Dao? Are we satisfied with Chen's answer?

In a more ambitious endeavor Charles Fu (1933–1996) presented an interpretation of Laozi's metaphysics of Dao by employing a complex method that

combines linguistic and philosophical analyses, and by comparing Laozi with Spinoza, Heidegger, and Buddhism. Fu assumes that the *Laozi* "creates a naturalist metaphysics of Dao *sub specie aeternitatis*" (Fu 1973: 368). He further argues:

> As in the case of Spinoza, Laozi's metaphysical attention is essentially focused on Nature as such or (the totality of) things-as-they-are, without positing or speculating upon what possibly exists behind or beyond Nature. Unlike Spinoza, however, Laozi's metaphysics of Dao is not merely non-dualistic, it is also non-conceptual: It is not structured in any kind of conceptual or propositional framework such as has characterized the Western philosophical tradition since Parmenides and Plato. For Dao is not an entity, substance, God, abstract notion, Hegelian *Weltgeist*, or anything hypostatized or conceptualized. Dao is, if you like, no more than a metaphysical symbol Laozi uses to denote, without any distortion, *Nature itself* in terms of the spontaneous self-so-ness (*ziran*) of the world and man (Fu 1973: 369).

Fu is absolute right that Laozi's thought is not a Western "conceptual or propositional framework." And he is inspiring in his assertion that Laozi's Dao is a metaphysical symbol. However, according to our textual reading, it is difficult to accept his claim that the Dao symbol indicates Nature itself (see the section above on *ziran* or civilized naturalness). Fu's philosophical explication of Laozi's conception of Dao explores six dimensions:

1. Dao as reality
2. Dao as origin
3. Dao as principle
4. Dao as function
5. Dao as virtue
6. Dao as technique

Numbers (2) to (6) can be subsumed as "manifestations to us" (ibid.: 367). "Reality" and "manifestation" are two perspectives on or aspects of Dao, which is a symbol reflecting Laozi's metaphysical way of understanding the totality of things-as-they-are (ibid.: 373–74). "These six dimensions are not 'categories' or 'attributes' in the Western (conceptual) sense, but are inseparable aspects of Dao reconstructed from the *Laozi* in order to show the best possible way of understanding Laozi's metaphysical thinking" (Fu 1973: 367).

Fu's deep thinking and broad associations between Laozi and Western thought have contributed many thought-provoking insights that deserve our admiration. While I appreciate and accept many of his ideas and approach, I think his interpretation is overly influenced by Spinoza, and in the end is more a modern and creative construction than a historical and textual investigation. However, since his purpose is modern reconstruction or creative interpretation, instead of close textual interpretation, this may be discounted. Little wonder that he would later publish an essay officially advocating *creative hermeneutics* (Fu 1976). Given his goals and approach, we may say he contributed a representative model of creative hermeneutical work for our examination and discussion.

There have been many brief interpretations of Dao, which we will not discuss in detail, but they can be helpful in our thinking about how to understand Laozi's Dao. For example, Dao is a mysterious "ineffable reality" (Schwartz 1985: 194),

"the source of all things," (Graham 1987: 219), and a "metaphysical monistic absolute—the Chinese equivalent of Parmeniedean being" (Hansen 1992: 13). Ivanhoe's summary presents a brief yet comprehensive understanding: "The *dao* is the source, sustenance, and ideal pattern for all things in the world. It is hidden and difficult to grasp but not metaphysically transcendent. In the apt metaphor of the text, it is the 'root' of all things" (Ivanhoe 2002: xxii). All these characterizations of Dao are useful for a more comprehensive understanding and better wording for our interpretation.

4.2 A Faithful Reading and Interpretation

After briefly reviewing these various modern understandings and interpretations of Dao, we find countless divergent theories. This raises many questions: Is Dao metaphysical in the traditional sense? Is it cosmological or ontological? Transcendent or immanent? Substance or principle? Matter or idea? Objective or normative? Mysterious or natural? Entity or symbol? Reality or vision? Humanistic or naturalist? Religious or philosophical? Among all these different and opposing positions, each side has its supporters. This fact suggests that none of our modern (mostly Western) philosophical concepts is a good match for Laozi's Dao, though each one may be apt or suitable to account for specific aspects and to certain degrees. To borrow A. C. Graham's observation, the trouble with our terms "is not that they do not fit at all but that they always fit imperfectly; they can help us towards Dao, but only if each formulation in its inadequacy is balanced by the opposite which diverges in the other direction"(Graham 1987: 219).

To try to understand Dao as precisely as possible, we have to return to the text itself repeatedly, reading closely and meticulously not only word by word and sentence by sentence, but also paying attention to a possible whole picture, that is, the relative consistency of meaning across the text. The expression "relative consistency" assumes that the *Laozi* contains, in certain degree, systematic and consistent theories. It *is* consistent and coherent, if in a weak or slack sense, rather than in accordance with the strict criteria of modern logic. Thus I disagree with the claim that "there is no topic that the *Laozi* systematically addresses" (Moeller 2006: 3), which may come from the expectation that the *Laozi* as a treatise must proceed in line with modern logic and argumentation. After the fashion of ancient Chinese exposition, the text does indeed exhibit persistent interest in certain themes.

The first theme of interest concerns the origin of the universe. Chapter 42 reads:

> Dao generated the One (*sheng yi,* 生一), the One generated the two, the two generated the three, and the three generated the myriad things.[25]

[25] In the translation, the word "generate" is suggested by JeeLoo Liu.

This is quite like a process of universal temporal evolution. The meaning of "generate" or "produce" (*sheng* 生) is simple if we read it straightforwardly, but this easy passage has produced conflicting readings and arguments. This probably started with WANG Bi's (226–249 CE) commentary. Its exegesis on this passage says:

> Although the myriad things exist in myriad forms, they all revert to the One (*qi gui yi ye* 其歸一也). Why do they all ultimately become One (*heyou zhiyi* 何由致一)? It is due to *non-being* (*wu* 無). Because One comes from *non-being*, can One be still called *non-being*? Because we already call it "One," how can there not be a word for it? Because we have this word and because we have the One, how can there not be two? Because we have the One and have these two, this consequently gives birth to three . . . (Lynn 1999: 135)

Wang's expressions *guiyi* 歸一 (revert to the One, reduce to or return to the One) and *zhiyi* (致一, become One) are apparently not about the origin of the universe, irrelevant with Laozi's *shengyi* 生一. According to Wang, Laozi's claim that Dao generated the One, two, and three does not necessarily describe a physical process of universal evolution. Wang's explanation is more like an intellectual inference and language game influenced by the Logic school (*mingjia* 名家) in the late Warring States period. Wang's exegesis is closer to ontological theory than cosmological hypothesis. Thus TANG Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964) has suggested that Laozi's philosophy is cosmological and it was WANG Bi who first formulated Chinese ontological theories, taking *wu* 無 or non-being as *ontic* (Tang 1983: 195, 214).

Tang's argument has been championed, ignored, and challenged. Much depends on how one reads the word *sheng* 生. MOU Zongsan proceeds from WANG Bi's idea and proclaims that the word *sheng* in the *Laozi* refers merely to a *gesture*, not actually production, and so he reduces the meaning of Dao to a subjective vision. Similarly, after reviewing the cosmological understanding, Fu claims:

> Philosophically speaking . . . the ontological interpretation under the form of eternity, is far more acceptable. And the passage about "Dao generates One" should be re-rendered philosophically as "Dao (metaphysically) comes before One . . . Three (metaphysically) comes before all things." Taking the ontological version of Laozi's cosmological thinking, I would maintain that Dao is the ontological ground of all things in the non-conceptual, symbolic sense; and One, Two, and Three can be regarded simply as the ontological symbols pointing to the truth that what is non-differentiated is that upon which what is differentiated is metaphysically dependent. (Fu 1973: 378)

Both Fu and Mou try to explain away the cosmological meaning of Chapter 42, but their aim is philosophical construction; again, this is different from our job here, which is to pursue primary textual reading and close contextual interpretation.

In the most straightforward reading, *sheng* 生 means to generate, produce or bring about, though not necessarily as mother gives a birth to a baby. As for the One, two, and three, these have been assigned various identities, such as ultimate reality, *yin* and *yang*, the harmony of *yin* and *yang*, etc. However, these interpretations are not necessary; in any case, they cannot be tested, though they may represent best guesses. Wing-tsit Chan has pointed out:

> It is often understood that the One is the original material force or the Great Ultimate, the two are *yin* and *yang*, the three are their blending with the original material force, and the

> ten-thousand things are things carrying *yin* and embracing *yang*. However, there is no need to be specific. The important point is the *natural evolution* from the simple to the complex without any act of creation. This theory is common to practically all Chinese philosophical schools. (Chan 1973: 161)[26]

Chan's interpretation of "natural evolution" (different from biological evolution theory) is simple, plain, close to the text itself, and so is more acceptable and better than any attempts to specify the One, two, and three. The reason is evident. Laozi does not try to identify what is One, two, and three because that identification lies beyond his attention and focus. The essential aim of this passage is to present a hypothesis about how the myriad things happen to evolve from nothing to something, from the sole to the multiple, and from the simple to the complicated. This is a kind of abstract formula that accounts for the origin and evolution of the universe. We do not need to read external terms and theories into it if our job is to understand the *Laozi* in itself rather than create our own new theory. If you suppose the world comes from fire, then the questions would be, Why? How to prove it? And what came before it? If we understand Dao, One, two, and three as symbols without any specific content, the formula becomes simple, clear, and logical, without philosophical or scientific difficulties. This understanding also makes it easier to accommodate other theories and new discoveries, even the Big Bang theory, that have been continuously developing as scientific and theoretical inquiry has proceeded.

A second consistent interest is the question of whether or not Dao is *wu* 無 (nothing, non-being). Laozi never answers this question explicitly, but Chapter 40 presents an implicit answer in its discussion of *wu* 無 and *you* 有 (being, there is). Different translations of this passage represent various understandings about Dao and *wu*. Chan's translation is conceptual: "All things in the world come from *being* (*you* 有), and being comes from *non-being* (*wu* 無)" (Chan 1963: 173). D.C. Lau has: "The myriad creatures in the world are born from *Something* (*you*), and Something from *Nothing* (*wu*)" (Lau 2001: 61). Ivanhoe tries to avoid using a technical term: "The world and all its creatures arise from *what is there* (*you*); What is there arises from *what is not there* (*wu*)." (Ivanhoe 2002: 43) The ten-thousand things (*wanwu* 萬物) come from *you*, and *you* in turn comes from *wu*, thus *you* and *wu* represent two phases in a sequence, not a pair at the same level. Obviously, *wu* is the ultimate origin. Since according to chapter 42 Dao produces ten-thousand things, it is easy to infer from chapters 40 and 42 that Dao is equal to *wu*. But Laozi does not present this conclusion; that step was left to WANG Bi, who lived roughly seven centuries later. While Laozi does not say Dao as the ultimate is *wu*, Wang takes Dao to be *wu* and makes *wu* the foundation of all beings. Therefore, *wu* in Wang's philosophy can be rendered as non-being, while in Laozi's text, it is better understood as simply "nothingness" or "what is not there." However, this conclusion is based only on chapters 40 and 42.

[26]The italics are mine.

Wu or nothingness fits the meaning of Dao as the source of the universe; however, when Laozi discusses Dao's features or characteristics, Dao is not simply nothingness. Instead, it features both aspects: It has the character of *you* and the character of *wu,* which are expressed as "nameless" (*wuming* 無名) and "named" (*youming* 有名), respectively, in Chapter 1. *Nameless* equals *wu* (non-being)*,* denoting the mysterious aspects of Dao that lie beyond human observation and comprehension, while *named* equals to *you* (being), which suggests and confirms Dao's existence and functions so that humans can imagine and describe it. Chapter 1 of the silk manuscript version can be rendered as "Nameless (*wuming* 無名), Dao is the beginning of myriad things (*wanwu*); Named (*youming* 有名), it is the mother of myriad things (*wan-wu* 萬物)." Unlike the received versions, this couplet repeats myriad things in association to both the nameless and named, which suggests that *you* (being) and *wu* (non-being) are equally features of Dao.[27] In this context, Dao's implicit *you* and *wu* are equal opposites in a pair, as distinct from their relationship in the cosmological process, in which *you* (beings) emerges from *wu* (nothingness). Dao's features, *you* and *wu,* should not be confused with *you* and *wu* in the physical world and human life. When Chapter 2 states: "'What there is (*you* 有)' and 'what there is not (*wu* 無)' generate each other," it by no means applies to Dao, or to the general relationship of *you* and *wu*.

Thus, we find *wu* in three different contexts. The first is the source of the universe, or the state before anything has appeared; this *wu* is just "*nothingness*"; later WANG Bi adjusts this to a more conceptual and abstract "*Non-Being*" as the reality of the universe. The second aspect of *wu,* together with *you,* constitutes a pair of features of Dao. These two concepts belong to the metaphysical level and should not be confused with the notions in physical realm. Again, the word "metaphysical" is not to be taken in the Platonic sense; on the contrary, Dao is imminent in all the myriad things. The third aspect of *wu* is a notion or phenomena opposite to *you* in the empirical world. At this level, *wu* and *you* transform from and into each other. Thus, *wu* is indeed a critical concept in Laozi's philosophy, but these three senses of *wu* should not be confused.

All told we find 101 references to *wu* in Wang's version of the *Laozi*, but most of these are in the form of negative adjectives and adverbs, and not used as a technical philosophical concept. Only in three cases is *wu* used as a philosophical term: once in Chapter 40 where it is described as the ultimate source (beings comes from *nothingness*); another is in Chapter 2, about the mutual independence of *wu* and *you* in physical world (being and non-being generate each other); and the third is in Chapter 11 where Laozi describes the advantages and utility *wu* presents for human life (Only by relying on emptiness (*wu*), do we have use of the room).

[27]That both *you* and *wu* constitute Dao's feature is obvious though Laozi doesn't explicate it. For example, in Chapter 21, on the one hand, Dao is shadowy, indistinct, dim, and dark, which suggests *wu*; on the other hand, within Dao is image, substance, essence, and genuineness (Lau 2001), which suggests *you*.

Dao is not only the source, but also the sustaining power and normative model of all beings. These latter functions are usually associated with and embodied by *de* 德, another term difficult to render, though it is usually translated as "virtue" or "power." *De* essentially denotes Dao's function, feature, and principle as these are embodied in individual beings. Chapter 51 of the silk manuscript versions states: "Dao generates (myriad things), and *de* rears them. Things take shape, and vessels are formed. This is why the myriad things all revere Dao and honor *de*." More important is *xuande* 玄德, profound or mysterious virtue, which we discussed above as a special feature of the sage.

4.3 Summary of Dao

Dao is an indefinite and ambiguous term with a core meaning. This feature seems a disadvantage, especially to modern philosophers who are used to defining concepts and propositions clearly. But in Laozi's case, in the context of cosmological and ontological issues that have eluded resolution by the measurements of science and mathematics, this might well be reckoned an advantage and a strength. We should pay attention to Laozi's naming Dao. The bamboo-slip version of Chapter 25 reads: "There was some shape (*zhuang* 狀) undifferentiated and yet complete, which arose before Heaven and Earth. Still and indistinct, it stands alone and unchanging."[28] This is speculation on the primordial origins of universe, but a more significant claim follows: "It can be regarded as the mother of the universe. Not yet knowing its name, I have styled it Dao; forced to give it a proper name, I would call it Great." This reluctant attitude and ambiguous statement must derive from foresight and discretion. Laozi seems to know that he himself and even mankind have no grounds to suppose any specific things about the origin and basis of the universe. The concrete things human beings know, such as fire, water, wind, and earth, could not have produced the whole universe. This sounds logical and in accord with scientific principles. What Laozi is sure about is that there must be a beginning stage and state from which the universe evolved, and it could be the ground that maintains the universe, including the myriad things. He could not, however, know exactly what it might be. For him, Dao was simply a compromise, a symbol for that stage and state, as well as the ground of the universe. If Laozi is forced to name it, he will say its name is Great. Obviously, "great" is not a proper name, but an exclamation. Laozi's attitude is logical and rational, even acceptable, from modern philosophical and scientific standpoint, because it is compatible with various theories about the origins of the universe. Thus, we may not have to attempt a precise and specific definition for it.

[28]Major differences between bamboo and received versions include: shape (*zhuang* 狀) is thing (*wu* 物) in received versions, and the latter has one more sentence "It operates everywhere and is free from danger." See Henricks 2000: 55; Li 2002: 3; Qiu 2004: 208.

Let us conclude with a brief summary of what we know about Laozi's concept of Dao.

1. The concept of Dao was invented by Laozi for answering the question, what is the source and ground of the universe? What is the root of universal originality and consistency? (just like CHEN Chung-hwan's *binding principle*.)
2. Dao as the origin of the universe indicates nothingness, from where all beings evolve and develop; however, Dao as the ground of the universe features a combination of both *you* (being) and *wu* (non-being).
3. The concept of Dao is just a style and symbol of a supposed universal source and ground, which Laozi and mankind cannot know or even name.
4. Dao as the ground of the universe penetrates the myriad things and maintains their existence and development. This is a key feature of metaphysics in Chinese thought wherein entity and principle are mutually engaged.
5. Thus, human beings should take their model from Dao to lead a better life; Dao in turn models itself on *ziran*: civilized order and civil conditions are the natural state of society.
6. Dao's operation embodies and supports the reversion of the myriad things in the empirical world.[29]

5 Conclusion

We have briefly discussed the core meanings of three key terms and theories in the *Laozi,* namely, *ziran* (natural order in civilized societies), *wuwei* (imperceptible yet effectual action, a transcending negation), and Dao (the source and ground of the universe). These three aspects of Laozi's thought should not be understood as separate or isolated. They are associated in a roughly coherent system in which they support and interpenetrate each other. Dao provides metaphysical support for the highest value *ziran*, and *wuwei* provides a principled method by which to realize that value. *Ziran* and *wuwei* also embody the features and character of Dao.

A more comprehensive picture of the system of Laozi's philosophy must also take into account the theory of reversion or transformational oppositions, and *de* (德), especially *xuande* (玄德), the profound and mysterious virtue. The brief analyses presented above are sufficient to demonstrate that the *Laozi* deserves more serious academic investigation and discussion from various approaches, textual, objective, comparative, and creative, and for different purposes, historical, philosophical, contemporary, and practical (Liu 2008–2009, 2009a). Even so, a faithful and meticulous reading of the primary text is the necessary foundation to a clear and reliable understanding of the *Laozi*'s thought.[30]

[29]For details, see Liu X. 2005: chapter 5.

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Chapter 5
Early Daoist Thought in Excavated Bamboo Slips

Wen Xing

Recently excavated Warring States-period (476–221 BCE) bamboo-slip manuscripts reveal a new picture of the world of Daoist thought in early China. Dated to around 300 BCE (Li X. 1999: 160–64, 2004b: 80–82), the bamboo texts *Hengxian* 恒先 (*Ante-Eternity*) and "Taiyi sheng shui" 太一生水 (The Great One Gives Birth to the Waters), both excavated from the Jiangling 江陵 area in China's Hubei 湖北 Province, provide us with crucial concepts and theories of early Daoist cosmology and philosophy in some ways distinct from those that have survived in received texts (Ma 2003: 286–299, Jingmenshi 1998: 125–26).[1] Previously unknown texts

Editor's note: Professor Xing Wen's article was submitted in 2008, and the final revision of this article following the anonymous peer review was completed in February 2009. Invited by Professors Yong Huang and Erica F. Brindley, this article was presented at a Columbia seminar on April 3, 2009 and a Penn State "Bamboo Event" workshop at Pennsylvania State University on May 17, 2010, respectively. The Penn State "Bamboo Event" workshop volume focusing on *Hengxian* was published as a special issue of *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12.2 (2013), guest-edited by Erica F. Brindley and Paul R. Goldin.

[1]I am grateful to the anonymous reader for his/her very helpful comments, which improve the clarity of this chapter. I also would like to register my gratitude to Terre Fisher for her insightful comments and meticulous editorial help. Thanks also go to Dr. LIU Xiaogan for his patience and confidence. Of course, I am solely responsible for any errors, ambiguities and confusions that have remained. In this chapter, I italicize the title of *Hengxian* because I treat it as an independent piece of work. "Taiyi sheng shui" is considered a section or chapter rather than a piece of independent work, thus it appears in quotation marks. Written on bamboo slips, both texts were initially excavated by tomb robbers. *Hengxian* was first smuggled to Hong Kong and then purchased back by the Shanghai Museum. There is no sign to indicate that it is a chapter or section of another work. Therefore, it is considered independent no matter how short it is. "Taiyi sheng shui" had been

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of decisive importance, the *Hengxian* and "Taiyi sheng shui" not only provide us a fresh vista on early Daoist cosmological thought, they also challenge us to think through methodologies and approaches proper to the interpretation of these excavated manuscripts. Such interpretations, needless to say, will refine our understanding of the early Daoist tradition. In this chapter, limiting myself to the material and scholarship on these most important Warring States Daoist texts, I will survey and examine two of the most important Daoist terms, Hengxian[2] 恒先 (Ante-eternity) and Taiyi 太一 (Great One), as well as the related cosmological concepts, *sheng* 生 (giving birth or generating) and *fu* 復 (returning). I will argue that *sheng* includes at least three phases in early Chinese cosmology, and that *sheng zhi sheng* 生之生, "generating anew from existing generations," in Phase III is termed *fu*, "returning," in the *Hengxian*. I will also identify three types of "returning" in the *Hengxian* and the "Taiyi sheng shui." With these critical Daoist terms clarified, we will be able to properly comprehend early Chinese cosmogony presented by both the excavated and transmitted texts from a refined and refreshed perspective.

1 *Cosmogonies in the* Hengxian *and the "Taiyi sheng shui"*

Excavated from the same area and during approximately the same years,[3] the *Hengxian* was published in 2003 and the "Taiyi sheng shui" in 1998 (Ma 2003: 286–99, Jingmenshi 1998: 125–26). Since the cosmology in the *Hengxian* starts with non-being and that of the "Taiyi sheng shui" starts at post-being, that is, after

discarded inside the tomb by the tomb robbers, and was later recovered by archaeologists. All the physical textual features of the "Taiyi sheng shui" indicate that it is a chapter (section) or chapters (sections) that was (were) compiled together with other chapters of Group C of the Guodian *Laozi*. The *Hengxian* is complete, with no missing slips. I personally believe that the reconstruction of the text is no longer problematic (Xing 2008a, b, c) although the order of the bamboo slips remains controversial among some scholars. The "Taiyi sheng shui" is incomplete. More information about the two texts can be found in Ma 2003 and Jingmenshi 1998. As an introduction to excavated texts that are not available in the received textual tradition, all my personal arguments and comments in this chapter are based on my own analyses and interpretations. It is not my intention to present my own arguments as something that have been accepted by the other scholars. Related scholarship will be summarized and presented in this chapter through citations and references. As the perspectives and arguments of this chapter are so critical and fundamental to a proper understanding of early Daoist cosmology, I am obligated to present them to the reader of this *Companion*, but this chapter presents more of my personal arguments and interpretations than those of other scholars. Readers are encouraged to conduct further research and make their own judgments.

[2]In this chapter, I take Hengxian as a proper name, according to multiple appearances in excavated texts.

[3]Although there is no record of the excavation date of the *Hengxian*, based on the time when it appeared in Hong Kong, scholars have assumed it was excavated at the same time or slightly after the "Taiyi sheng shui."

Taiyi was already present, my treatment here deals with the *Hengxian* first.[4] But to provide the intellectual context of the concepts in question, which will aid in the overall reading and understanding of this chapter, let me first provide an English translation of the cosmogony sections of both the *Hengxian* and the "Taiyi sheng shui."[5] The numbers in parentheses below indicate the bamboo slip numbers of the texts. (Please refer to Ma 2003: 286–99 and Jingmenshi 1998: 125–26 for original full texts.)

The first sections of the *Hengxian* read,

> Hengxian has no being but simplicity, quiescence, and emptiness. This simplicity is supreme simplicity. The quiescence is supreme quiescence. The emptiness is supreme emptiness. Being self-sufficient but not yet self-fulfilled, the indefinable Huo[6] arises. Since the indefinable Huo is there, there is Qi. Since Qi is there, there is being. Since being is there, there is beginning. Since beginning is there, there is returning.[7]
>
> 恒先無有, 樸 [8]、靜、虛。樸, 大樸。靜, 大靜。虛, 大虛。自厭不自牣, 或作。有或焉有氣, 有氣焉有有, 有有焉有始, 有始焉有往。
>
> In the past, there were neither the heavens nor the earth; neither (Slip 1) were there arising, operations, emerging or generating. The emptiness and the quiescence became one, silent and misty, and the indistinct indefinable Huo sprouts amidst the quiescence and the indefinite. The indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates; Qi actually generates by itself. Heng does not give birth to Qi; Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself. The generations of the indefinable Huo and Qi (Slip 2)[9] are not alone but with company.

[4]This does not mean to suggest that the *Hengxian* is earlier than the "Taiyi sheng shui."

[5]Currently there is only one version of English translation of the *Hengxian* available (Chen 2008: 366–88). The "Taiyi sheng shui" has multiple English translations, such as Henricks 2000: 126–29, and Ames and Hall 2003: 225–31. Relevant research articles usually provide a translation of most sections of the "Taiyi sheng shui," e.g., Allan 2003: 237–85.

[6]The interpretation of *huo* 或 has been very controversial. As followed by most scholars, LI Xueqin's 李學勤 reading is *yu* 域, equivalent to the cosmos, in particular, the space of the cosmos (Li X. 2004b: 80–82). I argue that this character reads *huo* 或, the indefinable, which is the indefinable and indefinite of being, time, space, living things and events. The indefinable or the indefinite of such things, in particular, that of time, people and events, is one of the most common usages and definitions of *huo* 或 in the classical Chinese language. As evidenced by early Chinese texts such as both the received version and the Mawangdui silk version of the *Zhouyi* 周易, *huo* 或 was also used as *you* 有 in early China. Edwin Pulleyblank even argued for the etymological connections between the two characters (Pulleyblank 1995: 135). The indefinable Huo should also faintly reflect the indefinite status of the very initial state of indefinable *you* 有, being.

[7]According to the *Guangya* 廣雅, *wang* 往 means *gui* 歸, returning (*Guangya* 1998: 11b). As one word in early Chinese texts, *guiwang* 歸往 means returning. *Chunqiu Guliang zhuan zhushu* 春秋穀梁傳注疏 reads, "Kingship is where the people return." 王者, 民之所歸往也 (*Chunqiu* 2002: 5.12a). The *Hanshu* 漢書 also has a similar saying, "Returning to it, which is kingship." 歸而往之, 是為王矣 (*Hanshu* 2002: 23.1b). The *Guangya* also indicates that *gui* 歸 is *huan* 還, returning (*Guangya* 1998: 158b). The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 clearly defines *huan* 還 as *fu* 復, returning (*Shuowen* 1972: 2b.4b).

[8]The reading of this character has been much debated. I deciphered it as *pu* 樸, simplicity (Xing 2008b).

[9]"The generations" is on slip 3, although "of the indefinable Huo and Qi" are on slip 2.

Huo, the indefinable, is Heng, eternity. That which generates Huo is the same Heng. It is in confusion and misty, with no peace, and requiring that from which it is generated. Distinction generates distinction. Convergence generates convergence. Divergence generates divergence. Negation generates negation. Affirmation generates affirmation.

往者未有天地, 未 (Slip 1) 有作行出生。虛靜為一, 若寂寂夢夢, 靜同而昧或萌。昧或滋生, 氣寔自生。恒莫生氣, 氣寔自生自作。恒、氣之 (Slip 2) 生, 不獨有與也。或, 恒焉。生或者, 同焉。昏昏不寧, 求其所生。異生異, 歸生歸, 違生違, 非生非, 依生依。

Inquiry and desire naturally return. Returning (Slip 3) is the operation of generating anew from existing generations. Turbid Qi gives birth to the earth; clear Qi gives birth to the heavens. Qi stretches and extends; the multitudinous living things mutually give birth to one another. ... (Slip 4)

求欲自復。復 (Slip 3), 生之生行。濁氣生地, 清氣生天。氣信神哉, 云云相生。... (Slip 4) (Ma 2003: 288–291)

The first sections of the "Taiyi sheng shui" read,

Taiyi gives birth to the waters. The waters return and assist Taiyi, thereby completing the heavens. The heavens return and assist Taiyi, thereby completing the earth. The heavens and the earth [again assist each other], (Slip 1) thereby completing the spiritual and numinous. The spiritual and numinous again assist each other, thereby completing yin and yang. Yin and yang again assist each other, thereby completing the four seasons. The four seasons (Slip 2) again assist each other, thereby completing the cold and the hot. The cold and the hot again assist each other, thereby completing the wet and the dry. The wet and the dry again assist each other and stop after completing the yearly cycle. (Slip 3)[10]

太一生水, 水反輔太一, 是以成天。天反輔太一, 是以成地。天地 [復相輔] (Slip 1) 也, 是以成神明。神明復相輔也, 是以成陰陽。陰陽復相輔也, 是以成四時。四時 (Slip 2) 復 [相]輔也, 是以成滄熱。滄熱復相輔也, 是以成濕燥。濕燥復相輔也, 成歲 (Slip 3) 而止。

Therefore, the yearly cycle is born from the wet and dry. The wet and the dry are born from the cold and the hot. The cold and the hot [are born from by the four seasons]. The four seasons (Slip 4) are born from yin and yang. Yin and yang are born from the spiritual and numinous. The spiritual and numinous are born from the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth (Slip 5) are born from Taiyi.

故歲者, 濕燥之所生也。濕燥者, 滄熱之所生也。滄熱者, [四時之所生也。]四時 (Slip 4) 者, 陰陽之所生也。陰陽者, 神明之所生也。神明者, 天地之所生也。天地 (Slip 5) 者, 太一之所生也。

This is thus that Taiyi hides in the waters, travels according to the seasons, returns to [the beginning] in a cyclical manner, [and takes itself as] (Slip 6) the mother of ten thousand things. ... (Slip 7)

是故, 太一藏於水, 行於時, 周而或 [始, 以己為](Slip 6) 萬物母。... (Slip 7)。(Jingmenshi 1998: 125)

It is not this chapter's object to provide a close reading of these texts, and the translations above present reasonable interpretations that reflect my personal understandings and will serve the purposes of my discussion here. However, it is worth noting that readings and interpretations on some lines have varied

[10]The character "end" is on slip 4.

significantly. For example, the first line of the *Hengxian*, i.e., *Hengxian wu you* 恒先無有 (Hengxian has no being), has been read as *Heng*, *xian wu you* 恒, 先無有 (As for eternity, at first there was no being),[11] or *Heng xian, wu you* 恒先, 無有 (Eternity existed first, and there was no being), or *Heng xian, wu "you"* 恒先, 無 "有" (Eternity existed first, and there was no Being) or *Heng, xian "wu," "you"* 恒, 先 "無"、"有" (Eternity existed before Non-Being and Being) or *Heng xian wu, you*... 恒先無, 有 ... (Eternity first was non-being but had...; or, Eternity existed before non-being and had..., etc.) (Yang 2005b). I will return to consider the above passages in some detail at the end of this chapter.

2 Hengxian*: Ante-Eternity vs. Eternal Antecedence*

The term *hengxian*, "ante-eternity" or "eternal antecedence," first came to light with the 1973 excavation of the Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb no. 3, where at least 28 bamboo and silk texts were discovered (Xing 1997: 16–19). One of four texts copied prior to the Mawangdui *Laozi* 老子 (version B), on the same piece of silk, "Daoyuan" (道原, The Origin of the Dao) reads,

> The beginning of ante-eternity both extends infinitely and is a great void. The emptiness and infinity become one, and eternity integrates into one and stops. Chaotic and misty, there is not yet light or dark.
>
> 恒先之初, 迵同大虚。虚同為一, 恒一而止。混混夢夢, 未有明晦。(Guojia 1980: 87; Li X. 1996b: 162–68)

In the passage above, the Chinese word for "ante-eternity" is *hengxian* 恒先, but this term was originally transcribed as *hengwu* 恒无, eternal non-being, when the silk text was first published. (Guojia 1980: 87) Li Xueqin argued that the character *wu* 无 (non-being) of *hengwu* should be deciphered as *xian* 先 (antecedence) instead and that the published transcription of *hengwu* 恒无 was actually mistaken due to the two characters, *wu* 无 and *xiang* 先, being rendered in the same written form on the Chu silk manuscript (Li X. 1996b: 162–68, Ma 2003: 287). The discovery of the bamboo-slip text *Hengxian* undeniably supports Li's earlier insight and argument since the characters *wu* and *xian* are indeed written in different forms in the centuries-earlier bamboo text (Ma 2003: 288).

[11] Since some scholars just proposed a different reading and did not provide clear or further interpretations, it becomes impossible to reasonably faithfully translate those readings. The translations provided here are simply for the convenience of the English readers; they might be totally different from those scholars' originally intended interpretations.

The self-titled bamboo text *Hengxian*[12] starts with, "Ante-eternity has no being." (*Hengxian wu you* 恒先無有) (Ma 2003: 288). This is a clear Daoist understanding of cosmic beginnings. The *Laozi* states, "Ten thousand things under the heavens were born from being, and being was born from non-being." 天下萬物生于有, 有生于無. (*Laozi* 2002: 6b). But what is *hengxian*? Is it "ante-eternity" or "eternal antecedence"? The ambiguity of classical Chinese allows more than one interpretation of this word and our readings of it will shape our interpretations of the bamboo text.

2.1 Dao

As the editor of the bamboo *Hengxian* text, Li Ling 李零 argues that Hengxian is an alternative name for Dao. Attributing the *Hengxian* to the Daoist philosophic school, he states,

> Hengxian is the alias of Dao. Chapter 25 of the *Laozi* reads, "There is something formed in chaos, before the birth of the heavens and earth. Still and lonesome, it stands alone, does not change, and travels around without being exhausted. It is competent to be the mother of the heavens and earth. I do not know its name. I style it 'Dao,' and force the name 'Great' on it." Hengxian is precisely the Dao that was born before the birth of the heavens and earth, stood alone and did not change, traveled around without being exhausted, and was considered the eternal creative power. (Ma 2003: 287)

He further argues that the author of the bamboo *Hengxian* text believed that all contradictory concepts came in sequence, with their particulars of priority, and that the ultimate "priority" or "antecedence," i.e., *xian* 先, is the "eternal antecedence." In short, he interprets Hengxian as Dao, which is "eternal antecedence" (Ma 2003: 288).

Li Xueqin reads *heng* 恒 as *chang* 常 (constancy). Citing *chang wu you* 常無有 (constancy has no being) from the "Tianxia" 天下 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, he argues that *hengxian wu you* 恒先無有 equals to *chang wu you* 常無有 (Li X. 2004b: 80). According to him, "'Hengxian' is the Great Completeness, Great Purity, and Great Emptiness. That is to say, it is Dao of Daoist philosophy" (Li X. 2004b: 81).

While Li Xueqin identifies *heng* 恒 with *chang* 常, he actually makes *hengxian* parallel to *chang*. That is to say, he reads *hengxian* as one word (Li X. 2004b: 80–81). However, when interpreting Hengxian as Dao, Liao Mingchun 廖名春 argues that *heng* 恒 and *xian* 先 are in fact two words, and that *heng IS xian*, both of

[12]Conventionally, scholars usually take the first word of an excavated early text as its title if it is not self-titled. Although "*hengxian*" is the first word of the bamboo text, it is so self-titled, too. Please note that "*hengxian*" is also the first word of the Mawangdui silk text "Daoyuan," and the silk text is self-titled "Daoyuan" rather than "Hengxian." That is to say, the term "*hengxian*" is of more significant importance of the Warring States-period text *Hangxian* than that of the early Han dynasty text "Daoyuan."

which are synonyms of Dao (Liao 2004: 83). ZHENG Wangeng 鄭萬耕 also takes *heng* and *xian* to be two separate words. According to him, *heng* is the "courtesy name" of Dao and *xian* might have come from the *Laozi* (Zheng 2006: 419–422).

2.2 Not Dao

Unlike the above readings, JI Xusheng 季旭昇 argues that *heng* 恒 is not Dao itself but a description of the state of Dao. According to Ji, *heng xian wu you* 恒先無有 does not comment on the state of Dao before *heng* exists, but that of Dao after *heng* starts (Yang 2005a). In such case, *hengxian* is not considered one word; neither is it considered Dao.

Similarly, LIN Yizheng 林義正 does not read *hengxian* as one word, either. In Lin's reading, *xian* 先 (at first) is an adverb modifying *wu* 無 (do not have), i.e., "Heng, at first does not have being" (*Heng, xian wu you* 恒, 先無有). As he argues, the interpretation of *heng* as Dao was made on the assumption that the *Laozi* is earlier than the *Hengxian*, and that if it were true, Dao should have at least been mentioned in the *Hengxian* text. Accordingly, *hengxian* is not one word, and Heng is not Dao (Yang 2005b).

2.3 Nature

KUO Li-Hua 郭黎華 also reads *heng* as a separate word. She argues that the bamboo *Hengxian* text discusses the existence of *xian* 先 (antecedence) as cosmic origins. As for *heng*, she takes it as the way in which *xian* exists (Kuo 2008: 45). By examining Liezi's 列子 theory on *chihou chuxian* 持後處先 (maintaining posteriority in order to be in a position of anteriority) and other various *xian*-related thoughts in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and the *Guanzi* 管子, etc., Kuo argues that "Hengxian" is not an alternative for Dao but a philosophical concept of origins clarifying the ambiguity of Dao, and that rather than Dao, Heng actually indicates nature (Kuo 2008: 38–39).

2.4 Ultimate Antecedence

As LIU Yiqun 劉貽群 points out, LI Ling also considers Hengxian to be the ultimate *xian* or ultimate antecedence (Liu Y. 2005: 34–35, Ma 2003: 287). Clearly, PANG Pu 龐樸 follows this option (Pang 2004). This reading has become influential, since QIU Xigui 裘錫圭 recently deciphered the character in front of *xian* as *ji* 極, extreme, rather than *heng*, as most people read it (Qiu 2007).

Following Qiu's paleographical interpretation, Hengxian can only be understood as Ultimate Antecedence.

Comparing *changhou* 常後 (constant posteriority) of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and the *Wenzi* 文子, DONG Shan 董珊 argues that *changhou* might originally be *henghou* 恒後 (eternal posteriority) that was changed to *changhou* due to the taboo around using an Emperor's name, LIU Heng 劉恒 (Dong 2004).[13] As he interprets it, *hengxian* is the absolute *xian*, i.e., absolute antecedence or anteriority, and it is the substance (*ti* 體) of Dao while *henghou*, or *changhou*, eternal posteriority, is the function (*yong* 用) of Dao (Dong 2004).

2.5 Taiyi 太一 (Great One)

Different from all of the above, Olga Gorodetskaya argues that Taiyi 太一, Great One is an alias of Hengxian, and it designates the concept and phenomenon of *tianheng* 天恒 (heavenly eternity), the state of the Pole Star. As Gorodetskaya explains, *tianheng* is the state during which no star can be observed in Polaris (Gorodetskaya 2007: 173–81). This interpretation relates to another important concept I will discuss in this chapter, Taiyi.

3 Taiyi 太一: Great One

Taiyi 太一 (Great One), also written in homophone forms such as 大一 (such as Fu and Chen 1992: 35, Zhu 2002: 271.25b), 太乙 (such as Wang 2002b: 30a, Yan 2002: 7.62b), 泰一 (such as *Shiji* 2002: 12.5a, Qin 2002: 7.19b) and 太壹 (such as *Hanshu* 2002: 30.48b, Wang 2002a: 8.14a), is by no means a new term only available in excavated manuscripts. Still, it has commanded intense attention since the excavation of the bamboo text "Taiyi sheng shui" in 1993 (Xing 2005: 198–267). As QIAN Baocong 錢寶琮 (1892–1974) argued in his substantial study of Taiyi, its philosophical implications are far more important than its astronomic or astrological significance (Qian 1932: 2449–78). In the received textual tradition, Taiyi was mainly understood as both Dao and the Pole Star or the spirit of the Pole Star. Some scholars also argue that Taiyi has a mixed identity (Ding 2000: 91–98). Inspired by the discovery of the "Taiyi sheng shui," recent scholarship has considerably enriched the previous understandings of this term.

[13] This is a possibility that awaits further evidence.

3.1 The Pole Star

Without doubt, Taiyi is the name of constellation in received texts. Probably due to QIAN Baocong's influential article, it has been quite common for current scholars to simply cite the Tianji 天極 (Heavenly Pole) constellation entry of the *Shiji* 史記 (Historical Records) as the evidence for Taiyi being the name of the Pole Star (Ding 2002: 194). However, based on what the *Shiji* says, Taiyi is only a spirit that resides in the Tianji constellation. *Shiji* reads, "Tianji constellation in the Central Palace: One of the stars is bright; it is where Taiyi often resides" (*Shiji* 2002: 27.1b). ZHANG Shoujie 張守節 already annotated in his *Zhengyi* 正義 (*Correct Meanings*) of the *Shiji*, "Taiyi is an alternative name of the Heavenly God" (Zhang 2002: 27.1a). QIAN Baocong also points out, more than one star was indentified as the Pole Star due to the precession of the equinoxes, or *suicha* 歲差, in ancient China[14] (Qian 1932: 2449–2478). Taiyi as a star name is widely documented in received texts. The *Xingjing* 星經 (*Classic of the Constellations*) reads, "Constellations Tianyi 天一 (Heavenly One) and Taiyi 太一: (the observation of their positions, movements and brightness) has power over the accession of kings" (Zhang 2002: 27.1b–2a). In the *Shiji*, we also find that Taiyi consists of three stars: *Taiyi san xing* 太一三星 (*Shiji* 2002: 28.37a). However, Taiyi more often refers to the spirit of the Pole Star and its cult.

3.2 The Spirit of the Pole Star and the Cult of Taiyi

Taiyi is clearly the name of the spirit of the Pole Star in received texts. Many scholars have paid close attention to it (Peng 2000: 538–41). ZHENG Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200 CE) annotation to the *Zhouyi Qian zao du* 周易乾鑿度 reads, "Taiyi is the name of the spirit of the Pole Star" (Zheng 2002: 4a). As the *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子 states, Taiyi occupies the central position in the heavens, and oversees the hundred spirits (*Heguanzi* 2002: 2.21a). ZHANG Shoujie gives a more specific examination of Taiyi. It reads: "Constellation Taiyi locates South of constellation Tianyi. Taiyi is also the Heavenly God, orders sixteen spirits, and is in charge of wind, rain, flood, drought, military affairs, famine, and diseases" (Zhang 2002: 27.2b).

Confucius said, "To rule by moral virtue is like the Pole Star to be paid homage by the myriad stars while it remains in its own place." 為政以德, 譬如北辰, 居其所而衆星共之 (*Lunyu* 2002: 2.1a). With such rich tradition of veneration, Taiyi, as the spirit of the Pole Star, was widely worshiped and received cult offerings. Evidence for the popular cult of Taiyi in early China is extensive, appearing in Warring

[14] As Sarah Allan explains, *suicha* is "the phenomenon by which a star used to mark the position where the equinoctial sun rises slowly changes its position in the sky because of the rotation of the earth's axis" (Allan 2003: 274). LI Xueqin identifies both Draco (Tianlong zuo 天龍座) 10 and Ursa Minor (Xiao xiong zuo 小熊座) B as Taiyi in the received texts (Li X. 2005a, b: 449).

States-period literary works attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (340?–278? BCE) and Song Yu 宋玉 (late Warring States-period) as well as various excavated materials, such as bamboo and silk manuscripts, divination boards, and bronze vessels (Li X. 1991: 35–39, 1998: 130; Li L. 1992, 1996a: 1–39; Allan 2003: 246–76). There have never been any doubts about the existence of the cult of Taiyi.[15] The only problem is when it starts.

3.3 The Sun or the Moon

Mythological and cosmological interpretations of Taiyi include suggestions related to the Sun and the Moon. Xiao Bing 蕭兵 argues that Taiyi is the god of the Sun or the Heavenly God. According to Xiao, the Sun or Taiyi or the Heavenly God controls rain and water, and this is the mythological context for the "Taiyi sheng shui," i.e., the Great One gave birth to water (Xiao 2003: 18–24). Guo Yi 郭沂 suggests that the prototype of Taiyi is the moon, and this perhaps is the main reason why he does not consider Taiyi as tantamount to Dao (Guo 2001: 138).

3.4 One, at the Center of a Divination Board

As Sarah Allan argues, the key role Taiyi plays in the use of a divination board, which usually consists of a heavenly disc and an earthly board,[16] also works from its identity as the spirit of the Pole Star, further evidence of the popularity of that cult. She considers the center of a divination board as representing the center of the heaven, the undividable One, Taiyi (Allan 2005: 210–11). She interprets *Shengren bao yi wei tianxia shi* 圣人抱一為天下式, Chapter 22 of the received *Laozi*, as "the sage embraces the one and acts as the cosmograph (*shi*) for the world" (Allan 2003: 250). That is to say, this *shi* 式 in the *Laozi* is a divination board, or *shipan* 式盤, and the One, *yi* 一, implies Taiyi, the Great One (Allan 2005: 211).

[15]For more on the Daoist religious Taiyi sect, see Xu 1994: 34–38.

[16]The divination boards referred to here are both the *liuren* 六壬 and the *Taiyi* 太乙 styles of *shipan* 式盤, i.e., two of the three styles of divination boards, *sanshi* 三式. Most divination boards currently available, no matter whether they are transmitted or excavated, are of the *liuren* style. The three styles of divination boards were defined differently in ancient China, for instance, in the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907 CE) the three were called *Leigong* 雷公, *Taiyi* 太乙 and *liuren* 六壬, and in the Song 宋 dynasties (960–1279 CE) they were known as *Taiyi* 太乙, *dunjia* 遁甲 and *liuren* 六壬. Please note that on the *Taiyi* 太乙 divination board, Taiyi, the Great One, regularly travels among the *jiugong* 九宮 (nine palaces) as presented on one of the two excavated Fuyang 阜陽 divination boards (Xing 1997: 100–8, 244). See Chen 1980: 260–72 for a systematic study of early divination boards.

In Allan's interpretation, Taiyi, the Great One, is the center of the divination board, the conceptual center of an idealized cosmos (Allan 2005: 210). She further argues that this theoretical center is also Taiji 太極, the Supreme Ultimate (Allan 2005: 211).

3.5 Taiji 太極 (Supreme Ultimate)

The *Zhouyi* 周易 (*Book of Changes*) reads,

> It is thus that in the *Changes* there is the Supreme Ultimate, which gives birth to the two modes. The two modes give birth to the four images. The four images give birth to the eight trigrams. The eight trigrams determine the auspicious and inauspicious. The auspicious and inauspicious give birth to great enterprises.
>
> 是故, 易有太極, 是生兩儀, 兩儀生四象, 四象生八卦, 八卦定吉凶, 吉凶生大業。(*Zhouyi* 2002: 11.43a)

Its cosmological framing reminds us of a similar statement in the "Liyun" 禮運 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 (*Records of Rites*). It reads,

> It is thus that the rites must have been originated from the Supreme One, which separates and becomes the heavens and earth, revolves and becomes *yin* and *yang*, transforms and becomes the four seasons, and distributes and becomes ghosts and spirits.
>
> 是故夫禮, 必本于大一, 分而為天地, 轉而為陰陽, 變而為四時, 列而為鬼神。(*Liji* 2002: 22.25a)

It is not difficult to draw a parallel between the above Supreme Ultimate and Supreme One. YU Fan 虞翻 (164–233) clearly points out that Taiji is Taiyi. His argument, which has been transmitted through LI Dingzuo's 李鼎祚 (fl. 8th century) *Zhouyi jijie* 周易集解 (*Collected Interpretations of the* Book of Changes), reads,

> The Supreme Ultimate is the Great One. It divides into the heavens and earth, therefore gives birth to the two modes.
>
> 太極, 太一也。分為天地, 故生兩儀也。(Li D. 2002: 14.19b)
>
> The four images are the four seasons. The two modes are what are meant by *Qian* and *Kun*. When the second and fifth lines of *Qian* transform into *Kun*, they complete *Kan*, *Li*, *Zhen* and *Dui*.[17] *Zhen* is associated with spring. *Dui* is associated with autumn. *Kan* is associated

[17] I argue that one line is missing here. Between "when the second and fifth lines of *Qian* transform into *Kun*" 乾二五之坤 and "they complete *Kan*, *Li*, *Zhen* and *Dui*" 成坎離震兑, there should have been a line reading "when the second and fifth lines of *Kun* transform into *Qian*" 坤二五之乾, otherwise *Li* 離 and *Dui* 兑 cannot be formed. Here, *Qian* of "the second and fifth lines of *Qian*" is the hexagram *Qian*, and *Kun* of "the second and fifth lines of *Kun*" is the hexagram *Kun*; the other *Kun* and *Qian* indicate *yin* lines and *yang* lines respectively. *Kan*, *Li*, *Zhen*, and *Dui* here are neither the hexagrams nor the trigrams. They refer to the half-images and combined-images of the trigrams *Kan*, *Li*, *Zhen* and *Dui*.

with winter. *Li* is associated with summer. Therefore, the two modes give birth to the four images.

四象, 四時也。兩儀, 謂乾坤也。乾二五之坤, 成坎離震兑, 震春兑秋, 坎冬離夏, 故兩儀生四象。 (Li D. 2002: 14.20a)

Such cosmological interpretation depicts at least similar, if not precisely the same, images of the early Chinese cosmogony recorded in the “Taiyi sheng shui.”

3.6 Primordial Qi 氣

When KONG Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) commented on the preceding “Liyun” passage of the *Liji*, he argued that the Supreme One was the Primordial Qi (*yuanqi* 元氣) in the universe before the heavens and earth separated. His commentary on the *Liji* reads,

That “must have originated from the Supreme One” indicates the Primordial Qi of the chaos before the heavens and earth separate. Extremely great is called Supreme. Undivided is called One. The Qi is not only extremely great but also undivided; therefore it is called Supreme One.

“必本于大一” 者, 謂天地未分混沌之元氣也。極大曰大, 未分曰一。其氣既極大而未分, 故曰大一也。 (*Liji* 2002: 22.25b)

According to Kong’s argument, Primordial Qi is actually closely related to both Supreme Ultimate and Dao.

3.7 Dao

The above “Liyun” extract is similar to what the “Dayue” 大樂 of the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Lü’s Spring and Autumn*) states:

Where music comes from is far away. It originates from measurements, and is based on the Great One. Great One produces the two modes. The two modes produce yin and yang. Yin and *yang* transform, alternating between up and down, and combine to form patterns. ... The origins of ten thousand things start from the Great One and transform between yin and *yang*.

音樂之所由來者遠矣, 生於度量, 本於太一。太一出兩儀, 兩儀出陰陽。陰陽變化, 一上一下, 合而成章。 ...... 萬物所出, 造於太一, 化於陰陽。 (*Lüshi* 2002: 5.3b–4a)

Taiyi is considered where the myriad living things come from.

In “Dayue,” Taiyi is designated the name for Dao. “Dayue” reads,

Dao is the ultimate essence. It cannot have a form; neither can it be named. To force a name on it, it is called Great One.

道也者, 至精也, 不可為形, 不可為名。强為之名, 謂之太乙。 (*Lüshi* 2002: 5.5b)

That many scholars take Taiyi as Dao is strongly supported by the above textual evidence. WEI Qipeng 魏啓鵬 further argues that *hengyi* 恒一 in the Mawangdui silk manuscript "Daoyuan" 道原 literally means "great one," that is the "Great One" of Taiyi, and that Taiyi is Hengyi 恒一, both of which are Dao (Wei 2000: 26).

3.8 Water

As Sarah Allan argues, water is the root metaphor of many of the most fundamental philosophical concepts in early China, including Dao (Allan 1997: 146–48). Being designated a name of Dao, Taiyi is the source of the cosmic water, from which the cosmos was formed (Allan 2005: 212). In the received textual tradition, Taiyi is also considered the honorific style name given to water. *Lingshu jing* 靈樞經 (*Classic of the Divine Pivot*) reads, "Great One is the honorific style given to water. It was first the mother of the sky and earth, and later the fount (*yuan* 源) of the myriad living things."[18]太一者, 水尊號, 先天地之母, 後萬物之源 (Liu W. 2002: 1.30a). This is a very interesting documentation because it is so closely related to the excavated bamboo-slip "Taiyi sheng shui" text. The ideas differ slightly: one says that Taiyi gives birth to water, the other that Taiyi is water. But the two sayings share one idea in common: both hold that Taiyi gives birth to the heavens and earth as well as to myriad living things.

4 *Sheng 生 : To Generate Versus to Give Birth*

The cosmological idea that the *Hengxian* and "Taiyi sheng shui" share is termed *sheng* 生, to generate or give birth. The idea of *sheng* is of critical importance in early China. The received *Yizhuan* 易傳 (*Commentaries on the* Book of Changes) defines Yi 易 (Change) as *sheng sheng* 生生, to generate and further generate, i.e., "To generate and further generate is what is meant by Yi" (*sheng sheng zhi wei Yi* 生生之謂易) (*Zhouyi* 2002: 11.19b). This line reads *sheng zhi wei Xiang* 生之謂象, "To generate is what is meant by Xiang, the image" in the Mawangdui silk version of the classic (Fu and Chen 1992: 118). The distinction between Yi and Xiang is a different topic (Xing 1997: 155–156), but the implications of *sheng sheng* and *sheng* are of cosmological significance no matter what the connections are between Yi and Xiang. Below I start my examination of the differences between *sheng*—to generate and *sheng*—to give birth by first discussing the *sheng* initiators, Hengxian and Taiyi, as well as their *sheng* initiatives.

[18]This is Sarah Allan's translation (Allan 2003: 276).

4.1 Hengxian and Taiyi: Sheng *Initiatives*

As we saw earlier, scholars give different interpretations of the identities of Hengxian and Taiyi. Most of those discrepancies are decided by the specific contexts under examination. From the perspective of Daoist cosmology, it is practicable to identify what Hengxian and Taiyi are based on the internal textual evidence of the two bamboo manuscripts.

In the *Hengxian*, generating-*sheng* starts amidst the immense emptiness and quiescence before the formation of the heavens and earth and myriad things. It reads,

> In the past, there were neither the heavens nor the earth; neither were there arising, operations, emerging or generating. The emptiness and the quiescence became one, silent and misty, and the indistinct indefinable Huo sprouts amidst the quiescence and the indefinite. The indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates; Qi actually generates by itself. Heng does not give birth to Qi; Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself.
>
> 往者未有天地, 未有作行出生。虛靜為一, 若寂寂夢夢, 靜同而昧或萌。昧或滋生, 氣寔自生。恒莫生氣, 氣寔自生自作。 (Ma 2003: 288–89, Xing 2008a)

Here self-generating *sheng* is clearly distinguished from giving-birth *sheng* in the above *Hengxian* passage. Such self-generating *sheng* is also referred to as *zuo* 作, arising, in the earlier lines of the text, i.e., *Huo zuo* 或作, "the indefinable Huo arises." Before "the indefinable Huo arises," before "the indistinct indefinable Huo sprouts amidst the quiescence and the indefinite" and before "the indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates," there exists Hengxian:

> Hengxian has no being, but simplicity, quiescence, and emptiness. The simplicity is supreme simplicity. The quiescence is supreme quiescence. The emptiness is supreme emptiness. Being self-sufficient but not yet self-fulfilled, the indefinable Huo arises.
>
> 恒先無有, 樸、靜、虛。樸, 大樸。靜, 大靜。虛, 大虛。自厭不自牣, 或作。 (Ma 2003: 288, Xing 2008b)

As *Hengxian* defines later, "Huo, the indefinable, is Heng, eternity." (*Huo, Heng yan* 或, 恒焉) Before Huo or Heng generates, there has been literally no being (*wu you* 無有) but simplicity (*pu* 樸), quiescence (*jing* 靜) and emptiness (*xu* 虛). Needless to say, those "supreme simplicity," "supreme quiescence," and "supreme emptiness" no longer exist after the indefinable Huo, or Heng, generates.

This generating-*sheng* is a particular type of *sheng*, during which Meihuo 昧或 or Huo 或 sprouts from the simple, silent and empty Hengxian. In the *Hengxian*, it is depicted as *mengsheng* 萌生 and *zisheng* 滋生, i.e., beings germinating or gradually generating from non-being. This type of *sheng* is similar to the *sheng* of *zi sheng zi zuo* 自生自作, self-generating and self-arising, although the later is that beings generate from being (*you* 有) rather than non-being. Those two types of *sheng* complete the transition from non-being to being, from Hengxian to Huo or Heng. Consequently, the identity of Hengxian becomes clear: Hengxian is non-being, it exists before Heng or Huo germinates. It is pre-Heng, Ante-Eternity. It is the ultimate beginning of the cosmos, with no starting point that can be identified, therefore, the antecedence of Ante-Eternity is unlimited thus can never

be surpassed. From this perspective, I further argue that the eternal antecedence is part of the qualitative attribution of Ante-Eternity. It is evident that, chronologically and cosmologically, Ante-Eternity defines the identity of Hengxian.

Taiyi, the Great One or the Supreme One, has more or less a similar attribution. In the "Taiyi sheng shui," Taiyi, the Supreme One, is the ultimate initiator. Rather than non-being, One is being, and this Supreme One, similar to supreme simplicity, supreme quiescence, and supreme emptiness, carries, if not represents, the Heavenly Way, *Tiandao* 天道. As the *Hengxian* reads, "the Heavenly Way is already carried, and One is still being One" (*Tiandao ji zai, wei yi yi you yi* 天道既載, 唯一以猶一).

The Supreme One in the "Taiyi sheng shui" initiates the giving-birth *sheng*. "Taiyi sheng shui" reads,

> Taiyi gives birth to the waters. The waters return and assist Taiyi, and therefore complete the heavens. The heavens return and assist Taiyi, and therefore complete the earth.
>
> 太一生水。水反輔太一, 是以成天。天反輔太一, 是以成地。(Jingmenshi 1998: 125)

Taiyi, the Supreme One, is the ultimate being that gives birth to the waters, which in return assist Taiyi to give birth to the heavens, etc. This type of *sheng* is different from both the generating-*sheng* of "Huo *zuo*" 或作, the self-arising of the indefinable Huo, and the self-generating-and-self-arising-*sheng* of Qi in the *Hengxian*. Both *sheng* generations in the *Hengxian*, although one starts from non-being and the other from being, are homogenous generations, i.e., one thing self generates itself rather than that one thing gives birth to another thing. Evidently, the later type of *sheng* is the type that "Taiyi gives birth to the waters."

4.2 Generating **Sheng** *vs. Giving-Birth* **Sheng**

This distinction between the generating *sheng* and the giving-birth *sheng* did not become evident until the *Hengxian* and "Taiyi sheng shui" were recently published. In the "Taiyi sheng shui" (Taiyi gives birth to the waters), one thing gives birth to a different thing. However, in the *Hengxian*, the *sheng* of one thing being gradually or self-generated is clearly distinguished from that of one thing giving birth to a different thing.

As the *Hengxian* defines it, at the very beginning of the cosmos, things are self-generated, i.e., *zi sheng* 滋生 (gradually generating) or *zi sheng* 自生 (self-generating). The *Hengxian* emphasizes this difference while discussing how Huo (the indefinable), which is actually Heng (eternity), and Qi generate. According to the *Hengxian*, "the indefinite Huo gradually generates, and Qi actually generates by itself." Following this line, *Hengxian* further specifies, "Heng does not give birth to Qi; Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself." This style of writing is unusual in classical Chinese, which is usually quite concise and avoids repetition of the same meaning and even the same wording. However, in this particular rhetorical

treatment,[19] the *Hengxian* makes one point clear: just like Heng or Huo or Meihuo (the indefinite indefinable) is self-generated, Qi is also self-generated.

Self-generating means that one thing generates itself, and there is nothing else, no different thing, which has given it birth. Strictly speaking, absolute self-generation does not exist in Daoist cosmology. Take the *Hengxian* as an example. When Huo, the indefinable, "arises" or Meihuo, the indefinite indefinable "gradually generates," they do so from non-being. The transition from non-being to being is actually from one thing/state to a different thing/state. When the *Hengxian* emphasizes "self generating," it focuses on the being side. In other words, it talks only of the world of being, and the world of non-being or the transition between the two is neglected; when self-generating is stated, it actually presumes the existence of Huo and Qi in their initial forms.

Based on the *Hengxian*, I divide the generating-*sheng* into two phases: Phase I, initial stage and Phase II, development stage. These phases can be presented as follows by using the statements from the *Hengxian*:

> Phase I
> The emptiness and the quiescence becomes one, silent and misty, and indistinct indefinable Huo sprouts amidst the quiescence and the indefinite. The indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates; Qi actually generates by itself. Heng dos not give birth to Qi; Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself.
>
> 虛靜為一, 若寂寂夢夢, 靜同而昧或萌。昧或滋生, 氣寔自生。恒莫生氣, 氣寔自生自作。
>
> Phase II
> Huo, the indefinable, is Heng, eternity. That which generates Huo is the same Heng. It is in confusion and misty, with no peace, and requiring that from which it is generated. Distinction generates distinction. Convergence generates convergence. Divergence generates divergence. Negation generates negation. Affirmation generates affirmation.
>
> 或, 恒焉。生或者, 同焉。昏昏不寧, 求其所生 :異生異, 歸生歸, 違生違, 非生非, 依生依。(Ma 2003: 290, Li R. 2004a)

In Phase I, the *sheng*-generating is described as *meng* 萌, sprouting, *zi sheng* 滋生, gradually generating, *zi sheng* 自生, self-generating, and *zi zuo* 自作, self-fashioning. Evidently, these all indicate initial stages. In Phase II, a more advanced process generates development. The "distinction" that is generated is still "distinction," but no longer the original "distinction." These later categories are all more advanced ones, that is, what is generated is a more advanced distinction, convergence, divergence, negation and affirmation. This is *sheng*-generating in its development stage.

In the *Hengxian*, the giving-birth *sheng* seems to be discussed only as part of the "operation of generating anew from a previous generation" (*sheng zhi sheng xing* 生之生行). In the *Hengxian*, such operations are called *fu* 復, "returning," which is discussed below. The *Hengxian* reads, "Turbid Qi gives birth to the earth; clear Qi

[19] From its rhetorical expressions, we are able to tell that the author of the *Hengxian* paid particular attention to the style of the writing. (Xing 2008a)

gives birth to the heavens." That the heavens and earth are no longer Qi after they were born is an example of such further *sheng* generating.

The "Taiyi sheng shui" has better examples. As we know, "Taiyi sheng shui" reads, "Taiyi gives birth to the waters. The waters return and assist Taiyi, and therefore complete the heavens. The heavens return and assist Taiyi, and therefore complete the earth." Accordingly, with the birth of the waters, the heavens and earth, the spiritual and numinous, *yin* and *yang*, and the four seasons, etc., are consequently born. In this cosmogony, everything is ultimately born by, or can be traced back to Taiyi. In the *Hengxian*, there is a similar line although the types of *sheng* are not specified; neither is the genealogical line. *Hengxian* reads,

> Since the indefinable Huo is there, there is Qi. Since Qi is there, there is being. Since being is there, there is beginning. Since beginning is there, there is returning.
>
> 有或焉有氣, 有氣焉有有, 有有焉有始, 有始焉有往. (Ma 2003: 288)

Although the *Hengxian* does not specify the types of *sheng* here, we are still able to tell that new things are kept being born. "Taiyi sheng shui" reads,

> Therefore, Taiyi hides in the waters, travels according to the seasons, returns to [the beginning] in a cyclical manner, [and takes itself as] the mother of ten thousand things.
>
> 是故, 太一藏於水, 行於時, 周而或 [始, 以己為]萬物母。 (Jingmenshi 1998: 125)

This passage clearly implies the continuation of giving birth to the myriad things.

Both the *Hengxian* and the "Taiyi sheng shui" mention cycles that focus on one point: returning. Returning is a particular form of *sheng*, which is closely associated with giving-birth *sheng*. As the turning point of cyclical operations in early Chinese cosmology, returning is of particular importance in early Daoist thought.

5 *Fu* 復: *Returning That Will Never Be Abolished*

In the above two passages, the idea of returning is expressed in different Chinese terms. The *Hengxian* uses the word *wang* 往, and the "Taiyi sheng shui" uses the phrase *zhou er huo shi* 周而或 [始], i.e., returning to [the beginning] in a cyclical manner. In the other lines of the texts, the *Hengxian* repeatedly uses *fu* 復 to indicate the idea of returning, and specifically relates this term to the Heavenly Way. It reads, "The Heavenly Way is already carried; One is still being One, and returning is still being returning." (天道既載, 唯一以猶一, 唯復以猶復) In the *Hengxian*, returning is part of the Way of the cosmos.

In early China, returning was a critical Daoist idea. Chapter 25 of the *Laozi* 老子 reads,

> There is something formed in chaos, before the birth of the heavens and earth. Still and lonesome, it stands alone, does not change, and travels around without being exhausted. It is competent to be the mother of the heavens and earth. I do not know its name. I style it 'Dao,'

> and force the name ‘Great’ on it. Being great is what is meant by retreating. Retreating is what is meant by being remote. Being remote is what is meant by returning.
>
> 有物混成, 先天地生。寂兮寥兮, 獨立不改, 周行而不殆, 可以為天地母。吾不知其名, 字之曰道, 强為之名曰大。大曰逝, 逝曰遠, 遠曰反。 (*Laozi* 2002: 1.27b–29a)

Chapter 40 reads,

> 反者道之動。 (*Laozi* 2002: 2.6b)
>
> Returning is a movement of Dao.

That is to say, “returning” is not only a form of movement, but also a name given for Dao; ever since the beginning of Daoist tradition, the idea of returning has been closely related to Dao.

In both of the passages above, the *Laozi* uses *fan* 反 to indicate “returning.” But the word *fu* 復 is used in many other chapters, such as chapters 14, 16 and 28. Chapter 16 reads,

> Arrive at the extreme of the emptiness, and guard the extreme of the quiescence. While the ten thousand things have all arisen, I observe the returning from it. All those things are multitudinous, and each of them returns to its original root. Returning to the original root is what is meant by quiescence. Quiescence is what is meant by returning to destiny. Returning to destiny is what is meant by eternity. Knowing eternity is what is meant by sagacity.
>
> 致虚極, 守静篤, 萬物并作, 吾以觀復。夫物芸芸, 各復歸其根。歸根曰静, 静曰復命。復命曰常, 知常曰明。(*Laozi* 2002: 1.15b–16b)

Fu, returning, is what the author of this passage observes from the arising of ten thousand things, which all return (*fu gui* 復歸) to their original roots. According to the Master, returning to the original roots is returning (*fu*) to destiny; that is to say, returning is the way to approach eternity. This idea is further discussed in Chapter 28 of the *Laozi*, where different approaches, such as *fu gui yu ying’er* 復歸於嬰兒 (returning to being a new born baby), *fu gui yu wuji* 復歸於無極 (returning to the Indefinite), and *fu gui yu pu* 復歸於樸 (returning to simplicity), are delineated.

Fu, returning, is actually a hexagram name in the *Book of Changes*. Hexagram 24 reads,

> *Fu* indicates through and smooth. There will be no distress existing and entering. Neither will there be any blame for friends coming. Returning and returning is the Way. In seven days comes the returning. It is advantageous in going wherever you are going.
>
> 復 :亨。出入无疾, 朋來无咎。反復其道, 七日來復。利有攸往。(*Zhouyi* 2002: 5.5a)

According to the *Book of Changes,* returning is the Way. One of the commentaries of the classic further comments,

> “Returning and returning is the Way. In seven days comes the returning.” This is the operation of the heavens. . . . Is it in *fu*, returning, where we see the mind of the heavens and earth?
>
> 反復其道, 七日來復, 天行也。 . . . . . . 復其見天地之心乎 ? (*Zhouyi* 2002: 5.5b)

If returning is the approach to eternity and if returning is where we see the mind of the heavens and earth, no wonder that “it is returning that will never be abolished”

(*wei fu yi bu fei* 唯復以不廢). Evidently, *tianxing* 天行 of *mingming tianxing* 明明天行 (Brightly, the heavens operate) in the *Hengxian* is closely related to the above *tianxing* 天行 quoted from the *Zhouyi*. Neglecting this *Zhouyi* passage, an appropriate understanding of *Hengxian*'s "Brightly, the heavens operate; it is returning that will never be abolished" (*mingming tianxing, we fu yi bu fei* 明明天行, 唯復以不廢) would not likely be established.

Hengxian focuses on *sheng*, i.e., both generating and giving-birth *sheng*; *fu* is proposed as a typical form of *sheng*. As we quoted above, *Hengxian* considers "'returning' is the operation of generating anew from a previous generation" (*Fu, sheng zhi sheng xing* 復, 生之生行). *Sheng zhi sheng* 生之生, literally, *sheng-ing* of *sheng*, is the second generation of reproduction from the previous *sheng*. Since it is the second generation, the things that are generated are no longer the original things. As the *Hengxian* states, "the turbid Qi gives birth to the earth; the clear Qi gives birth to the heavens." While in Chinese Daoist cosmology, the heavens and earth are particular condensed forms of Qi; but when they become the heavens and earth, they are no longer their original forms of Qi but the concrete heavens and earth. *Hengxian* further explains, "Qi stretches and extends; the multitudinous living things mutually give birth to one another" (*Qi xin shen zai, yunyun xiang sheng* 氣信神哉, 云云相生.) The "generating anew from a previous generation" also includes those mutual reproductions; this is also one meaning of *fu*, returning.

According to my reconstruction and interpretation (Xing 2008a, b), the *Hengxian* presents three levels of rhetorical discussion on different types and stages of *sheng*, i.e., from the very beginning, germinating and gradually generating *sheng* to self generating and self arising *sheng*, from giving-birth *sheng* to mutually giving-birth *sheng*, from "further generating from the previous generating" *sheng* to returning, *fu*. As a typical form of *sheng*, *fu*-returning is of critical cosmological significance, thus it is repeatedly discussed in the *Hengxian*. From the definition of *fu* to its association with the Heavenly Way, from the claims that "it is *fu* that will never be abolished" to "nothing will not return" (*shi wu bu fu* 事無不復), the *Hengxian* not only directs our attention back to the ideas and theories of returning in the received texts, but it also presents the best, most sustained argument concerning *fu*-returning we have to date.

When I argue that returning is a typical type of *sheng*, what I mean is that returning is a continuation of *sheng*-generation. The *Hengxian* reads, "Since a beginning is there, there is returning." This of course can be read together with the *Hengxian*'s claim that "nothing will not return." Whenever there is a beginning, there will be returning since nothing will not return. However, such returning is simply a continuation of existing *sheng*, no matter whether it is generating *sheng* or giving-birth *sheng*. "Taiyi sheng shui" reads, Taiyi "returns to [the beginning] in a cyclical manner, [and takes itself as] the mother of ten thousand things." By linking returning to the beginning and being the mother of ten thousand things, "Taiyi sheng shui" actually highlights the returning that starts a new cycle of *sheng* generation.

6 Sheng, Fu, and Early Daoist Cosmogonies in Excavated Bamboo Slips

From the above discussion, it is not difficult to see specific similarities and differences of early cosmogonies in the *Hengxian* and the “Taiyi sheng shui.” Since these are the two most important excavated cosmological texts of the Daoist tradition, a detailed comparison of the different phases or types of *sheng* and *fu* in them, will further clarify some fundamental ideas that have long been neglected; further, it will demonstrate a new perspective for gaining a proper understanding of early Daoist bamboo-slip texts.

While working on early Daoist cosmogonies, most scholars have paid close attention to the term *sheng*, to generate or to give birth, but not enough attention to the different phases and types of *sheng*. This is also true for the concept *fu*, returning. Going back to the sections of the *Hengxian* and the “Taiyi sheng shui” cited at the beginning of this chapter, we see three phases of *sheng* that can be summarized as follows.

Phase I – From non-being to being

> Hengxian has no being, but simplicity, quiescence, and emptiness. This simplicity is supreme simplicity. The quiescence is supreme quiescence. The emptiness is supreme emptiness. Being self-sufficient but not yet self-fulfilled, the indefinable Huo arises. (Slip 1)
>
> 恒先無有, 樸、靜、虛。樸, 大樸。靜, 大靜。虛, 大虛。自厭不自牣, 或作。 (Slip 1)
>
> In the past, there were neither the heavens nor the earth; neither (Slip 1) were there arising, operations, emerging or generating. The emptiness and the quiescence became one, silent and misty, and the indistinct indefinable Huo sprouts amidst the quiescence and the indefinite. The indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates; Qi actually generates by itself. Heng does not give birth to Qi; Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself. (Slip 2)
>
> 往者未有天地, 未 (Slip 1) 有作行出生。虛靜為一, 若寂寂夢夢, 靜同而昧或萌。昧或滋生, 氣寔自生。恒莫生氣, 氣寔自生自作。 (Slip 2)

We cannot find Phase I in the “Taiyi sheng shui.” In the above *Hengxian* passages, the *sheng* generations start from non-being. No matter that “the indistinct indefinable Huo gradually generates” or that “Qi actually generates by itself and arises by itself,” the self-generation of being comes from non-being.

Phase II – From being to being

> The generations of the indefinable Huo and Qi (Slip 2)[20] are not alone but with companies. Huo, the indefinable, is Heng, eternity. That which generates Huo is the same Heng. It is in confusion and misty, with no peace, and requiring that from which it is generated. Distinction generates distinction. Convergence generates convergence. Divergence generates divergence. Negation generates negation. Affirmation generates affirmation. (Slip 3)

[20]“The generations” is on slip 3 although “of the indefinable Huo and Qi” are on slip 2.

恒、氣之 (Slip 2) 生, 不獨有與也。或, 恒焉。生或者, 同焉。昏昏不寧, 求其所生。異生異, 歸生歸, 違生違, 非生非, 依生依。 (Slip 3)

Taiyi gives birth to the waters. (Slip 1)

太一生水。 (Slip 1)

From the above passages, we see that Phase II includes two types of *sheng*: (1) beings generate the same kind of beings, such as "distinction generates distinction" and "convergence generates convergence;" (2) one being gives birth to a different being, such as "Taiyi gives birth to the waters." That is to say, for Phase II, what *Hengxian* focuses is generating-*sheng* and what "Taiyi sheng shui" focuses is giving-birth *sheng*.

Phase III – Generating anew from existing generations or pairs giving birth to new pairs

Since being is there, there is beginning. Since beginning is there, there is returning. (Slip 1)

有有焉有始, 有始焉有往。(Slip 1)

Returning (Slip 3) is the operation of generating anew from existing generations. ... (Slip 4)

復 (Slip 3), 生之生行。 ...... (Slip 4)

The heavens return and assist Taiyi, thereby completing the earth. The heavens and the earth [again assist each other], (Slip 1) thereby completing the spiritual and numinous. The spiritual and numinous again assist each other, thereby completing yin and yang. ... (Slip 2)

天反輔太一, 是以成地。天地 [復相輔] (Slip 1) 也, 是以成神明。神明復相輔也, 是以成陰陽。(Slip 2)

Clearly, Phase III *sheng* includes returning. Returning is defined as "the operation of generating anew from existing generations" in the *Hengxian*. In the "Taiyi sheng shui," returning is also a must for the birth of the heavens or the earth. As for pairs, such as the heavens/earth and the spiritual/numinous, that one pair gives birth to a new pair also belongs to the category of "the operation of generating anew from existing generations." Such pairs may take the form of totally different materials, as "Taiyi sheng shui" specifies: the heavens above are Qi while the earth below is soil. In the *Hengxian*, Phase III is actually termed *fu*, "generating anew from existing generations." Different from pairs giving birth to pairs, *Hengxian* focuses more on mutual generating, which does not, however, necessarily exclude pair generating.

When *fu* focuses more on the generating aspect, i.e., "generating anew from existing generations," etc., I take it as Phase III of *sheng*. However, when *fu* focuses more on its returning aspect, I categorize it as one of three types below.

Type I – Returning as an indispensable part of *sheng*:

Since beginning is there, there is returning. (Slip 1)

有有焉有始, 有始焉有往。(Slip 1)

> The Heavenly Way is already carried; One is still being One, and returning is still being returning. The generations of Eternity and Qi are thus (Slip 9) returning to what they desire. Brightly, the heavens operate; it is returning that will never be abolished. (Slip 5)
>
> 天道既載, 唯一以猶一, 唯復以猶復。恒、氣之生, 因 (Slip 9) 復其所欲。明明天行, 唯復以不廢。(Slip 5)
>
> ... no matter of theirs will not return. (Slip 12)
>
> ......其事無不復。(Slip 12)

Type I is returning that continues the present *sheng*-generation and completes the *sheng* cycle. "Since beginning is there, there is returning." Clearly, without "returning," the *sheng* process with this particular "beginning" cannot be completed. In this sense, returning is just a particular form of *sheng*, even though it is termed *wang* or *fu*. *Hengxian* positively confirms this by stating that "Returning is the operation of generating anew from existing generations." Moreover, on slip 9, returning is presented as comparable with the Heavenly Way, and it is something "that will never be abolished." This significant role of returning as an indispensable portion of *sheng* is further emphasized as *shi wu bu fu* 事無不復, no matter will not return.

Type II – Returning as a new phase of *sheng*

> Returning (Slip 3) is the operation of generating anew from existing generations. Turbid Qi gives birth to the earth; clear Qi gives birth to the heavens. Qi stretches and extends; the multitudinous living things mutually give birth to one another. ... (Slip 4)
>
> 復 (Slip 3), 生之生行。濁氣生地, 清氣生天。氣信神哉, 云云相生。......(Slip 4)

As a particular form of *sheng*, returning is not *sheng*'s first phase but a new phase or a higher level of *sheng*, a new generation from existing generations. Such new generations are different from those previous generations that belong to the earlier phase. In particular, when "Qi stretches and extends" into myriad living things in the cosmos, it becomes impossible to identify which specific Qi gives birth to which living thing that contains a particular Qi. From the perspective of Qi, later generations actually represent a kind of "mutual generation" (*xiangsheng* 相生) of the same various earlier Qi. That is to say, various earlier Qi give birth to new things that consist of *new* or later Qi, and the *new* or later Qi actually always contain different forms of the earlier Qi, i.e., the earlier Qi are always transformed into the *new* or later Qi in this or that form. If we understand this generation as earlier Qi generating new forms of the earlier Qi, it is a result of mutual generation, the various Qi mutually generate themselves.

Type III – Returning as a beginning of *sheng*

> The waters return and assist Taiyi, thereby completing the heavens. The heavens return and assist Taiyi, thereby completing the earth. (Slip 1)
>
> 水反輔太一, 是以成天。天反輔太一, 是以成地。(Slip 1)
>
> It is thus that Taiyi hides in the waters, travels according to the seasons, returns to [the beginning] in a cyclical manner, [and takes itself as] (Slip 6) the mother of ten thousand things. ... (Slip 7)

是故, 太一藏於水, 行於時, 周而或 [始, 以己為] (Slip 6) 萬物母。 ......(Slip 7)。

Type III returning is clearly described in the “Taiyi sheng shui.” Different from the types of returning mentioned in the *Hengxian*, Type III returning starts a new cycle of *sheng*. Taiyi gives birth to the waters; when the waters return and assist Taiyi, that marks the beginning of another *sheng* process—Taiyi gives birth to the heavens. In the same way, after the heavens return and assist Taiyi, Taiyi starts another new cycle of *sheng*—giving birth to the earth. Such returning is cyclical, and if it repeats ten thousand times, Taiyi becomes “the mother of ten thousand things.” It is returning, *zhou er huo shi* 周而或始, “returns to the beginning in a cyclical manner,” that enables Taiyi to give birth to myriad things; such returning marks the beginning, rather than end, of *sheng*.

In summary, according to the bamboo-slip texts *Hengxian* and “Taiyi sheng shui,” *sheng* and *fu* were crucial concepts in Warring States’ era Daoist cosmogony. *Sheng* consists of three phases: Phase I, from non-being to being, via self-generating or self-arising, etc.; Phase II, from being to being, i.e., one thing giving birth to a second thing, which could be of either the same kind or a different kind; Phase III, generating anew from existing generations or pairs giving birth to new pairs. In the *Hengxian*, Phase III is termed *fu*, which is characterized as a typical form of *sheng*. According to these two texts, three different types of returning can also be identified. Since returning is a particular type of *sheng*, these three types of returning can also be observed from their connections with *sheng*: Type I, returning as an indispensable part of *sheng*—not only will returning “never be abolished” but also “no matter will not return”; Type II, returning as a new phase of *sheng*—not only new generations come from the previous generations, but actually myriad things mutually generate themselves; Type III, returning as a beginning of a new *sheng* process—returning does not mark the end of *sheng* but rather the beginning of *sheng*. Returning, according to these excavated cosmological texts, is a typical form of *sheng*. These are critical new concepts and ideas, and lacking the excavated texts, we would be that much farther away from an informed approach to early Daoist cosmogonies.

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Part II
The *Zhuangzi*

Chapter 6
Textual Issues in the *Zhuangzi*

Xiaogan Liu

Among the many important works of ancient China, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 provides the most fascinating, appealing, and puzzling food for thought. If we ignore Chinese textual conventions and methodologies, it is possible discover innumerable philosophical strands under the name of Zhuangzi—humanism, naturalism, skepticism, absolutism, idealism, materialism, relativism, pluralism, nihilism, mysticism, and even aspects that foreshadow postmodernism. In this sense, the book functions like a kaleidoscope: Readers can reach quite different understandings of key concepts like Dao, *wuwei* 無為, *ziran* 自然, *xiaoyao* 逍遙, and take those understandings in almost any direction.

Another important source of divergence and uncertainty about the *Zhuangzi* are questions that have long surrounded the divisions of the text, specifically, who were the author(s); what is the dating of chapters in the Inner, Outer, and Miscellaneous divisions; and what was the timing of the book's completion? Our discussion in this chapter will focus on the divisions of the *Zhuangzi* and emphasize the principles and methods by which analysis may be carried out on this sort of historical problem, based on literary convention and on a work's historical and cultural background.

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1 Five Positions

The earliest official record that survives Zhuangzi and his book is the biography by SIMA Qian (145–86 BC), according to which:

> Zhuangzi was a native of Meng 蒙, his first name was Zhou 周. He once served as a functionary at Qiyuan 漆園 in Meng. He was a contemporary of King Hui 惠 of Liang 梁 (r. 369–335 BC) and King Xuan 宣 of Qi 齊 (r. 369–301). There was nothing on which his erudition did not touch, but in their essentials they went back to the teachings of Laozi. Thus his works, over 100,000 characters, all consisted of allegories. He wrote “Yufu” (漁夫 The old fisherman), “Daozhi” (盜跖 The bandit Zhi), and “Quqie” (胠篋 Rifling in trunks), in which he mocked the likes of Confucius and illuminated Laozi’s learning. The likes of “Weileixu” (畏累虛) and “Kangsangzi” (亢桑子) were all fictions. Yet he was skilled at composition and turning a phrase, in referring to affairs and making analogies of situations, and with these he flayed the Confucians and Moists. Even the most profound scholars of the age could not defend themselves. His words billowed and swirled without restraint, for his own entertainment, and so from kings and dukes on down, the great men of his day could make no use of him. (adapted from Niehauser 1994: 23–24)

According to this biography, Zhuangzi’s book was over 100,000 characters in length. This is acceptable because the official Han bibliography indicates that the book contained 52 chapters; the extant version consists of 33 chapters with something over 70,000 characters in total. It also explains why some chapters mentioned in Sima’s biography do not appear in the current version. Actually, all extant editions of the *Zhuangzi* derive from the recension attributed to GUO Xiang 郭象 (252?–312). The 33 chapters Guo selected were organized into three divisions, namely, the Inner (chapters 1–7), Outer (chapters 8–22) and Miscellaneous chapters (chapters 23–33). By comparing Guo’s version to historical records of earlier versions, as we will do in the next section, we can conclude that Guo’s editing and grouping essentially followed conventions already established, especially with regard to the Inner chapters. His edition does not reflect simply arbitrary choices, as some scholars have believed. Comprising apparently disconnected passages of arguments, fables, dialogues, and stories, these 33 chapters have vastly varied philosophical outlooks and different literary styles, which are unlikely to be the work of a single author. Affixing definite authorship and dates to these heterogeneous writings seems impossible, and the debate among modern academics regarding these issues has continued for a century.

A critical question is whether or not we should trust Sima’s biography or how much we can rely on Sima’s work, including his belief that a person—Zhuangzi—wrote the book *Zhuangzi*. And how do we reckon the significance of changes Guo Xiang introduced to the work? Is there any reliable ground from which we can answer these questions?

In the late 1970s and early 1980s when I studied the *Zhuangzi* as a graduate student at Beijing University, answers to these questions fell into one of four camps:

1. From WANG Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–92) on, it has been widely accepted and agreed that not all chapters of the book were written by Zhuangzi himself. The Inner chapters were indeed written by ZHUANG Zhou 莊周 and so completed earlier

than the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. This conclusion strongly suggests that the Inner Chapters are the basic texts for studying Zhuangzi's philosophy. This is known as the "Inner Chapters theory."

2. An opposing opinion was posed by REN Jiyu 任繼愈 in the 1960s, who held that the Inner Chapters were actually later than the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, so the study of Zhuangzi's philosophy should be based on these two sections instead of the Inner Chapters (Ren 1983: 386). We can call this the "Outer and Miscellaneous Theory."
3. FENG Youlan 馮友蘭 asserted that "Xiaoyaoyou" 逍遙游 and "Qiwulun" 齊物論 should be considered the key sources for judging relevant texts from other chapters for the study of Zhuangzi's thought, regardless of those other texts' location among the tripartite divisions (Feng 1965: 367). It is a pity that Feng did not present the grounds for his principle or develop a regrouping based on his thinking. We will call this the "the First and Second chapters theory."
4. Another position suggested that the *Zhuangzi* was basically authored by ZHUANG Zhou, and so it was unnecessary to draw any distinctions among the three parts that GUO Xiang set out (Lu 1983: 1). We will call this the "Whole Book theory."

All these theories share a common assumption that the *Zhuangzi* must include the work of an author, Zhuangzi, and that the *Zhuangzi* was a distinct work, a book. However, recently a fifth theory has emerged, whose argument runs like this:

"Since in ancient China an anthology like the *Zhuangzi* consisted of a collection of scrolls to which new components could be added at any time, we need not assume the existence of finished 'book' . . ." (Fraser 1997: 157). This theory seems to be supported by Esther Klein, who suggests that the conventional position, that the Inner Chapters comprise the core and earliest section of the *Zhuangzi* book, might be totally wrong; those chapters could have been selected by a Han dynasty editor (Klein 2011).[1] Thus if the *Zhuangzi* was originally a mere collection of scrolls instead of a book, it suggests that the book as we have it today may have nothing to do with the person Zhuangzi, therefore we can also call this standpoint the "No Specific Author theory." If we focus on the formation of the work, we might also call

[1]Klein's work is serious and based on a broad survey of related literature. However, her hypothesis is still essentially based on skepticism and questions, instead of positive new evidence. The presuppositions of her argument are: (1) all ancient books and sections of them should be cited in or mentioned by other books; (2) all other books should have survived over two millenia to be available for us today; (3) as long as we cannot see X, we have grounds to suppose that it never existed. Great numbers of unearthed texts have repeatedly proved that these suppositions are groundless and should not be a basis for textual analyses. Too many texts we knew nothing about have been discovered by archeologists in recent decades. Klein's method is only valid for a defined and known object, but the realm of ancient books has proved an infinite, unknown kingdom. Klein's way of reasoning had been used by Herbert A. Giles (1845–1935), who once contended that the *Laozi* was forged from *Huainanzi* in the early Han dynasty. Giles' argument was based on his claim that Confucius, Mencius, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, Huainanzi, and SIMA Qian never saw or claimed to have seen the text of the *Laozi*. Archeologist findings have proven this argument groundless.

this position the "Any Time Collection theory." It is clear that we are unable to carry out serious discussion from this position since no definitive evidence has so far been provided, although David McCraw's recent rhyming analyses do seem favorable to this theory (McCraw 2010). His method is inventive, but its single rhyming approach and argument are not convincingly presented (Lynn 2012: 333–339).

Another well-known position was proposed by A. C. Graham (1919–1991), who accepted, based on statistics derived from the occurrence of selected words and terms, the "Inner Chapters theory," believing that the Inner Chapters were generally Zhuangzi's own work. He accepted the convention that there must be works of the historical person Zhuangzi. In addition, he thought that parts of the *Zhuangzi* were written as late as the early Han (second century B.C.E.) and claimed, "They [the *Zhuangzi* chapters] are not necessarily all Daoist and even among those which are, only the last six of the Outer chapters need be accepted as belonging consistently to Zhuangzi's own branch of Daoism" (Graham 1990: 283). Seen against the above-mentioned five positions, Graham's standpoint combined, by certain extensions, the "Inner Chapters theory" and the "Any Time Collection theory."

So we have a spectrum of positions regarding the relationship between the book and the person Zhuangzi. At one end is the fourth opinion, that the whole book is the work of Zhuangzi, and the other end is the fifth position, that the book just a collection of essays, which are not necessarily related to Zhuangzi or even to Daoism. The other theories either span several points or stand at one certain position between these two ends.

Before proceeding, we need to tackle a fundamental issue: what should the basis for our analysis? In other words, which materials can we rely on as we reexamine and assess the theories to arrive at a better position? FENG Youlan once said,

> When studying history, of no matter what period, one must employ some texts that everyone recognizes as reliable to act as a fulcrum, which one uses to distinguish a certain category of historical materials from others; otherwise there is no way research will make progress. (Feng 1965: 367)

Feng's asserts that history research must rely on historical documentation, even though these materials may not be complete and sufficiently accurate in all aspects and details. After all, we cannot decide on authorship or date a text merely by speculation and reasoning, or general information about ancient textual practices. At present, for any credible study of the *Zhuangzi*, the so-called "fulcrum" must include:

1. The received *Zhuangzi* itself, especially its divisions, the titles of its chapters, and anecdotes and stories about Zhuangzi;
2. Sima's brief biography of Zhuangzi;
3. Mentions of the historical or legendary figure Zhuangzi in texts of the pre-Qin and early Han eras, for instance, *Xunzi* (荀子), *Lüshi chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lü 呂氏春秋), and *Huainanzi* (淮南子);
4. Ancient bibliographies and related textual recensions, such as the royal bibliography ("Yiwenzhi" 藝文志) in *Han History* (*Hanshu* 漢書) and the *Interpretation of Classics* (*Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文) by LU Deming 陸德明 (550?–630);

5. Bamboo slips and silk manuscripts identified as pieces of the *Zhuangzi* text excavated in the past few decades, as well as new knowledge about textual conventions derived from these archeological findings.

No single item of the above five "fulcrums" can satisfactorily answer our questions on the textual issues. However, none of them should be neglected in a faithful academic investigation. They are helpful and necessary, though they are still insufficient to definitively resolve our doubts. To successfully parry new challenges in textual investigation, therefore, we must adopt a circumspect attitude and comprehensive and inclusive methodologies when choosing possible approaches. Two principles will be key to keep in mind:

1. We must be extremely careful and meticulous about reexamining the classics and related literature, especially as we evaluate which parts or aspects of ancient documents and texts are more reliable. Since conducting textual analysis is our main concern, we should neither totally believe in nor abandon issues of ancient textual convention because at least some of them could prove, if even imperfectly, a "fulcrum" for further exploration. Simply ignoring or denying the value of textual conventions could allow seemingly text-based discussion to devolve into free imagination or pure logical speculation with no historical grounds or textual foundation, like a kite that has lost its thread. If this were the case, academic discussion would become impossible, even pointless.
2. We should try to assess new evidence from both received documents and archeological findings and re-assess conventional "fulcrums" as objectively as possible. By considering its problem-solving potential, we may be able to establish more solid ground for academic discussion. This is a challenging task, but its rewards are worth the effort.

Both these principles are applied throughout our discussion, but Sect. 2 especially emphasizes the first, and Sect. 3 the second.

2 Conventions of the Literature and the Fulcrum of Research

The main problem we address here is the division of the work into Inner, Outer, and Miscellaneous chapters. Although there are divergent hypotheses about when, why, and by whom this division was made, can we therefore assume that the text evolved into its present form through accidental developments, without any cause and course, or understandable reasons? The answer must be "no," if we are serious about engaging evidence as we work out a position.

Many scholars believe it was Guo Xiang who introduced the divisions, yet others have maintained it was LIU Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BC), the imperial officer in charge of the recension and editing of books collected from all over the country. Liu was personally responsible for organizing books about the Confucian classics, writings of independent thinkers, and books of verse and songs. Though it is not necessary that Liu made the tripartite division, it was probably done before the end of the

Latter Han (25–220) period. Gao You 高誘 (fl. 205–212) recorded in his annotation of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 that "Zhuangzi is from county of Meng 蒙, in the state of Song 宋. He wrote a book of *thirty-three chapters* presenting Daoist ideas" (Gao 1985: 735).[2] Few scholars accept the assertion that Zhuangzi himself completed the whole 33 chapters; however, Gao's note suggests that Guo may not have been the first person to edit a 33-chapter version of the *Zhuangzi*, though he may well have made some modifications to the version he received. So we cannot fairly put the blame on Guo for muddling up the book and obscuring the course of its evolution.

Nevertheless, Wang Shumin 王叔岷 has contended that the tripartite division was made by Guo Xiang, based on nothing more than Guo's personal opinion (S. Wang: 17). That being the case, Wang has argued that the divisions in the received work should be ignored when discussing textual issues. To consider this assertion our best fulcrum is the Tang scholar Lu Deming's 陸德明 work *Jingdian shiwen* (*Interpretation of classics* 經典釋文), which elaborates on the records of the official Han bibliography:

> However, Master Zhuang (Zhuangzi) was renowned throughout the world as a great genius. The meaning of his writings is brilliant and profound, although paradoxical; that is why no one has been able to comprehend his great significance. Later generations added the extraneous sections and (the book) eventually strayed from its authenticity 後人增足, 漸失其真. For this reason Guo Zixuan (Guo Xiang) noted, "Those with limited ability inserted some strange essays on their own, like the preludes of Eyi 閼弈 and Yixiu 意脩, and the writings of Weiyan 危言, Youfu 游梟, and Zixu 子胥. Three out of ten are a crafty mixture 凡諸巧雜, 十分有三." (Lu 2006: 28)[3]

> According to the Official "Bibliography of Han Historian" 藝文志 [we have the] "*Zhuangzi* in fifty-two chapters." This is the volume annotated by Sima Biao 司馬彪 and Mr. Meng 孟氏. It speaks of the strange and curious. Sometimes it is compared to the *Shanhai jing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經), sometimes to a book of dream divination. So, annotators rely on their own ideas to delete or select [passages]. *The various editions all agree on the Inner Chapters* 其内篇衆家並同. Apart from this, some editions have Outer but no Miscellaneous chapters. Guo Xiang's commentary is particularly in harmony with the ideas of Zhuangzi and is something the world will treasure.[4] (Lu 2006: 28; Liu 1994: 43)

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[2]It is very probable that both the 52 and 33 chapter versions were in circulation by the end of Han dynasty. In Gao's annotation of *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (The Spring-Autumn Annals of Master Lü), he also mentions that Zhuangzi wrote a book of 52 chapters. Ho Che-wah once thought that the number 52 might be a correction of the 33 in Gao's annotation of the *Huainanzi* (Personal e-mail communication. As for the divergence of Gao's annotations of the two books, see Ho 2007: 109–138.). However, if we believe that Gao was a true scholar and would not make an annotation based on hearsay rather than literary evidence, then: (1) the word "thirty-three" must have been based on what he saw; (2) it is unlikely that the number "thirty-three" was a careless mistake for "fifty-two" because the pronunciation and graphs of the two in ancient Chinese were quite different; (3) it is difficult to imagine that such a mistake would coincidentally, yet perfectly, match the number of chapters in Guo Xiang's version of the *Zhuangzi*, which would only be completed dozens of years later.

[3]The text is based on a translation by Mr. Huang Zhuhua 黃柱華 with amendment; Yama Wong contributed to the first draft. I am responsible for any faults or mistakes.

[4]Translation by William E. Savage. Emphases are mine.

After this general introduction, Lu records nine versions of the *Zhuangzi* with annotations or phonetic notes, of which six specify chapter numbers and the divisions of chapters. We tabulate these six versions as follows.

Keeping in mind Lu's introduction and these annotations, as well as Guo's comment that "three out of ten are a crafty mixture," five points should be considered:

1. **The expansion of the book**

According to historical literature, Zhuangzi's work displays great talent and a perplexing style; therefore we can readily believe that few people were able to fully understand and present the magnitude of his ideas, let alone imitate him. As later followers supplemented with their own essays, the work was expanded and its original character gradually became muddied. This statement nods to the Any Time Collection theory: the work evolves as more and more essays are included. However, Lu also believes that the work took shape based on Zhuangzi's original, brilliant works, to which the later essays were attached. That being so, this theory cannot be entirely correct. If there were no earlier textual core that continued to fascinate and attract contributors, what would the later essays supplement? How could so many essays just accumulate into a collection, which someone then divided into three parts? Certainly, the Any Time Collection theory is a good match for the formation of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, but it is difficult to see how it pertains to the Inner Chapters.

2. **The distinction of the Inner Chapters from the rest**

The major differences around this book arise from the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. As Table 6.1 demonstrates, all disagreement among the various versions involves these sections. All editors' decisions about inclusion or exclusion occur only in and between the Outer and Miscellaneous sections, which strongly indicates that the editors agreed the Inner Chapters are special and should not be altered

Table 6.1 Comparison of various versions[a]

Versions	Total chapters	Inner chapters	Outer chapters	Miscellaneous	Interpretation
Sima Biao 司馬彪	52	7	28	14	3
Meng 孟氏	52	(7)	(45?)[b]	?	?
Cui Zhuan 崔譔	27	7	20	0	0
Xiang Xiu 向秀	26/27[c]	(7)	19/20	0	0
Li Yi 李頤	30/35	(7)	23/28	0	0
Guo Xiang 郭象	33	7	15	11	0

[a]Table 6.1 is based on Lu 2006: 28

[b]Numbers in parentheses indicate that it is our calculation according to Lu's accounts that "The Inner Chapters of the various editions all agree." Question marks suggest there is no specific information

[c]In the table, more than one number in a cell indicates there is alternative information recorded by Lu Deming. This is also a signal that Lu was faithful about taking notes on all divergent versions

or excluded. In addition, the word "inner" (*nei* 内) literally implies "closer to home," that is, the core and root, or the most important section. Lu's record and Guo's statement alert us to the fact that the inner and the other parts should not be considered equivalent. This observation is supported by the convention embodied in the *Mencius* and *Huangnanzi*. The original *Mencius* had the "outer chapters" (four chapters), and the *Huainanzi* once had "the middle chapters" (eight volumes) and "the outer book" (numerous volumes), in addition to the "inner book" (21 chapters). Meaningfully, only the "inner" parts of the *Mencius* and *Huainanzi* have survived selection and dissemination across history and remained extant. With these two cases as reference, the hypothesis that later editors and compilers have retained the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* untouched (or with minimal amendments) but deleted chapters or sections of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters is more reasonable than others conjectures.[5] Actually, we have so far no evidence that the Inner Chapters were ever as mixed and disorderly as the Outer and Miscellaneous sections. Lu's documentation of the distinction between the Inner and Outer and Miscellaneous chapters provides stronger support to the Inner Chapters theory.

By WANG Shumin contending that "the arrangement of the Inner, Outer and Miscellaneous chapters of the GUO Xiang edition took place through casually moving chapters up into the Inner Chapters or down into the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters according to [Guo's] own ideas of inclusion and exclusion" (S. Wang 1978: 17; Liu 1994: 42), he suggests that the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters all contain Zhuangzian and non-Zhuangzian material, though the Inner Chapters have more of Zhuangzi's work than the others. This position is reminiscent of the Whole Book theory, which claims that we should not take the tripartite divisions seriously; it is also like the First and Second Chapter theory that claims one should look for Zhuangzi's work in all three divisions. But such theories commonly lack any criteria for discerning Zhuangzi's work and give no indication as to which chapters are reliably Zhuangzi's. Neither Wang nor Feng provided rigorous guidelines here, and neither did any others, though by taking this position some philosophers assumed the freedom to choose any chapters and passages they liked, according to their own unspecified standards, to create different versions of Zhuangzian philosophy.

3. **Agreement in the historical record**

There is perfect agreement among Sima's bibliography, Lu's records, Guo's statement, and the extant *Zhuangzi*. Sima said the work was more than 100,000 characters, while Lu agreed with this and added that full or longest versions had

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[5]The convention of distinguishing between "inner" and "outer" chapters has continued throughout history; for example, GE Hong's 葛洪 (284–363) *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 has inner and outer chapters, dealing with Confucianism and Daoism, respectively. As late as the Qing dynasty, ZHUANG Xuecheng's 章學誠 (1738–1801) *Wenshi Tongyi* 文史通義 also divided into inner and outer chapters. Obviously, essays of the inner chapters are more important and serious than the outer ones. There is no grounds to claim that the distinction between the inner and outer chapters is meaningless.

52 chapters. Guo noted that three in ten of the essays in the original versions consist of disorganized passages and knock-off pieces. If we suppose that Guo deleted that 30 %, then his version should be around 70,000 characters, which is just about the length of the extant Guo recension. The 33 of 52 chapters also bring the remaining portion to about 70 %. Thus, thanks to Guo's editorial judgment, irrelevant chapters and passages were deleted, and the pieces that more closely resembled the mythological *Classics of Mountains and Seas* or dream divination were eliminated. We can see that this is so by examining the collections of "lost words and sentences" from the *Zhuangzi* (莊子逸文) compiled by WANG Shumin 王叔岷 (1914–2008) and MA Xulun 馬敘倫 (1885–1970).[6] These lost words and sentences prove Lu's comment that in the earlier 52 chapter version, there are "strange and curious" pieces, or redundant pieces that are somehow similar to but different from the extant text in substantial ways. Hence, we should recognize that Guo did not arbitrarily redact the text, but reasoned out the relative quality and integrity of its different parts, though he did not do his job perfectly: there remain some redundant or surprising pieces in the current version. This fact also favors the Inner Chapters theory over other theories.

4. **The agreement about the Inner Chapters**

LU Deming makes a clear statement: "The various editions all agree on the Inner Chapters" 其内篇衆家並同 . Lu was a serious scholar, and he had read, cited, and compared about a dozen of the then-available versions, only one of which is extant today. Still, we have no grounds to doubt his judgment. As Table 6.1 shows, the Inner Chapters have remained stable across all versions. However, there are opinions that deny or ignore this agreement, arguing that the meaning of Lu's statement merely refers to the number of the chapters, but the question of the seven chapters content is unresolved. This reading is neither accurate nor convincing. Let's revisit the passage to clarify: "Sometimes it is like the *Shanhai jing* (*Classics of Mountains and Seas* 山海經), sometimes like a book of dream divination. So, annotators rely on their own ideas to delete or select. *The various editions all agree on the Inner Chapters*." Obviously this comment concerns the content of the *Zhuangzi* and does not engage the number issue.

Through a careful reading of LU Deming's records we find ample evidence that, in the GUO Xiang version, certain suspect chapters and passages have been deleted from Outer and Miscellaneous parts. Although we cannot firmly conclude that every word and sentence of the Inner Chapters was written by one person, Zhuangzi, we have no evidence that Guo botched the division of the book, and must agree that historically and literarily, the Inner Chapters have been recognized as a special part

[6]Ma collected 128 items and Wang 150. These are neither valuable for the study of Zhuangzi's thought, nor useful for textual recension because scholars in antiquity quoted others' words according to memory and understanding, instead of copying word for word. And the "lost" passages are piecemeal and insignificant. Some are very strange, and some are redundant. See Wang 1988: 1383–1314; Ma 1925; for comments about the lost pieces, see Cui 1992: 50–52.

of the work. It is certainly possible the Inner Chapters may not be perfectly intact, in their pristine original shape, but we just have no solid grounds for picking out adulterations or modifications. In next section we will discuss some evidence on this point.

5. The problem of redundant passages

Quite a few items of what looks like evidence have been cited in opposition to the statements of Lu and Guo, by way of *sample argumentation*.[7] But this method has been shown to be unreliable. Here we will briefly analyze one example WANG Shumin used to support his argument. Wang contends:

> Another example is the first part of chapter 1 in the *Bailun shu* 百論疏 by the Sui 隋 dynasty Buddhist, Ji Zang 吉藏 (548–623). There it says, "In the Outer Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, there is the story of Cook Ding 庖丁, who had not seen a whole ox for twelve years." In the present edition, this story occurs in the third chapter, "Yangshengzhu" 養生主, in the Inner Chapters. (Wang 1978: 18)[8]

This example features textual corruptions that should send up red flags. In fact, the sentence "Cook Ding had not seen a whole ox for twelve years" does not appear in the present edition of "Yangshengzhu" in the Inner chapters. The only passages that relate to the sense of this quote are "After three years, I no longer saw the whole ox"; and "Now, I have used my knife for nineteen years." Neither is very close in either form or content to what Ji Zang quoted. If his sentence were to appear in the received edition, it would be both redundant and incongruous. There is no way to establish that this chapter was originally in the Outer Chapters, since we cannot be sure that the phrase "did not see a whole ox for twelve years" was derived from the received version of chapter 3 "Yangshengzhu." In fact, there is a good possibility that this fragment comes from another version or a similar story appearing in the Outer Chapters that GUO Xiang deleted in the shortened edition.

This kind of confusion is not difficult to understand. In the received edition, a similar situation occurs in chapter 2 "Qiwulun" 齊物論 of the Inner Chapters and chapter 24 "Xuwugui" 徐無鬼 in the Miscellaneous Chapters. Both contain stories relating how "Nanguo Ziqi 南郭子綦 sat leaning on his armrest, staring up at the sky." Though their contents are similar, they cannot be considered the same story based on this single line. If a commentary in another work noted that "the Miscellaneous Chapters say that Nanguo Ziqi sat leaning on his armrest, staring up at the sky," later students might well be unable to decide if the story that appears chapter 2 about Nanguo Ziqi originated in the Miscellaneous Chapters or in the Inner Chapters. Similar situations arise with the parables of the great tree; of the fish; of the pear, orange, and grapefruit; and on the question of being an ox or a horse. Since duplications between the Inner and Outer and Miscellaneous chapters remain so numerous even in Guo Xiang's shortened edition, one can imagine how

[7] About the weakness of sample argumentation, please see chapter one.

[8] The translation is by William E. Savage, adopted from Liu 1994: 40.

many there must have been in the original 52-chapter edition. We cannot rely on a single sentence in a commentary like Ji Zang's Buddhist book to decide where a certain chapter should or should not appear.[9]

Based on our analyses of redundant examples in the received *Zhuangzi* and the lost passages, and considering the evolution of the book from a core text to an early 52 chapter version, then to the 33-chapter version, we can arrive at a couple of possible explanations: First, Zhuangzi wrote more than one version of a fable or story, and the later or less favored ones were collected as additional section. Second, it is more likely that Zhuangzi's disciples imitated the master's ideas and style to write similar pieces, which were also collected in an additional section. These additional sections, no matter whether written by Zhuangzi himself or his followers, were compiled into the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters by certain later editors. Many "redundant" passages of this kind were deleted by Guo Xiang or other editors, but some of them were quoted in other books and so remained available for Wang and Ma to collect as "lost passages." Is this not a reasonable explanation of why so many similar passages appear across sections or are missing from the extant *Zhuangzi*?

To sum up, based on literary convention and written records, we can see clearly that editors of antiquity believed that the *Zhuangzi's* Inner Chapters should not be disrupted, even though they felt free to rearrange and reassign the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. Since the Inner Chapters as a body were seen to be a special unit distinct from the other chapters, it follows that if Zhuangzi's work survives in the collection that bears his name, it must be the Inner Chapter as a unit. At present we don't have sufficient evidence to clearly discriminate what later writings might lurk within the Inner Chapters, but we do believe it might contain some later passages.

3 New Evidence

Above section presents our approach to analysis grounded in the close reexamination of traditional literature. Because Chinese textual studies have a strong skeptical tradition, we must try to search for new and objective evidence to prove or disprove the traditional textual records. This is our second principle: to search out new clues, with the expectation that new data, if it is more objective, can provide better grounds to prove or disprove certain positions. We cannot know the outcome before the search is complete, and we cannot hide findings that favor or disfavor our position, based on conventions in and around the practice of literature in early Chinese history.

[9]For more analyses against Wang's arguments see Liu 1994: 38–45 (English) and Liu 2010: 45–48 (Chinese).

The basis of our argument runs below.

Hypothesis 1: If the distinctions between the Inner Chapters and Outer and Miscellaneous chapters are the result of historical developments, then objective differences between them must exist and are possible to find.
Hypothesis 2: If these objective differences are based in chronology, then the early part should be the originator's work and later part the followers'.
Hypothesis 3: If objective distinctions between the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters can be found, then we must conclude that the records in the traditional literature are essentially reliable, though there might be mistakes and ambiguity around specific details.

So the crux of the question is, are there any objective differences between the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, and can these objective distinctions be used to ascertain their chronological relationship? What follows are the results of our painstaking comparison:

1. The usage of three compounds in the *Zhuangzi*.

After a half-year's search, a credible distinction between the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters was identified. It is the use of three philosophical terms which appear as single characters in the Inner Chapters but two-character compounds in the other two divisions. In the Inner Chapters the key concepts *dao* 道 (Way), *de* 德 (Virtue), *ming* 命 (destiny), *jing* 精 (essence), and *shen* 神 (mind, spirit) appear and signify clearly. However, they never appear there in the compound forms (*daode* 道德, *xingming* 性命 and *jingshen* 精神) that occur repeatedly in the other two divisions. Table 6.2 summarizes the frequency of the compounds across the three divisions.[10]

Referring to Table 6.2, we can see that the use of the three compounds clearly distinguishes the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters from the Inner ones.[11] None of the compound terms appears in the Inner Chapters, compared with 36 uses in the other two divisions. Does this distinction offer any significant clues for dating the two portions of text? On this question, studies in the history of the Chinese language are helpful. They have shown that simple, single-character terms appeared first and that only later did compound phrases gradually appear (L. Wang 1956: 452). This development is similar to the formation of English compound words: We have "basket" and "ball" individually first then we have the new compound "basketball." With the passage of time, the use of compounds becomes more frequent and prevalent. This suggests a possible relation between the Inner Chapters and the other two parts, but is not definitive.

[10]The word "compound" is used here in a loose sense, namely a fixed combination of two words. It is not used as a rigorous linguistic term.

[11]All the occurrences counted in the Table 6.2 are listed in Liu 1994: 4–9 (English) and Liu 2010: 26–29 (Chinese).

Table 6.2 Compounds in ***Zhuangzi***

Chapters	Dao de 道德	Xing ming 性命	Jing shen 精神	Total
Inner 1–7	0	0	0	0
Outer				
8	3	3	0	6
9	2	0	0	2
11	0	5	0	5
13	4	0	2	6
14	0	1	0	1
15	1	0	1	2
16	0	1	0	1
20	3	0	0	3
22	0	1	2	3
Miscellaneous				
23	1	1	0	2
28	1	0	0	1
32	0	0	2	2
33	1	0	1	2
Total	16	12	8	**36**

The absence of the three compounds in the Inner Chapters and the 36 occurrences in the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters do, however, amount to an objective distinction between the two parts of the text. This is a proof to our hypothesis 1.

2. History of the emergence of the three compounds.

To see whether this distinction between the Inner and other chapters is significant, we have to investigate the emergence of the three compounds, *daode*, *xingming,* and *jingshen* in other ancient works. According to our survey, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary of Spring and Autumn*), *Analects* 論語, *Mozi* 墨子, *Laozi* 老子 and *Mencius* 孟子, which were written before the mid-Warring States period, all contain many phrases and compounds formed with the words *dao* 道, *de* 德, *ming* 命, *jing* 精 and *shen* 神. But the precise compounds *daode* 道德, *xingming* 性命 and *jingshen* 精神 do not appear anywhere in those works. In other works of the same period, such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Odes*), *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Book of History*), *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the States*) there is again no trace of these compounds. This means that *daode*, *xingming* and *jingshen* were not broadly used before the mid-Warring States period, that is, in the period before Mencius.[12]

[12]Here we did not consider the "Tuanzhuan 彖傳" and "Shuogua 說卦" of the Zhouyi 周易, in which *xingming* 性命 appears twice and *daode* 道德 once, because there is no clear agreement on the dating of those passages. In addition, the Guodian bamboo-slip text "Tangyuzhidao" 唐虞之道 uses *xingming* once. But even if all these works date to before the *Mencius*, our general observation would not be adversely effected because compounds emerged gradually, so that if a few cases appear earlier than their general usage that can be counted as normal and understandable.

Table 6.3 Compounds in **other texts**

Text titles	Dao de 道德	Xing ming 性命	Jing shen 精神	Total
Zuozhuan 左傳	0	0	0	0
Analects 論語				
Mozi 墨子				
Laozi 老子				
Mengzi 孟子				
Xunzi 荀子	11	1	2	14
Hanfeizi 韓非子	2	1	10	13
Lüshi chunqiu 呂氏春秋	2	11	2	15
Total	15	13	14	**42**

These compounds do appear in the *Xunzi* 荀子 (286–255 BC?), and we also find them in other pre-Qin works such as the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (280?–233 BC) and *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Spring and Autumn of Master Lü,* edited by Lü Buwei 呂不韋 291?–235 BC). Their emergence and rate of usage in these texts are tabulated in Table 6.3.[13] The three had become quite common in the Han period, appearing in such varied works such as the *Xinyu* 新語 (*New Words*), *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (*The Collected Scholarship of Prince Huainan*?), and *Lunheng* 論衡 (*Discourses Weighed in the Balance*). Their emergence and increased use occurred over a number of decades from the middle- to the late-Warring States eras.

Comparing Tables 6.2 and 6.3 side by side,[14] we find an intriguing historical coincidence: before Mencius, there were only rare occurrences of the compounds, and none at all in the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*. Both Zhuangzi (369?–286? BC) and Mencius (372?–289? BC) were contemporaries of King Hui 惠 of Liang 梁 (r. 369–335 BC) and King Xuan 宣 of Qi 齊 (r. 369–301 BC), therefore it is significant that neither the Inner Chapters nor the *Mencius* used the compounds. If we believe the *Zhuangzi* contains writing by Zhuangzi, then that work must be in the Inner Chapters. This is a proof for our Hypothesis 2.

3. Another objective distinction between the Inner and Outer chapters.

One scholar has suggested that the distinction of the compound usage might be "due to differences in content and style" (Fraser 1997: 157). This point was made by the same scholar who argued for the Any Time Collection theory (or No Specific Author theory) based on the conventions of literary practice and the format of "books" in ancient China. The point is generally credible if we wish to engage in an open discussion without clear historical boundaries and grounds. We cannot tell if an

[13] All sentences counted in Table 6.3 are listed in Liu 1994: 9–15 (English) and Liu 2010: 29–33 (Chinese).

[14] The comparison of Tables 6.2 and 6.3 focuses on the distinction between the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, then comparing that with the Mencius and later texts. It is not meant to suggest that each text has a precise counterpart in the *Zhuangzi* chapters.

essay using the compound "basketball" is necessarily later than ones that use only "basket" and "ball" without specific texts and related background knowledge, and that judgment depends importantly on the content of the essay. This same point also applies to the use of "Dao" and "de" instead of "Daode," or vice versa, which may also arise from either the demands of the content or personal practice.

However, our discussion is neither a general nor a wide-open exercise: it deals with a specific book that was historically formed into three units. The plausible dating of those units coincides with the period in which the usage of the compound terms grew from none (or very few) to many. It would be hasty and injudicious to neglect or dismiss the timing of that emergence or to assume that the objectively different terminology of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters is a simply matter of ahistorical personal practice. If the challenger proposing the Any Time Collection also suggests that the works in different divisions could have been written in the same period instead being a gradual collection, he contradicts his major hypothesis. This logical contradiction throws a significant obstacle in the path of serious discussion.

But to answer this skepticism, we can point to another piece of evidence to further support the conclusion we have proposed. In the entire *Zhuangzi* there are a total 29 sections that directly record Zhuangzi's activities, stories, or anecdotes.[15] Excluding the few that appear in the Inner Chapters, such as Zhuangzi's dream of becoming a butterfly, which are possibly in Zhuangzi's own words, the others seem to record Zhuangzi's activities and stories told by his followers. Table 6.4 offers a summary of all such mentions.

It is obvious from Table 6.4 that of the 25 stories of Zhuangzi's activities or anecdotes in 12 of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, only 2 (or 8 %) appear at the end of those chapters. In these 12 chapters, this type of narrative is more often featured at the beginning or in the middle parts, with one coming first and six coming second. All such passages in the Inner Chapters appear at the end of the chapters.

How to explain this pattern of distribution? We should take into account ancient Chinese social conventions, namely, that disciples must show respect to their masters, and so students should always position their teacher's person or work before and higher than themselves. Thus, a reasonable explanation for the arrangement of Zhuangzi stories might be, if the Inner Chapters are the master's own work, then anecdotes about Zhuangzi recorded by students could only properly be appended at the end of his compositions. The Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, as student compositions, consequently record their teacher's activities in more important positions. This further supports our method and overall argument.

[15]For all the 29 passages, see Liu 1994: 18–21 (English) and Liu 2010: 34–36 (Chinese). There is a special section in chapter 33 "Tianxia," that clearly comments on Zhuangzi's thought. Because the general form of this chapter differs from the others, however, we are unable to compare it to similar essays, and we will not include it in our comparative figures.

Table 6.4 Positions of the passages featuring Zhuangzi

Chapter	No. of sections	Sections featuring Zhuangzi	Position within the chapter		
Inner					
1 Xiaoyaoyou	5	#4, #5			End
2 Qiwulun	10	#10			End
5 Dechongfu	6	#6			End
Outer					
13 Tiandao	10	#2	Beginning		
14 Tianyun	7	#2	Beginning		
17 Qiushui	7	#4, #5, #6, #7		Middle	End
18 Zhile	7	#2, #4	Beginning	Middle	
20 Shanmu	9	#1, #6, #8	Beginning	Middle	
21 Tianzifang	10	#5		Middle	
22 Zhibeiyou	11	#6		Middle	
Miscellaneous					
24 Xuwugui	15	#5, #6		Middle	
25 Zeyang	12	#6		Middle	
26 Waiwu	11	#2, #7, #8	Beginning	Middle	
27 Yuyan	7	#2	Beginning		
32 Lieyukou	12	#2, #4, #10, #11, #12	Beginning	Middle	End

4. Avoid reaching a conclusion based on insufficient data

Many analytic works have been written on a certain chapter's style, language, and ideas. This close reading technique may also be helpful for addressing the problems of author and date; however, many of these studies unfortunately depend more or less on personal understanding and interpretation, and few are grounded in objective evidence.

The argument we pursue here is comprehensive and holistic, taking the Inner Chapters and Outer and Miscellaneous chapters as two distinct bodies as historical fact, though we do not exclude the possible existence of some currently unknowable exceptions. An easy challenge to the plausibility of the Inner Chapters as Zhuangzi's works might be this: Some essays from the Outer or Miscellaneous chapters lack either the three compounds or anecdotes about Zhuangzi, so how can you prove that they are later works and not those of the master. The response is simple: These are not sufficient grounds to discuss the dating and authorship of an isolated single essay or passage, because we have no reliable point of comparison or evidence. Our argumentation is grounded on the fact of the division of the Inner and other chapters, and this challenge ignores that factual presupposition and so can be considered irrelevant.

Trying to determine the author and date of one single chapter or passage in the *Zhuangzi* would entail neglecting or dismissing historical convention and the textual record. For example, there may be a piece added by later scholars to the Inner Chapters, or pieces written by Zhuangzi have remained in the Outer Chapters. But

we just have no instrument by which to identify and talk about them. Certainly there could be exceptions. Suppose two tour groups come to New York. We believe one to be from the UK and the other from Australia because of their English accents. In most cases we would accurate, but there could be exceptions in each group. A few exceptions do not negate the general judgment. Likewise, we cannot expect to judge the author and dating of a small unit because our information is simply insufficient.

4 Completion of the Book

Now we move on to the next issue: When was the *Zhuangzi* as a distinct work completed? There was no question, until the Ming dynasty, that the *Zhuangzi* is a pre-Qin text. However, this view drew new challenges under the inspiration of a movement called "Doubting Antiquity" in the early twentieth century. That movement was significant and positive in promoting a skeptical spirit in the study of ancient history and texts. However, archaeological discoveries have repeatedly proved that scholars of the Doubting Antiquity movement went too far with their claims that most ancient classics and other works were false and late. Regarding the *Zhuangzi*, a dominant theory in Western scholarship, promoted by such leaders as A. C. Graham, was that the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters must be works completed in early Han times. We will refer to this as the Early Han theory. Based on numerous discoveries in ancient tombs, the respected archaeologist Li Xueqin 李學勤 now advocates that we move forward from the Doubting Antiquity era (X. Li 2002: 19–25). But this does not mean we should return to believing all the traditional views. The useful lessons of this movement include:

1. We need a healthy spirit of skepticism to conduct academic research, but skepticism per se is not sufficient grounds on which to build new theories and hypotheses.
2. We cannot depend on *sample argumentation* to build new theories and hypotheses.[16]

Archeologists have found bamboo slip versions of the *Zhuangzi* and from the evidence of those fragments believe they have proof that the Inner Chapters of *Zhuangzi* were plausibly written by Zhuangzi himself and that the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters were also completed in the pre-Qin period (X. Li 1998). This completely agrees with our position (Liu 1994: 49–82). However, because the bamboo slip versions are fragmentary, they may not convince all academics.

[16]For the weakness of the sample argumentation see chapter 1 of this volume. Some think the present author also uses language "samples" as evidence, but this misunderstands and distorts our method. Our argumentation is based on statistics gained from a comparison of *all* relevant language materials in specific text bodies. It relies on a definite database, depending on neither selected examples that support a position already decided nor general conjectures made in an infinitely open world.

Therefore argumentation based on textual investigation is still helpful. We shall list our textual evidence of special significance in this matter.

1. Evidence from *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Hanfeizi*

Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋 and *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 both contain passages that indicate the dating of the *Zhuangzi*'s Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. *Lüshi chunqiu* shares many passages with the *Zhuangzi,* but who copied whom? Our answer is that there is only one possibility, that the *Lüshi chunqiu* copied the *Zhuangzi*. Here are three instances of supporting evidence.

First, the editor's objective was to make the *Lüshi chunqiu* an encyclopedic work that collected what others had said: "LÜ Buwei 吕不韋 ordered his retainers to record what they had learned. The collected treatise comprised eight Views (*lan* 覽), six Arguments (*lun* 論), and twelve Records (*ji* 紀) in over 200,000 characters. Proclaiming that it embraced Heaven and Earth, the myriad things and all events old and new, he called it *Lüshi chunqiu*" (Sima 1959: 2510). For an encyclopedic work, it was fair play to copy and quote the content of other books, and add some interpretation. But the practice of copying other books was absolutely contrary to the original impulse and the unique ideas and style of the *Zhuangzi.*

Second, since the method of *Lüshi chunqiu* was to borrow others' essays to establish its own positions, this project required substantial quotes from other books. This explains the highly structured format of the writings. Each of its chapters consists of numerous quotations that include historical incidents and stories. At the end of each quotation, a short discussion and conclusions are attached. Sometimes a brief explanation is added to tie a story to the theme of the chapter. Conversely, the authors of the *Zhuangzi* operated outside this kind of constraint and were free to create stories, tell parables, make criticisms, and express their thoughts as they pleased.

Third, we have a direct quotation of Zhuangzi's sayings found in the "Quyou" 去尤 section of *Lüshi chunqiu*. Compare the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 19 "Dasheng" 達生, which reads,

> Confucius said: "A good swimmer will be able to row a boat after but a few attempts. You shoot skillfully when you bet on clay tiles in an archery contest. You tremble when you wager for belt buckles. And you become confused when you wager for gold. In all these cases, your skill remains the same—but because one prize means more, external considerations bear down on you. Whenever the external becomes weighty, one gets stupid on the inside." (Q. Guo 1978: 642)[17]

And this passage in "Quyou":

> Zhuangzi said, "You shoot effortlessly in an archery contest when betting on clay titles. You struggle when betting for belt buckles and become dangerously agitated when betting for gold. The fortunes are the same for all three cases. And yet, because one becomes agitated,

[17]Passages of the *Zhuangzi*, *Lushi Chunqiu*, and other texts in this section were translated by William E. Savage; they are cited from Liu 1994.

> it must be on account of an external element being more important. Whoever places more importance on the external dissipates his strength and becomes internally confused." The men of Lu could be criticized for emphasizing externals. (Lü 1984: 689).

Here is clear evidence that the guest scholars working for LÜ Buwei copied from the *Zhuangzi*; In the entire text of the Zhuangzi, however, we do not find any evidence of plagiarizing.

Another significant pre-Qin work, the *Hanfeizi*, also borrowed passages from the *Zhuangzi*. For example, "Gengsangchu" 庚桑主 in the *Zhuangzi* reads,

> If a sparrow came within Archer Yi's range, he would certainly shoot it down—an awesome display. But if he had made the whole world into a cage, then the sparrow would have had nowhere to escape. (Q. Guo 1978: 814).

The almost same text appears in the *Hanfeizi*, "Nan San" 難三:

> Therefore a man from Song said, 'If a sparrow went past archer Yi, he would certainly shoot it down—he was a wizard. Had he made the whole world into a net, then not a single sparrow would have escaped.' Now to understand the villainous is also like a large net from which no one escapes. (Hanfeizi 2001: 914)

Zhuangzi was a native of the state of Song, so "a man from Song" in the cited passage obviously points to the *Zhuangzi*.

In total we find 30 *Zhuangzi* passages quoted in 16 chapters of *Lüshi chunqiu* and 4 chapters of the *Hanfeizi*; these come from at least 14 chapters in the *Zhuangzi*.[18] This number of quoted chapters is 42 % of the received 33 chapter edition. In other words, the *Zhuangzi* text was rather frequently quoted around the end of the Warring States period. This would not have been possible if the *Zhuangzi* of that time had not already taken shape as a distinct and widely circulated work. Moreover, the proportion of the number of chapters quoted by the two books from the Inner, Outer, and Miscellaneous chapters is 3:6:5, which is fairly close to the 7:15:11 distribution of chapters in the received edition. These similar proportions suggest that the content of the three divisions had basically taken shape at this early time. That is to say, the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters had been largely completed by the end of the Warring States Period.

Fraser has suggested that some passages we count as *Zhuangzi* quotations might have come from a third unknown work (Fraser 1997: 157). Actually, this possibility had already been taken into consideration, and our analysis did not count phrases like *feiyu ze wu* 非愚則誣 and *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情, which do show up in other works of the time. But even if a few quotations came from a third party and not the *Zhuangzi*, the general result of statistics would not be affected. We cannot find any basis for accepting the possibility that all these quotations were collected from other books or essays, and that those works had simply disappeared—but only after being collected into the *Zhuangzi*.

[18]The *Zhuangzi* passages quoted in the *Hanfeizi* and *Lüshi Chunqiu* are listed in Liu 1994: 50–61 (English) and Liu 2010: 52–57 (Chinese).

2. Support from Xunzi's comments

Our conclusion is additionally supported by Xunzi's comments about Zhuangzi among five other early thinkers such as Mozi 墨子 and Shenzi 慎子. He formally criticized him: "Zhuangzi was blinded by Nature (*tian* 天) and was insensible to men." (Knoblock 1994: 102) Because Xunzi's work is earlier than *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Hanfeizi*, we can believe that Zhuangzi was as influential as many other thinkers during the time Xunzi was active. This suggests that Zhuangzi's book, or at least its major body, composed of the Inner and other chapters, was in circulation and well thought of in many different elite circles.

3. Support from JIA Yi's *fu*

Another bit of support for our position comes from literary works of the very beginning of Western Han dynasty (206 BC–8 AD). JIA Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BC) was famous for his writings, including the two *fu* 賦 (rhymeprose works) "Lament for QU Yuan" (Diao Qu Yuan fu 弔屈原賦) and "Rhyme-prose on the owl" (Funiao fu 鵩鳥賦). Popular during the Han dynasty, the *fu* form was a lengthy poem, and in Jia's *fu*, we see evidence that he read the *Zhuangzi* intently and used its allusions and quotations extensively. These two short verses together have no more than 800 characters, but among them are 21 places that feature ideas borrowed or developed from the *Zhuangzi*. They relate to 14 chapters, with 3 from the Inner Chapters, 8 from the Outer Chapters, and 3 from the Miscellaneous Chapters. This again points to the plausibility of the *Zhuangzi* circulating as a book by the end of the Warring States period, a book that already included the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters.[19]

Invalidation of the arguments of the Early Han theory may also found in the usage of certain words and terms. Many terms and expressions were taken as evidence for the Early Han theory, for example, "the six classics" (*liu jing* 六經), "the twelve classics" (*shi er jing* 十二經), "the Three August Ones and the Five Emperors" (*san huang wu di* 三皇五帝), the "Uncrowned King" (*suwang* 素王), and "primer" (*zaixiang* 宰相), because of their appearance in early Han literature. However, they were also appear in literature before the Han and so do not qualify as evidence in support of that theory. This example again demonstrates the weakness of *sample argumentation.*

Some other terms are also claimed to be Han phrases, such as "super immortals" (*shangxian* 上仙), "white clouds" (*baiyun* 白雲), and "home of the god" (*dixiang* 帝鄉), because no use of them has been found so far in pre-Qin texts besides the *Zhuangzi*. However, scholars of Qing dynasty who made this kind of argument did not provide specific examples of their Han counterparts. We have no evidence to negate the possibility that these phrases made their earliest appearance in the *Zhuangzi*. Any new term has a first appearance before it is adopted in other texts

[19]For details see Liu 1994: 61–66 (English); Liu 2010: 57–60 (Chinese) It is unlikely that the *Zhuangzi* was completed in the very short Qin dynasty (223–206 BC) because the first emperor of Qin issued an order to ban all books among the common people except official laws and some practical technology works.

and popularized. This time delay seems especially possible two millenia ago, when communications were much slower than today. It does not provide grounds for pegging the first appearance of a text to a historical period when some of its terms and words became prevalent.[20] Furthermore, while great numbers of events, figures, and places from the pre-Qin era appear in the *Zhuangzi*, there is no similar mention of early Han counterparts. So sample argumentation falls short again. A single appearance of rare terms and phrases in the *Zhuangzi,* without sufficient references in other texts, cannot be used as evidence to date a chapter or a group of essays, let alone the whole book. Generally speaking, an adequate quantity of linguistic materials, a defined databank, and relevant and comparable language samples are necessary conditions for textual analysis, and specifically for text dating.

5 Classification and the Relation of the Chapters

We can conclude that the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi,* or most of that section, was plausibly written by Zhuangzi himself during the mid-Warring States period, if we believe that the book must be related to the name it bares. We have also reviewed evidence that the remaining two divisions were written afterward by his followers or related thinkers, mostly before the Qin. Now the next issue is to sort out the divergence and classification of the 26 chapters of the Outer and Miscellaneous parts. The differences seen in and across these sections are broad and sometimes dramatic, in light of both the doctrine espoused and the style of the composition. For example, some chapters seem to be indifferent towards the virtues *ren* 仁 (benevolence) and *yi* 義 (righteousness), in the line of Inner Chapters, but some attack these values fiercely, while others incorporate them into their Daoistic system. Hence, careful classification of these sections is necessary and significant to any serious research on the *Zhuangzi*.

Various classifications have been proposed since the twentieth century, such as those of LUO Genze 羅根澤, YE Guoqing 葉國慶, GUAN Feng 關峰, ZHANG Hengshou 張恆壽 (Liu 1994: 85; Cui 1992: 73–103); these posed 6, 9, and even 12 distinct groups as responsible for the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. In the English scholarship, A. C. Graham's work is the most influential. He ascribed the 26 chapters to authors from 4 different schools, which he designated the "Primitivists" (chapters 8–12), the "Syncretists" (chapters 12–14), the "Zhuangzi" school (chapters 17–22), and the Yangists (chapters 28–31) (Graham 1981). He discussed extensively the differences among the chapters but had little to say about their general similarity. Based on his findings of "profound differences," he excluded most of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters of the *Zhuangzi* from branches of the Daoist school (Graham 1990: 283).

[20] For detailed argument and evidence, see Liu 1994: 66–82 (English) or Liu 2010: 60–69 (Chinese).

Past classifications reflect two attitudes toward the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. One emphasizes their differences and disregards their resemblance and even identicalness, a position that seems in line with the Any Time Collection theory; the other stresses their similarities and might well be favored by Whole Book theory camp. Although we will also propose categories for the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, our concern is not so much the grouping per se but rather the transformation of the themes and style of the Inner Chapters into varied trends of thought. With this purpose, our analyses will pay attention to both the discrepancies and associations among the Outer and the Miscellaneous chapters, as well as these sections' association with the Inner Chapters, according to each chapter's theoretical terminology and style of language.

In their numerous textual studies, most scholars, including A. C. Graham (1990), GUAN Feng (1961: 319–358), and ZHANG Hengshou (1983; Liu 1994: 84–86, 2010: 70–72), have agreed that the chapters 8–10, 12–14, and 17–22 are three small clusters with clear similarities, though each scholar names and dates the clusters differently. These small clusters can serve as the core of three groups for our classification of other Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, based on their thought and writing style.

The three clusters present distinct ideas with new discourses, compared to the Inner Chapters and to other parts of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. For example, Chapter 8 "Webbed Toes" ("Pianmu" 駢拇), Chapter 9 "Horses' Hoofs" ("Mati" 馬蹄), and Chapter 10 "Rifling in Trunks" ("Quqie" 胠篋) are very similar short essays: They directly attack social convention and standard values, especially Confucian ethics, and promote spontaneous nature, and argue for judging legendary sage kings as equivalent to merciless tyrants. These are obviously different from the Inner Chapters in view of their theories and narrative style, but they still carry the overall tone of the Inner section.

While most of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters can be assigned to the three core groupings, the two exceptions are worth noting. Chapter 30 is excluded because it is just odd and has no mate among the other chapters. Chapter 11's content falls into two different groups: its first two sections (called 11A) better fit the chapter 8–10 group, while other sections (collectively known as 11B) fall with chapters 12–14. This division was first suggested by Yoshio Takeuchi 武内義雄 and Zhang Hengshou 張恆壽 (Zhang 1983: 135–141; Liu 2010: 87–88) After excluding chapter 30 and distinguishing the parts 11A and 11B, we have still have a total of 26 chapters.

When we assign the other chapters to the three core clusters according to their similarities of thought and linguistic characteristics, we get three groups: the "Transmitters," "Huang-Lao," and the "Anarchists." The result of our categorization is tabulated in Table 6.5. The numbers of the core clusters appear in bold.

This classification is a bit sketchy compared with earlier proposals but sufficient and more effectual for our purposes of tracing the transformation of thought from the Inner Chapters. To trace the general trend of theories, some less significant ideas will not be addressed. But the virtue of this approach is that we can clearly make out three paths of digression.

Table 6.5 Classification of the outer and miscellaneous chapters

Chapters and groups		Features and relation to inner chapters
I Transmitters group (12 chapters)		
Outer Chapters		Respond to and expound the themes and ideas of the Inner Chapters Promote attitudes transcending the debates of Confucianism and Moism Resemble the Inner Chapters in ideas and writing style
17	"Qiushui" 秋水	
18	"Zhile" 至樂	
19	"Dasheng" 達生	
20	"Shanmu" 山木	
21	"Tianzifang" 田方子	
22	"Zhibeiyou" 知北游	
Miscellaneous Chapters		
23	"Gengsangchu" 庚桑楚	
24	"Xuwugui" 徐鬼	
25	"Zeyang" 則陽	
26	"Waiwu" 外物	
27	"Yuyan" 寓言	
32	"Lieyukou" 列御寇	
II Huang-Lao group (7 chapters)		
Outer Chapters		Absorb Confucianism, Legalism, and Moism into a hierarchy with Daoism at the top Promote a practical theory of *wuwei* 無為 or non-action: Kings practice non-action while ministers practice active action
11B	"Zaiyou B"* 在宥 B	
12	"Tiandi" 天地	
13	"Tiandao" 天道	
14	"Tianyun" 天運	
15	"Keyi" 刻意	
16	"Shanxing" 繕性	
33	"Tianxia" 天下	
Group III Anarchists group (7 chapters)		
Outer Chapters		Directly attack Confucianism and Moism
8	"Pianmu" 駢拇	Promoting spontaneous nature
9	"Mati" 馬蹄	Equalizing judgment of sage kings and tyrants
10	"Quqie" 胠篋	
11A	"Zaiyou A" 在宥 A	
Miscellaneous Chapters		
28	"Rangwang" 讓王	
29	"Daozhi" 盜跖	
31	"Yufu" 漁父	

The salient feature of the first group, the Transmitters, is their explanation and development of strands of thought in the Inner Chapters. For example, Chapter 17 systematically expounds why and how to see all things equally, though to do this it sacrifices the base text's free and untrammelled spirit. The Transmitters do not raise new or distinct points, but like the Inner Chapters their writings transcend the contention between Confucians and Mohists (Liu 2010: 73–87).

The Huang-Lao group's prominent characteristic is their synthesis of Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism into hierarchy of thought and practice. They make the clearest case that a king's rulership should be based in the arts of non-activity to avoid imperfections, while his ministers must be active and held responsible for any mistakes (Liu 2010: 87–93).

The last group, the Anarchists is distinct from the other two in its direct attack on social conventions and value traditions. They seek to liberate human nature and fantasize a utopia of the highest virtue where there is no distinction among rulers and subjects, and no persecution. For them, original human nature, uncontaminated by civilization, is the most significant gauge judging value (Liu 2010: 93–98).[21]

While this categorization, grounded in theoretical and literary analysis, might be argued to be prey to subjective judgments, objective language comparisons will be employed to verify its validity.

The *Zhuangzi* as a whole contains numerous parables, legendary figures, phrases, terms, and comments that bear on distinctive features first set out in the Inner Chapters. Some of these features are manifest in peculiar and striking expressions that are repeated across various chapters. The near repetition of such expressions results in language similarities in the various chapters and sections. These similarities are an objective reflection and evidence of some relation among the authors of all the relevant chapters. We use these occurrences as the basis for statistical comparisons, by which we may obtain the relatively objective justification of our classification.

Here are two examples of similar wordings and how we have processed them.

1. In Chapter 18 "Zhile" (Highest happiness 至樂), we find a story that also appears in Chapter 19 "Dasheng" (Mastering life):

   Once a sea bird stopped in the suburbs of Lu 昔者海鳥止於魯郊. (18–621)[22]
   Once a bird stopped in the suburbs of Lu 昔者有鳥止於魯郊. (19–665)

   This pair of close wordings is treated as one item.

2. In Chapter 20 "Shanmu" (The mountain tree 山木), Chapter 21 "Tianzifang," and Chapter 19 "Dasheng," we also read another set of similar sentences:

   Drifting and wandering with the ancestor of the myriad things 浮游乎萬物之祖. (20–668)
   Letting my mind wander in the beginning of things 吾游心於物之初. (21–712)
   Wandering at the end and beginning of the myriad things 游乎萬物之所終始. (19–634)

   These three wordings are also treated as one item.

Other similar items have been processed in the same manner, but a detailed account of all of them must be omitted here because of limited space. After the

[21]For a detailed discussion of the three groups, see Chapter 9 "Various Theories of Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters."

[22]The numbers in parentheses are chapter and page numbers, respectively, from *Zhuangzi Jishi* 莊子集釋 (Q. Guo 1978). Same for next four close wordings. Translation is by William E. Savage, cited from Liu 1994.

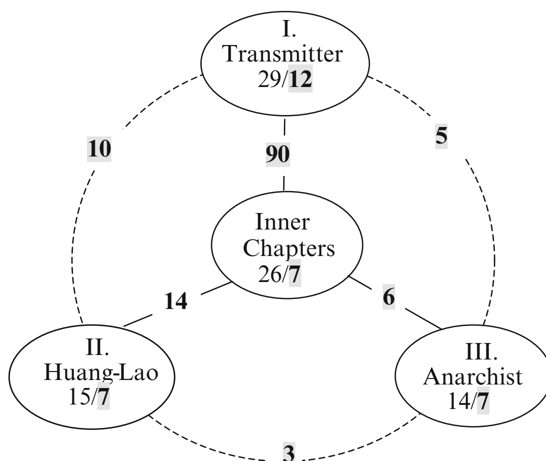

Fig. 6.1 Chart on relations within and between the Inner Chapters and the three groups in the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters

collection, classification, and statistical analysis of all such items throughout the whole *Zhuangzi* was completed, the results were compiled in the following chart.

In Fig. 6.1 the indexes x/y in small circles indicate (x) the total similar items in the group with (y) total chapters. Thus 26/**7** in the central circle means that within the seven Inner Chapters there are 26 similar items. Similarly the index 29/12 in the circle I indicates there are 29 such items within the 12 chapters attributed to the Transmitter group, and so forth.

The numbers associated with straight solid lines between the Inner Chapters and other groups give the index of similar passages between two groups, so the number 90 indicates that number of similar items shared between the Inner chapters and the Transmitter group, and so on.

The numbers inserted into the circumferential (broken) lines index the similar passages between two related groups, so number 3 between II Huang-Lao and III Anarchist tells there are 3 such items between these two groups.

By viewing the chart, we find intriguing and significant points.

1. The index 26/7 (average 3.71) in the Inner Chapters is the highest, by far besting that of the three groups in the Outer and Miscellaneous, namely 29/12 (average 2.41, Transmitters), 15/7 (average 2.14, Huang-Lao), and 14/7 (average 2.0, Anarchists). This shows that the Inner Chapters contain the strongest internal connection among all sections of the book, which in turn indicates that, objectively, the Inner Chapters are indeed a special part in the book. Again, this supports our earlier arguments grounded on the conventional literary tradition and new evidence from usage of the three compounds.
2. The relations between the Inner Chapters and any one of the three groups from the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters are stronger than those between any two of the three groups. For example, the index between the Transmitters and the Inner Chapters is 90, while that between the Transmitters and Huang-Lao is 10, and

Anarchists is 5. Similarly, the index of between Huang-Lao and Inner chapters is 14, compared with the index 10 for Huang-Lao and the Transmitters, and the index of 3 for Huang-Lao and the Anarchists. The same pattern applies for Anarchists. This implies that the three groups from the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters were developed from a common core, the Inner Chapters. This is another support for our earlier arguments about the special position and significance of the Inner Chapters.

3. The index of 90 between the Transmitters and Inner Chapters is much higher than the relation between the Inner Chapters and the Huang-Lao (index: 14) and the Anarchists (index: 6), respectively. This is objective proof that the Transmitters group has the closer connection with the Inner chapters and, further, this classification has a firm factual basis. It also suggests that the Transmitters chapters are significantly more relevant to the study of Zhuangzi's thought based on the Inner Chapters, compared to the other two groups.

As an issue of methodology, it should be mentioned that our statistics and comparison of similar language items included all typical items. We tried to collect all kinds of similar items for statistical analyses, without any bias and pre-assumptions in mind to make the processing as comprehensive and objective as possible. The spirit of this method is different from *sample argumentation,* which means selecting favorable samples to support one's position and largely ignoring or dismissing unfavorable samples.

Another issue is how to identify the similar language items. It is difficult to devise absolutely objective criteria by which to make such decisions. However, as long as one's standard is generally clear and consistent, even if numbers from different researchers differ, the final conclusion indicating the relations among the Inner Chapters and the other three groups agree. For example, the index 90 could be 92 or 88 for a different researcher, but such difference is insignificant to the overall relations, especially in the key numbers, such as 90:14:6, or 29/12 compared to 26/7. The level of objectivity here is not absolute but should be sufficient to support our major findings.

6 Conclusion

Based on all the above arguments, the Inner Chapter theory evidently gets the strongest support from conventional literary records and objective findings derived from textual and linguistic approaches. Other theories may contain reasonable insights, but they are one-sided in their consideration or lacking in comprehensiveness and thoroughgoing deliberation, or they even run contrary to the historical record and new evidence. Therefore the position that one may work from any of the chapters or major divisions to study Zhuangzi's philosophy is imprudent and unreliable. If we are not complete nihilists about this work and its author, we should recognize that the Inner Chapters are the core of the whole book with their

dazzling ideas, astonishing fables, and splendid arguments. These are observably the sources of inspiration for the ideas and styles we see in the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. We are certainly not in a position to say that the book contains no instances of contamination, but we do not have the tools to pick out the corrupted pieces. However, this should not affect our general confidence about the Inner Chapters as the rightful heart of our comprehensive examination of the book and analysis of the various theories around it, unless we find stronger evidence favoring other theories in the future.

Accordingly, the soundest current approach to studying Zhuangzi's thought and philosophy must be based mainly on the Inner Chapters and with reference of their elaboration in the Transmitters' work. All three groups of the Outer and Miscellaneous sections may be surveyed to assess the transformation of the Inner Chapters and to explore various concepts and ideas significant in the history of Daoism and general Chinese thought.

Basic knowledge of how to examine texts for divergences and conflicts is necessary and profitable for students of early Chinese thought, though this cannot resolve all difficulties across *Zhuangzi* studies. By engaging in textual analysis students will (1) have a clearer grasp of the object from which they access and engage with Zhuangzi's discourse and philosophical arguments; (2) gain fuller consciousness of the complexity, divisions, divergences, and enormous fertility of the whole text, so they can better enjoy and appreciate the intellectual richness of the *Zhuangzi* and its offshoot Daoist schools; (3) gain new insights and perspective on the sometimes unexpected transformation of philosophical concepts, themes, and debates; (4) learn to recognize the difference between investigation into ancient philosophy and the development of modern elaborations inspired by the brilliant work of ancient thinkers. Thus knowing how to carefully examine a text can produce a more solid foundation from which a philosopher may fly higher and farther.[23]

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Chapter 7
Conceptual Analyses of the *Zhuangzi*

Steve Coutinho

1 Introduction

The *Zhuangzi* is one of the most captivating of pre-Qin philosophical texts, among which it stands out for its free-spirited nonconformism, in terms of both its literary style and its philosophical recommendations. Philosophical positions and arguments can be discerned on a variety of issues concerning knowledge, language, meaning, imagination, ethical evaluation, emotions, social involvement, social exclusion, human behavior, skillful practice, and life and death; all of these take their place within a philosophy of life that is recognizably Daoist, even if the ways in which they are stated remain ambiguous and open to interpretation. The Way (*dao* 道) that Zhuangzi advocates is one in which we each cultivate our own particular natural Potency (*de* 德) to attain a spontaneity that is so responsive to the way the world is, and to the circumstances in which we are surrounded, that we attain the heights of a sagely practical wisdom and achieve emotional tranquility. Thus, Zhuangzi's view of a good life is one in which we practice *wuwei* 無為, action that is in tune with the spontaneous tendencies (*ziran* 自然) of things, minimizes interference and artifice, remains sensitive to the unfolding of circumstances, and thereby enables us to live harmoniously and to our fullest natural potential (*qiong qi tiannian* 窮其天年).

Recent Western philosophical interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* has tended to emphasize the epistemological, linguistic, and ethical issues raised in the text, especially in chapter 1, "Xiaoyao You" 逍遥遊, and chapter 2, "Qi Wu Lun" 齊物論. The passages that receive the most attention are those that suggest

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relativism and skepticism,[1] and those that discuss language and meaning. It is not that Western interpreters are unaware of other aspects of the text, or of the holistic nature of Daoist philosophy. It is simply that Western philosophy gives a central role to epistemology, metaphysics, logic, language, and ethics, and so these are the philosophical lenses through which the text will almost inevitably be understood. This should not be construed as necessarily a bad thing: as we shall see below, the results of this "fusion of horizons" have been diverse, extraordinarily rich, and philosophically interesting.

In this chapter, I shall consider four recent conceptual analyses that have focused on issues raised primarily in the "Qi Wu Lun" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. I shall provide critical analyses of the logical, linguistic, ethical and epistemological issues raised by each of those interpretations, but shall also touch briefly on issues of skill and spontaneous action. The first, and possibly most influential, interpretation is that of A.C. Graham. Graham emphasizes the relativistic tendencies of the text and, in doing so, works out an interpretation based on that of the Jin dynasty Neo-Daoist thinker, Guo Xiang. Chad Hansen has articulated what is probably the most detailed analysis of the "Qi Wu Lun" text, attempting to find an interpretation consistent with what he considers to be the results established by twentieth-century analytic philosophy, including even some of the most obscure passages of the chapter. His interpretation involves a combination of relativism, skepticism, and pragmatism, and most significantly he argues forcefully against the popular view that Zhuangzi was a mystical monist who rejected language and reason. Both Graham and Hansen interpret Zhuangzi as engaging directly with the same logical, epistemological, and linguistic issues that led to the development of the Realist philosophy of the later *Mohist Canon* 墨經.

More recently, Paul Kjellberg and Lisa Raphals have emphasized a different aspect of Zhuangzi's philosophy: rather than focusing on the relativistic sounding arguments, they emphasize the role of these arguments in developing a Skeptical way of life. By this they do not mean that Zhuangzi subscribes to a doctrine that denies the possibility of knowledge, but rather that he seems to recommend a way of life based on a continuous suspension of judgment—a way of life that nonetheless remains responsive to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. They do this

[1]The term "skepticism" means many different things to different people. As well as referring to the Greek therapeutic way of life, the term can refer to being skeptical about specific things and to various degrees. It is even sometimes conflated with fallibilism, the position that we might be wrong about anything we believe we know. But, to use the unmodified term to refer to any and all of these philosophical positions is to risk rendering the term almost useless for clear communication. The plain assertion that Zhuangzi is a skeptic becomes almost meaningless. In the interest of obviating such confusion, I shall use the term "Skepticism" to refer to the philosophy of the ancient Skeptics, "skepticism" for the philosophical thesis that knowledge is not possible, and include modifiers if I intend to refer to weaker and less broad forms of skepticism. I shall never use the term to refer to fallibilism.

by identifying what I call "traces" of Skepticism in the text: characteristics that can reasonably be interpreted to indicate the relevance of Skepticism as an issue that motivates the text.

In the following sections, I will highlight relevant philosophical problems and then present my own reinterpretation of the text. By changing the context of interpretation for selected passages from the "Qi Wu Lun," I develop a different understanding of the philosophical issues that motivate the text. This understanding places the *Zhuangzi* once again in the same philosophical tradition as the *Laozi*, emphasizes logic, language, and ontology rather than epistemology, and pays heed to the aspects of the Daoist way of life that are more like those of the ancient Stoics than the Skeptics. My own interpretation does not make these issues central to the text, but sees them instead as theoretical adjuncts in the service of a philosophy of life that finds value in the natural processes of the cosmos that make us what we are.

2 A.C. Graham

A.C. Graham's work ranks among the most important and influential English-language scholarship on the *Zhuangzi* from many perspectives: sinological, linguistic, literary, and philosophical. His translation, *Zhuangzi: The Inner Chapters*, (Graham 2001a) includes not only the Inner Chapters, as the name implies, but is in fact a nearly complete translation of the full text. This translation is of great importance to Western scholars because it bears the traces of deep and painstaking cogitation over enduring textual and philosophical problems, even down to the most minute and apparently insignificant grammatical particles. Graham never opts for the simplest solution, or easiest dictionary equivalent of a word or phrase. He always makes use of his profound understanding of the ancient Chinese language, linguistics, and philosophy as he strives to capture as much subtlety and nuance—grammatical, philosophical, and literary—as is conceivably possible in English.

Graham identifies the root of Zhuangzi's philosophy as a kind of *conventionalism* about language and meaning developed in response to the Mohist theory of naming. According to this conventionalism, the categories in accordance with which we divide up the world are not fixed, but are conventional and variable. Graham for the most part follows the traditional interpretation established by the Jin dynasty thinker Guo Xiang, in which Zhuangzi is presented as espousing a form of *relativism* or *perspectivism*: there are many things and many points of view, great and small; each has its own value, and none can be judged to be better or worse than any other. Graham also characterizes Zhuangzi as an *anti-rationalist* who rejected a kind of rational, analytic thinking that carves up the world into categories of things, in favor of a holistic, monistic, non-analytic, experiential, and embodied understanding that is manifested in almost superhuman skill and sagely wisdom. I shall consider each of these doctrines in turn.

2.1 Conventionalism

According to the Mohist theory of naming (Graham 2001a: 10),[2] one chooses a name for a particular object, and then applies the same name to any object that is similar to it insofar as it possesses a particular characteristic that other kinds of things lack (its criterion). For example, one may choose to name a certain particular animal "horse." One then applies the same name to any animal that is similar to it in having the relevant characteristic, whatever that characteristic might be. But, Graham reminds us, the original object named "horse" could have been any object. It could have been what we would call a cow, or a sheep, or a human. The relation between the choice of name and the type of object is thus entirely arbitrary. It is simply a matter of convention.

Graham believes that the conventional nature of language would have been evident to early Chinese thinkers given the terminology of their argumentation (Graham 2001b: 176–177). For example, two early basic logical terms, comparable in function to our term "true," have the primary function of being grammatical demonstratives: *shi* 是, the basic affirmative verb, has the primary meaning "this," and *ran* 然 means "it is so" (like this/that). Now, demonstratives are indexical terms: terms whose meaning changes depending on the user at the moment of utterance. What "this" refers to varies on each occasion of its use. The word may be used countless times, by countless different people, to point to different things, and to answer affirmatively of different things. While this is true, it is not clear why Graham thinks of this as a type of conventionalism, or as suggesting conventionalism. From the fact that the referent of "this" is variable, and dependent on the circumstances of its use, it does not follow that its use is merely conventional. Nor does it follow that any other aspect of language is conventional. It may indeed be the case that language is conventional, but this does not follow, and nor is it made evident from, the fact that the logical affirmative verbs in Chinese have the primary function of being demonstratives.

On more persuasive grounds, Graham points to the fact that in early China different geographical regions used different characters as well as different pronunciations to name the same things. This would indeed have made the conventional relation between words and things abundantly clear. That is to say, it would have made it clear that if different linguistic signs, written and spoken, can refer to the same thing, then what a thing is, or the name by which it is categorized, depends on which linguistic system is being used. Graham sees in this conventionalism a tremendous philosophical significance: " . . . in Chuang-tzu one enjoys the shock of the discovery when it was still new, the apparent overthrow of all received ideas when it is first seen that in principle anything might be called anything" (Graham 2001b: 177).

[2] A more extended discussion can be found in Graham 2001b: 147–150, and Graham's complete original translation and analysis of the later *Mohist Canon* in Graham 1978.

2.2 Relativism

What is it that Graham thinks is the shocking significance of conventionalism? Why should this entail the "overthrow of all received ideas"? As Graham sees it, conventionalism leads directly to more extensive forms of relativism. Different people, different philosophers, different cultures can choose not only to name objects differently, but also to divide the world up into different groupings of objects. Different cultures, and different philosophers will thus create, not just different terminology for the same sets of things, but different systems of categorization for different things and sets of things. Things are classified and affirmed as "thus" and "so" from within each system of divisions. The reason this is significant is because what a thing is, whether it is really thus or so, will now depend on the system of classification (Graham 2001a: 10).[3] In one system of classification, for example, a pony might be classified as a kind of horse, in another it will not. In modern English, written materials might subdivide into books, novels, essays, pamphlets, leaflets, newspapers, *etc.*; while in ancient Chinese they might divide into *jing* 經, *zhang* 章, *lun* 論, *juan* 卷, *ce* 册, *ming* 銘, and so on.[4] There can be no sensible cross-linguistic question as to which is the right system of classification.

According to Graham, this sort of conventionalism leads to relativism not only regarding classification, but also and more importantly, evaluation: each conventional system produces its own system of evaluation (Graham 2001a: 11). Each system may value different things and different types of behavior. In Ruist culture, devotion first and foremost to one's family is admired; among Mohists, this kind of partiality is considered reprehensible. Thus, the various systems disagree with each other not only about how to divide up the world, but also about what to value, and indeed about what value is.

There are places where Graham seems to draw the counterintuitive conclusion, which he attributes to Zhuangzi, that there can be no real disagreements between different systems (Graham 2001b: 178).[5] The apparent disagreement must in fact

[3] "What is 'it' for me and what is 'other' than it depend on my choice of standpoint, and when I say 'That's it' I am merely announcing that the thing in question is the thing to which I have chosen to give the name."

[4] Although there are rough and ready dictionary equivalents for these terms, I list them without translation to emphasize that the dictionary "equivalents" are in fact *not* exact equivalents: the two systems of classification may contain some overlap to varying degrees, but they do not match.

[5] "But is there even real disagreement between debaters who are using 'this' in relation to distance from themselves? This suggestion astounds Hui Shih: 'Just now those Confucians and Mohists, Yang and Ping, are challenging me in argumentation. We formulate sentences to refute each other, shout to browbeat each other. Are you seriously suggesting that they have never denied my position?' Chuang-tzu replies with what seem to be examples of quarrels caused by misunderstandings over words . . . " Here, Graham is echoing his translation of Zhuangzi's rhetorical question: "There they say 'That's it, that's not' from one point of view, here we say 'That's it, that's not' from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other?" (Graham 2001a: 53).

be illusory. If different schools of thought divide up the world differently, then they have different definitions for their terms. So, when they differ in their application of those terms they cannot really be disagreeing with each other. Each is in fact correctly naming and evaluating, given the criteria of classification and evaluation of their respective systems. And since they *mean* different things by the terms they use, they cannot really be disagreeing with each other about the same things, even though they seem to be in disagreement. What the Ruists call duty or rightness (*yi* 義), for example, is not the same as what the Mohists call *yi.* Thus, when they argue about what is *yi*, they cannot after all be disagreeing with each other, since they are really saying different things. According to this analysis, if a Mohist says that the Ruists are not *yi*, all they are really saying is that the Ruists do not believe in impartial concern (*jian'ai* 兼爱). Conversely, if a Ruist says that the Mohists are not *yi*, all they are really saying is that the Mohists do not show their relatives a greater level of concern. And on these two statements both sides must agree. According to Graham, Zhuangzi is drawing our attention to the fact there are many such evaluative systems and that they can and do exist without conflict. Conflict between the proponents of such systems is not only unnecessary, it is misguided.

In the case of classifying books, one can concede the point: the two classification systems do not really conflict, because neither side is claiming to be the uniquely correct one. Each simply classifies its own cultural products appropriately. However, the same does not hold when we consider *evaluative* concepts. The difference between the ethical and political philosophies of the Ruists and Mohists is, after all, profound. They are not just using words at cross purposes; their disagreement is substantive. Nor is the content of their criticism reducible to a simple descriptive claim ("they don't do what we do"). Each genuinely believes the other to be ethically wanting, and the difference is not descriptive but evaluative. That is, while it is true that a person's understanding of "*yi*" is acquired, as is the understanding of any classificatory term, through experience with what each culture chooses as its paradigmatic instances, nevertheless, the meaning of an evaluative term such as "*yi*" is not simply a general label for the sum of those instances. To approve an instance of giving preferential treatment to relatives as *yi*, to say that it is right and appropriate, is also to say that this kind of behavior is to be emulated. Nor are the two claims contextualized—the Mohists using *yi* to apply to what is right "for a Mohist," the Ruists using *yi* to apply to what is right "for a Ruist." On the contrary, when the Ruists say that the Mohists are not *yi*, they are saying that Mohist behavior is not right for anyone and should not be emulated by anyone, and *vice versa*. The disagreement is thus not only conceptually deep, but has profound social consequences: It is a substantive disagreement about what kind of behavior should be emulated and thus about what kind of society will be most conducive to human flourishing.

Another way of putting this is that they can be construed as genuinely disagreeing over who has the right understanding of *yi*. Then the question arises: How can we decide who is right? As we shall see in the next section, Chad Hansen pursues this question and ends up at quite a different understanding of Zhuangzi's philosophy from that of Graham. Graham, however, rejects the question as meaningless.

No view, no philosophy, no culture, no system of evaluation can be asserted to be better than any other, because there can be no absolute point of view from which such a judgment can meaningfully be made. Each system must make internal judgments, judgments from its own perspective.[6] To put it in Nagel's language (Nagel 1989), there can be no such thing as a "view from nowhere"; each view must have its limited standpoint. With this interpretation, Graham is essentially adopting the same moral that Guo Xiang draws from Zhuangzi, his interpretation of the "equalization" of all things, and all views about things (*qi wu lun* 齊物論). Everything has its own nature (*ziran* 自然) and its own place in the scheme of things, and should not strive to become anything else; nor should it expect anything else to conform to what is appropriate to it. Even what is vast and impressive has its limitations: an eye that is too large cannot see minutiae, a foot that is too large cannot explore a crevice.

2.3 Anti-rationalist Monism

Western philosophical analysis of Zhuangzi's philosophy tends to proceed on the supposition of a close philosophical dialectic that takes place between Zhuangzi and the early Chinese logicians, not only the later Mohists but also his close friend Huizi. According to Graham, Huizi has shown, with his paradoxes, that the very act of carving up space and time into spatial and temporal divisions leads to spatio-temporal contradictions (spatio-temporal "paradoxes") (Graham 2001a: 9). This is because the very point of demarcation, say between today and tomorrow, or between north and south, does not belong clearly to one side as opposed to the other. Indeed, it might even be construed as belonging to both of the mutually exclusive sides: whence the paradoxes and contradictions. In this way, Graham says, Huizi shows that spatio-temporal divisions must be rejected, and he interprets Huizi as thereby arguing in favor of a holistic unity.

Graham characterizes Huizi as a "rationalist" thinker who employs "analytical" methods of thinking to undermine those very methods. This terminology is somewhat anachronistic, but Graham's point, I think, can be made more persuasive. Huizi's paradoxes bear striking resemblance to Zeno's paradoxes, although there are no records of any reasoning that might have led to them as conclusions. Graham, not unreasonably, attempts to reconstruct rough accounts of what might have been Huizi's counterparts to Zeno's arguments (Graham 2001b: 76–82). It is this *hypothesized* logical, mathematical style of thinking that Graham refers to as "reason" and "analysis." It is Huizi's imputed employment of such hypothesized techniques of rational analysis that Graham refers to as his "rationalism" or "analytic thinking." And it is the rejection of such techniques that Graham

[6]Hansen also makes this relativistic point, but he does not accept that the realist question as to which is the best is *meaningless*. He thus draws a skeptical conclusion from relativistic premises.

calls Zhuangzi's "anti-rationalism." The characterization of Zhuangzi as an "anti-rationalist" depends on the imputation of a hypothesized method of thinking, and on a hypothesized rejection of that way of thinking. The appropriateness of the characterization thus depends on the degree to which this double hypothesis succeeds, and on the degree to which it can be substantiated by coherence with other parts of the text.

Thus, according to Graham's interpretation, Zhuangzi learns from Huizi's argument and analysis, but goes on to see what Huizi failed to see: that this line of reasoning applies to *all* distinction making (Graham 2001a: 9). In this way, Zhuangzi comes to realize that not only spatio-temporal divisions, but all linguistic divisions must for similar reasons lead to paradox and contradiction. The contradictions are derivable, not necessarily from the nature of space and time, but from the very act of dividing. So, just as Huizi rejects spatio-temporal distinctions in favor of a holistic unity, Zhuangzi goes on to reject all distinctions, and all reasoning through making distinctions, in favor of an holistic understanding of a cosmic unity without divisions. Following Huizi's reasoning, Zhuangzi concludes that the world does not come with fixed and clear divisions, and that any attempt to think methodically and rationally through fixed and clear concepts must fail. In itself, it is a seamless whole that is misrepresented the moment it is forced into any of our systems of classification (Graham 2001a: 20–22). We engage with the world well only when we respond to it spontaneously with a natural embodied wisdom that does not force our experience of it to conform to crude linguistic categories.

2.4 *Pragmatism*[7]*: Flexible Distinctions and Skillful Action*

However, at this point, Graham takes a step back and modifies this claim. He sees that it cannot be right to attribute such an extreme position to Zhuangzi, since Zhuangzi does not withdraw into a mystical silence, and neither does he unequivocally recommend such silence. Yet it is clear that Zhuangzi does criticize, if not reject altogether, the making of distinctions. This is where Graham attributes an important distinction to Zhuangzi, that between the "'That's it' which deems" (*weishi* 為是) and the "'That's it' which goes by circumstance" (*yinshi* 因是) (Graham 2001a: 11). What Zhuangzi rejects, then, is a naive form of distinction making: *weishi*, affirmative judgment. This is any form of distinction making that takes things to be the way they are deemed. It is a kind of naive realism that lacks flexibility and subtlety in the way it understands distinctions between things.

[7]Pragmatist theories of meaning tend to be characterized by a rejection of essentialism. Meanings are not fixed, but flexible, varying depending on circumstance, context, and practical purpose. Graham's distinction between *weishi* and *yinshi*, and its connection to successful practice, can be thought of as pragmatist in this way.

It takes those distinctions to be fixed and non-negotiable, and is the kind of distinction making of which the Mohists approved.

The Daoist sage, however, recognizing both the conventional, relativistic nature of language, and the undifferentiated nature of the world, engages it without forcibly imposing such linguistic distinctions and evaluations. Instead, the sage responds with intuitive sensitivity to the ways things are and names them tentatively, without being fooled by the apparent fixity of conventional divisions, classifications, evaluations, and interpretations. The sage, thus, does make distinctions for practical purposes, but the sort of judgment that the sage issues is *yinshi*, dependent judgment, or as Graham translates it, "the 'that's it' which goes by circumstance." This pragmatic sensitivity allows the sage to classify and evaluate in a manner that is always situational, contextual, and flexible, and results in extraordinary levels of wise and skillful engagement with the practical exigencies and vicissitudes of life. The sage refrains from making fixed distinctions, takes in the whole situation in all its complexity and multifarious flexibility, and then simply responds naturally and spontaneously (*ziran* 自然), unmediated by conscious analysis. This is not an emotional spontaneity that can vary with each person, but is the single inevitable course of action which one allows to develop once one understands with tranquil indifference the full significance of the full external circumstance (Graham 2001b: 186–194).

3 Chad Hansen

The second most influential philosophical interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*, after Graham's, is that of Chad Hansen (2000). Hansen rejects a common religious Daoist interpretation of Zhuangzi, which he calls the "ruling interpretive theory." In Hansen's characterization of the received view, Zhuangzi is taken to be a mystical monist who rejects reason and language in favor of a direct intuitive experience of the ultimate, absolute, ineffable reality, which is given the name "Dao" (Hansen 2000: 266–68). This is the kind of interpretation presented by such scholars as Benjamin Schwartz (1985: 216–17), according to whom Zhuangzi attempts to express a "mystical vision," and "describe the indescribable." This view can also be seen to have its influence on more philosophical interpretations, such as that of A.C. Graham. While Hansen agrees with Graham's account of Zhuangzi as espousing a form of relativism, he decisively rejects Graham's portrayal of Zhuangzi as a mystical contemplative opposed to language and reason. On the contrary, Hansen maintains that Zhuangzi's philosophy is a "skeptical perspectivism" (or, more recently, "skeptical relativism")[8] that gives an appropriate place to both language

[8]My presentation here is based largely on Hansen's most extensive discussion of the *Zhuangzi* in his book (Hansen 2000). However, I also take into account, a more recent statement of his views as expressed in Cook 2003.

and reason. Hansen's reading, as we shall see, attributes to Zhuangzi a curious blend of realism, relativism, skepticism, and pragmatism. The tensions between these philosophical positions make Hansen's view very complex and hard to pin down. The position he attributes to Zhuangzi goes by several other names as well, including "relativistic skepticism" and "perspectival skepticism" among others.

3.1 Philosophical Implications of Zhuangzi's Literary Style

Zhuangzi's literary style is poetic and imaginative, full of fantastic stories that leave behind the realm of mundane reality. But Hansen does not find reason to read these as indicative of any mystical or religious claims about an absolute experience of a reality that transcends language. While Hansen accepts that there may be a mystical tendency suggested by Zhuangzi's literary style, he flatly denies that Zhuangzi rejects language and reason. On the contrary, he takes Zhuangzi's major contribution to be his philosophy of language. Moreover, he interprets Zhuangzi as making use of rational arguments for rejecting the very notion of a single, absolute, ultimate reality that such a mystical view presupposes (Hansen 2000: 273, 280).[9] Hansen accounts for the constantly shifting mythical and poetic narratives as literary devices that enable Zhuangzi to explore his rationally developed pluralistic philosophical stance, without implying commitment to any perspective from which he temporarily writes. Zhuangzi's style of writing may be literary, but his method of thinking is rational analysis, and his analytic arguments lead him to a philosophy of perspective. Stories are told from many points of view, philosophical, human, animal, mythical, and Zhuangzi is able to explore the value of each view without implying commitment to any of them, and without using any one of them to provide an overall evaluation of the others.

While Hansen's claim regarding the purpose of Zhuangzi's style is certainly intriguing, the precise relation between the obscure, poetic metaphors that Zhuangzi deploys and the clear, logical arguments that Hansen articulates is unclear. What is it about these poetic metaphors and narratives that makes it clear that they disguise logical arguments in the style of a contemporary analytic philosopher? If the text had been composed of literally stated logical arguments with the minimum of metaphorical embellishment, this question would not arise. But since obscure poetic metaphor seems the very antithesis of clear analytic thinking—most, if not all, analytics choosing to avoid such literary devices to the greatest extent possible, or using them only for rhetorical emphasis once the argument has been explicitly stated—some explanation is needed for this interpretive move. Certainly, Hansen

[9]Hansen 2000: 273. "Despite the strange-creatures-talking-in-riddles-to-each-other motif of the second chapter, I see an argument being developed in an intelligibly logical way." And on page 280: "Despite the obscurity of putting doctrines metaphorically, poetically, and in the mouths of various figures, Zhuangzi's essay develops in a logically natural way."

does a first rate job at articulating possible analytical arguments as he runs through each section of the "Qi Wu Lun," and in some places the ingeniousness of his analysis is a veritable hermeneutic *tour de force*.[10] Nevertheless, what remains to be clarified is the status of the literal form of these arguments in relation to the actual text. Are they supposed to be reconstructions of arguments that Zhuangzi had thought through but did not write? Perhaps constructions of arguments that Zhuangzi would have thought of had he tried to persuade a Mohist? But, if it is these arguments, as presented by Hansen, that were what Zhuangzi was trying to articulate, then why did he choose to use such an obscure literary method to do so? His contemporaries, Mencius and Mozi, show us that a clear literal argumentative style were indeed part of his philosophical milieu. And yet he chose a style that is, on the surface, at odds with the goals of clear analytic thinking.[11]

Hansen writes as though he has discovered the real meaning of Zhuangzi's text, but since his interpretation is a form of pluralism that is skeptical of claims to have found the reality behind the interpretive *dao*, one wonders why he does not adopt the same skeptical pluralist attitude toward interpretation of the text itself.

3.2 Language, Relativism, and the Equalization of Discourses, Daos

Hansen takes Zhuangzi to be first and foremost a philosopher of language. Hansen argues that, as with the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* is primarily to be understood as a philosophy of language, and that the central concept *dao* is to be understood, not as a metaphysical absolute, but as a "guiding discourse." "Dao" is not the name of the ultimate reality, but is a linguistic term referring to the guiding discourses through which we interpret our world. There is not just one *dao*, but many, and they are not metaphysical, but linguistic (Hansen 2000: 268). *Dao*s may be thought of as conceptual schemes and discrimination patterns (Hansen 2000: 275). As Zhuangzi uses the word, there are many guiding discourses, conceptual schemes, or discriminating patterns, each exemplifying an understanding of the world, of a way of life, as patterned in a particular way, and each not necessarily commensurable with any other.[12] Clear sense can be made of a non-linguistic *dao* by taking it to

[10]From pages 275–277, for example, Hansen provides an extraordinary reading of some of the most obscure passages of the second chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. Hansen certainly provides a reading of the poetry that is consistent with his interpretation. Nevertheless, providing a consistent reading is not the same as showing that it is plausible. The reader is still left with a sense that more needs to be said to clinch the deal.

[11]Note, in asking for this clarification, I am not claiming that Zhuangzi must be interpreted as an anti-language, anti-rational mystical monist.

[12]Hansen 2000: 268. "His perspectivalism focuses on the awareness that we have many different, incommensurable guiding *dao*s."

refer to our natural predisposition to learn linguistically, a pre-linguistic disposition that is the condition of the possibility of our social acquisition of language and culture, and to the skillful application of the *dao*s that we acquire.

According to what Hansen calls the received interpretation, Daoists reject language as an unnatural human construct. Hansen, however, interprets Zhuangzi as claiming, to the contrary, that language is entirely natural. We and our language are products of nature, and all systems formulated linguistically are equally natural. In this respect, they are not different from natural sounds or from the noises that any animal produces.[13] We are not something set apart from nature, and our language is not an artificial addition. Subject (speaker) and object (the natural world) do not form a dualism, but are united in a single natural network (Hansen 2000: 274). Moreover, this is true, not only of the noises we make, but also of the very content of those words, what they say. All the various pipes of heaven are equally natural. Hansen interprets the "pipes of heaven" to be referring to the multiplicity of guiding discourses, *dao*s, by which humans speak and live. There is no single fixed relation between a preferred discourse and nature: all such guiding discourses are equally natural. Nature produces them all. It is this relativistic point that Hansen sees as the outcome of naturalizing language: if language is a natural phenomenon, then we can have no grounds on which to choose between discourses. All such discourses are equally justified by nature.[14]

Here we run into a problem concerning the strength of the claim that Hansen wants to make. Several times Hansen appears to make a strongly relativistic claim that *all dao*s are equally justified.[15] "Heaven (nature) creates *all* the *systems* of discriminating things from each other and of choosing using that discrimination system." "Every *dao* (doctrine) about what distinctions to make and what choices follow is equally natural and equally a part of the natural world." "All doctrines are equally *the pipes of heaven*" (Hansen 2000: 274). This radical equalization of all doctrines seems quite astonishing. Is it really the case that all points of view are equally justified? Such a radical equalization would surely entail that the doctrine that monkeys should sleep in trees cannot be established as better than the doctrine that monkeys should sleep underwater (all other things being equal). Admittedly, an imaginative mind can come up with all kinds of weird and wonderful possibilities as to why in fact it is better for monkeys to sleep underwater—by claiming, for example, that it is better for monkeys to be ill and die than for them

[13]Hansen 2000: 274. "Language is on a par with the sound of waves, the twitter of birds, and the slapping of beavers' tails on the water."

[14]Hansen 2000: 275. "Each is a natural *dao*. Mozi's is. Confucius' is. Yang Zhu's is. However, since all doctrines are pipes of heaven, none has any special status in having this heavenly or natural source. The antilanguage philosophers say that all doctrines are wrong. Zhuangzi grants (in the sense the various philosophers claimed it) that all are equally in accord with heaven: nature."

[15]Hansen 2000: 270. "That is not because reality justifies *no* distinctions, but because it justifies too many. All the distinctions we can actually draw have *some* basis in reality."

to live and be healthy—but how seriously are we expected to take these radical challenges? If all *dao*s are products of *tian*, then so are the *dao*s of crazy people. The *dao* of the person who believes that unfettered, unregulated greed and self-interest will be conducive to producing social flourishing, or the *dao* of a Nazi, are also products of *tian*. Is Hansen seriously suggesting that Zhuangzi is equalizing Nazism, Daoism and Confucianism?

Here, Hansen makes a distinction. Zhuangzi is only saying that the *dao*s are equally natural, not that they are equally good. They are equally products of nature. Strictly speaking, all the equalization doctrine says is that there is no ultimate *dao* that will independently establish any *dao* as better, or worse, than any other. The only criteria we have for evaluating *dao*s comes from within those *dao*s themselves.[16] To say that the criteria by which we evaluate are internal to each system does not entail that the systems are equally good. "Zhuangzi's relativism does not allow us to say that Hitler's perspective is *just as good* as our own. All it says is "Hitler happened."" But there seems to be something awry with this analysis. After all, relativism does not merely assert that all things and doctrines exist—the claim that all things and doctrines exist is not a philosophical position. Relativism derives its philosophical interest from the fact that it entails a normative, evaluative claim: relativism entails that all forms of absolutism are unacceptable. Moreover, to state that no view can be judged better or worse than any other is to imply that all are equally good. To refuse to allow a judgment of inequality is surely to force a *de facto* judgment of equality. This is, indeed, the sort of paradox, if not self-contradiction, to which radical relativism is prone. The disallowing of evaluative judgments is itself inextricable from some kind of evaluative judgment: One ought not to judge any other view as inferior, or one ought to accept all views without comparative judgment.

In fact, despite his claim that nature justifies all systems of distinctions equally, Hansen does not thoroughly equalize all discourses. There are places where he reformulates the claim in a less sweeping way: "All the distinctions we can actually draw have *some* basis in reality" (Hansen 2000: 270). And again, "Any *dao* that we actually practice will exist (hence be natural or *heavenly*)" (Hansen 2000: 281). Here the restriction is to actually existing *dao*s. He also does allow that some *dao*s can be ruled out on the grounds that they are inconsistent.[17] This, I think, is a more plausible formulation. Moreover, it can be developed further. Hansen seems

[16]"What works depends on the evaluative standards internal to one's *dao*" (p. 275). "A *cheng* is just what wins given the prior commitments" (p. 276). "All languages must fix on some real patterns of similarity and difference. . . . each appears to its adherents to be the obviously correct way to carve things up. . . . Of course all *dao*s and language internally determine their own pragmatic standards" (p. 281).

[17]Cook 2003: 150. "Relativism is consistent with some views being unwarranted (e.g., logical contradictions and counter-intuitives)."

thoroughly convinced by Zhuangzi's claim that all points of view simply justify themselves in such a manner that there can be no meaningful critique between them.[18] I think this position is overstated. Some *dao*s have some degrees of overlap between their criteria of evaluation, and it is possible for dialogue to proceed in a manner that enables one side or the other to change their minds for reasons that they perceive to be convincing beforehand. It is also possible for *dao*s to develop and change their very criteria of evaluation over time in this way, through deep levels of reconsideration of values, their relative weighting, the reasons for them, and their empirical and logical consequences. Since this is so, Zhuangzi's strong claim that all argument that aims to establish one position as better than another is pointless must be mistaken. This pluralist position is a form of relativism that seems more rational and less objectionable than the more radical claim favored by mystics and sophomores, and it is this kind of pluralism that I believe Hansen is attributing to Zhuangzi.

3.3 Skepticism and Realism

The recognition that there are many viable *dao*s, combined with the knowledge that no independent evaluation can be made between them, leads to the position that we cannot know which one is ultimately correct. This skeptical inference, however, depends on a metaphysical realist intuition: it presupposes that there is one way that ultimately *is* correct.[19] In what appears to be a curious turn, Hansen also seems to allow that one *dao* might be better than another, might even constitute the "correct" way of "dividing the world." There is a tension here between realist and relativist intuitions. On the one hand, all perspectives, and all discourses are equally natural, and none can claim superiority over another. On the other hand, it might actually be the case that one of them is superior to all others. One of them might actually be the correct expression of the way the world is. But, any system by which we might try to judge is simply another discourse with its own internal standards of evaluation, and which lays no greater claim to being the one right theory. This last point is not quite right. If one *dao* is actually the correct one, then it is indeed the one by which to judge all the others. The problem, rather, is epistemic: since we have no independent means of assessing *dao*s, how we could possibly *know* which is the right one? While this is an interesting distinction, I am not sure to what extent

[18]See the Problem of the Criterion in the section on Kjellberg and Raphals below for the *Zhuangzi* quotation.

[19]"We see realist faith coupled with a skeptical perspective. There must be a correct conceptual perspective. We could, however, never be sure of having found it." "Indeed, his position implicitly allows for a real world that interacts with our daos to yield *cheng*-successes judged from within the *dao* itself" (p. 272).

it can be maintained coherently. If nature *justifies* all discourses equally, then they must all be equally good. To maintain this stance is surely to reject metaphysical realism altogether. Conversely, if one presupposes a realist position and asserts that one of them must actually be right, then surely it must have greater justification than the others. It is hard to understand in what else its rightness could consist.

Hansen's claim, however, might be more modest, a hypothetical claim: *if* there is an ultimately correct *dao*, we would have no grounds on which to know that it was ultimately correct even if we had attained it. Notice that this keeps open the possibility that there is no ultimately correct *dao*. It allows for both realism and anti-realism. "He does not dispute that one language *might* have a better fit with reality than another. ... What good can this regulative ideal do us if we have *no way of telling which* conceptual scheme has the privileged relation to reality? He questions the usefulness of the regulative ideal of realism" (Hansen 2000: 281). Thus the skepticism is twofold. On the one hand, Zhuangzi doubts whether we can ever know the ultimately correct way (if there is one); on the other hand, on a deeper level, Zhuangzi questions the very meaningfulness and relevance of such a way. If we could never know whether we had the ultimately correct way, or even whether there is one, we should abandon all concern with it.

3.4 Mysticism and Monism

Hansen is not entirely opposed to the picture of Zhuangzi as a "mystic," if this means a philosopher who understands the limits of what can be said. In this sense, even early Wittgenstein might be considered a mystic in his final oracular utterance of the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." As Hansen puts it, "Zhuangzi playfully ridicules the hope of formulating what it is that language cannot state. He describes what it can state—the pluralism—and regards that as his liberation from social conventions. Zhuangzi's theoretical advances in this tradition lie in theory of language. The mystical tone has no other theoretical content" (2000: 272). And again, "Zhuangzi accepts the real context in which *dao*s operate. But that reality can only be an unknown, mystical *other*, the unknown context of our ways of knowing" (Hansen 2000: 292).

Nevertheless, Hansen rejects what he calls the absolutist interpretation, according to which there is one privileged perspective on an ultimate unspeakable reality called "Dao," about which nothing can be said since all descriptions can only be given from some perspective or other, and which can therefore only be encapsulated by the doctrine, "All is one." According to Hansen, the Later Mohists showed that such an anti-language position is incoherent. One cannot consistently reject all linguistic distinctions because one cannot consistently reject rejecting: "eschewing distinctions is unacceptable: 'Denying denial is perverse' (Canon B79)" (Hansen 2003: 140). While Zhuangzi is critical of Later Mohist realism, Hansen believes that he

nevertheless must have learned from their refutation both of this anti-language position, and also from Gongsun Longzi's refutation of an "everything" concept (Hansen 2000: 270).[20]

3.5 *Ming* 明*: An Attitude Toward Perspectives*

Hansen's hypothesis is that, while Zhuangzi favors no particular *dao*, he does advocate a discourse for understanding discourses: a *dao* of *dao*s. This meta-discourse is conceived of as metaphorically at the center or axis of a wheel; it is a *dao-shu* 道樞, a hinge of *dao*s. From this linguistic position all *dao*s can be surveyed with detachment. The insight provided from this position of the meta-language is called *ming* 明. It can be understood as the insight that all language is indexical, or rather that there are many *dao*s and any of them can be wholeheartedly adopted. While Hansen sometimes refers to *ming* as a perspective, I think its meta-level status requires a different classification. If a perspective is a perspective on the world, then *ming*, being directed to *dao*s and not to the world, is not really another perspective. It is rather an insight or understanding about the nature of *dao*s. For this reason, I think it is preferable to refer to it as an attitude toward perspectives, rather than a perspective on perspectives. This reclassification also frees the position from immediate inconsistency: *ming* is not a privileged perspective, but an awareness and acknowledgement of the existence and viability of other *dao*s. Hansen, like Zhuangzi, engages in some hyperbole here: "The view from the axis of *daos* is not where nothing can be said. It is rather the point from which *anything* can be said with equal warrant . . . . It allows us to see how we can reverse any prescriptive position. Any *fei* can be a *shi* and vice versa" (Hansen 2000: 283). "In themselves all things are both *shi* and not *shi*" (Hansen 2000: 282). Incidentally, *in themselves*

[20]Hansen is referring to the passage "The myriad things and I are one. . . . One and the saying makes two, two and one make three," where Zhuangzi shows the incoherence of saying that everything is one. The grounds for Hansen's insistence that Zhuangzi must have learned from the "analytic school's" diagnosis of such "mistakes" is unclear. Is it only Zhuangzi who deserves such "charity"? I acknowledge that as a hermeneutic hypothesis it results in an interesting interpretation of Zhuangzi; I am just not sure what justifies the insistence that the hypothesis must be true.

Hansen, incidentally, also rejects Graham's monistic interpretation of Zhuangzi, which he believes Graham attributes to Zhuangzi on relativistic grounds. Hansen criticizes Graham for failing to see that mystical monism does not follow from Zhuangzi's relativist premises. However, while Graham does attribute both a mystical monism, and relativism, to Zhuangzi, he does not draw the former as a conclusion from the latter, but instead provides entirely distinct arguments for both. In fact, Graham has a different interpretation of the relation between Zhuangzi and Huizi. As we have seen, Graham interprets Huizi as showing the paradoxical consequences only of spatio-temporal distinction making, while Zhuangzi extends these arguments to all linguistic distinction making and in this way develops his brand of mystical monism. It is not the plurality of possible systems of classification that Graham cites as Zhuangzi's reason for rejecting reason and analysis, but the inconsistency inherent in distinction making itself that he believes Huizi to have demonstrated.

all things are neither *shi* nor not *shi*; it is only from the perspective of a particular discourse that things become *shi* or not *shi*, and the sum of all perspectives does not give us what they are in themselves. And we have already considered problems with the radical relativist claim that anything can be said with equal warrant, and the reasons for making a more restrained pluralistic claim (which, I suspect, is what Hansen intends despite the hyperbole).

3.6 Pragmatism

According to Hansen, Zhuangzi's insight is that we can neither justify our own particular system as uniquely correct, nor abandon it. The recognition that there are many *dao*s does not automatically invalidate our own. Indeed, the only way we can evaluate it is still from the inside, in which case we will evaluate it positively and continue to follow it. And we are encouraged to pursue one particular *dao* to the heights of excellence. This might seem to suggest that Zhuangzi cannot be advocating his own way as better than ours. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Zhuangzi does recommend his meta-level insight. The function of *ming* is twofold. On the one hand, it enables us to be more flexible; the pluralist attitude enables us to learn things of value from other ways. On the other hand, it requires us to be more tolerant; the skeptical attitude counteracts any certainty we may feel that our way is better than any other. On a personal level this leads to sagely heights of skillful engagement in our lives. On a political level this leads to a liberally inclusive attitude toward different philosophies, cultures, values, and lifestyles (Hansen 2003: 153).

While this is a promising result, and one that seems clearly consistent with Zhuangzi's overall style and attitude, there remains the problem of consistency. It is not easy to see how such flexibility and appreciation of difference can be maintained unless they are already contained within a particular perspective as part of its *dao*. Otherwise, such flexibility implies that one holds *values* and engages in forms of *practice* that are not available from within any one system, but are applied to all systems. These *values* then must arise from the meta-discourse. But in that case the meta-discourse, the *dao* of *dao*s, cannot claim to be value neutral. If flexibility is a value of the meta-discourse, then discourses that are flexible will be preferable to those that are not, since the possibility of adopting a *dao* inflexibly will not be an option available from the axis of *dao*s.

4 Paul Kjellberg and Lisa Raphals

While both Graham and Hansen have emphasized the more relativistic tendencies of the *Zhuangzi*, Paul Kjellberg (1996: 1–16) and Lisa Raphals (1996: 26–42) have taken a slightly different tack. They have identified traces of a line of thinking reminiscent of ancient Greek Skepticism. Hansen also notes the importance of a

form of skepticism in Zhuangzi's philosophy, insofar as he claims that Zhuangzi observes that we cannot know which of the many possible guiding discourses is the correct one, but this is not the type of skepticism that Kjellberg and Raphals have in mind. They refer not to an epistemological thesis of skepticism, but to the way of life of the ancient Skeptics based on a practice of withholding judgment.

Our ordinary attitude is to accept our experience at face value: we take it that the world is just as it appears. But in unusual circumstances we come to realize that things are not necessarily the way they appear. Mistakes and illusions suggest to us that what appears to be real may not actually be so. We learn to distinguish the way things appear from the way they really are. But, since we can always wonder if things really are the way we appear, the question arises, how can we *ever* know what really is the case? If all we ever experience is the way things are, it would seem that we can never get past these appearances to test if they are veridical or not. Our ordinary distinction between the ways things appear and the way they really are thus turns into what might be called a metaphysical distinction between Appearance, or the world as it shows up in our experience, and Reality, or the world as it is apart from our experience.

The Skeptics also note that this possibility is a great source of anxiety: we feel that we need to know what, after all, is the truth of a matter, especially matters regarding our well being, our health, our happiness, or matters of life and death. We are so emotionally attached to the outcome that the possibility of a detrimental one causes us great anxiety. If being attached to an outcome about which we cannot be certain causes emotional anxiety, then release from that anxiety would mean releasing ourselves from attachment to any particular outcome.[21] Thus, the Skeptics recommended suspending judgment, *epoché*. *Epoché* dissipates those anxieties and brings us to *ataraxia*, peace of mind. We arrive at a suspension of judgment by cultivating uncertainty, by actively seeking out reasons against what we believe to be the case, until we undermine our capacity to make a decision one way or the other. Once we give up the need to make a decision, we automatically fall into a state of tranquility. Ideally, we should always do this, but it is especially important at times when we find ourselves racked with anxiety about the circumstances of our life.

4.1 Types of Skepticism

Lisa Raphals points out that Skepticism can be understood in three different ways: as a doctrine, as an imperative or recommendation, and as a method

[21] Kjellberg notes that Pyrrho, the founder of this form of Skepticism, developed his philosophy after meeting the "gymnosophs" of India. The Buddhist practice of freeing ourselves from anxiety through the use of a middle path releases us from attachment to any enduring permanence that underlies our experiences, while refusing to make any assertion, positive or negative, regarding the existence of such an ultimate reality and accepting only what shows up in our empirical experience. This might well be the philosophy that he transformed into Skepticism.

(Raphals 1996: 28). As a doctrine, skepticism is the claim that nothing can be known. This doctrine is self-refuting if the skeptic claims to know that nothing can be known (and it is hard to see how else the doctrine can be interpreted, if not as a knowledge claim). Raphals notes that Zhuangzi does not ever explicitly make such a claim. This might simply mean that Zhuangzi was not a skeptic, but Raphals takes a more nuanced approach and suggests that this would be too hasty a conclusion. After all, the ancient Skeptics, aware of the paradox of claiming to know that Skepticism is true, likewise refrained from ever asserting it as a doctrine. So, the lack of explicit statement does not necessarily imply lack of commitment to the claim. Note, incidentally, that refraining from explicitly saying something self-contradictory does not free you from being committed to the contradiction. If a claim entails a contradiction, then to be committed to that claim, either explicitly or implicitly, is to be committed to its logically entailed contradiction.[22]

As an imperative, Skepticism is no more—and no less—than the instruction to withhold judgment always. Though there may be reasons and beliefs behind the instruction, they do not form part of its content, and so it might appear that the imperative can be followed without inconsistency. Raphals defines it simply as the "imperative to withhold judgment," and leaves unspecified when one ought to withhold judgment. Now, while it is true that one can sometimes issue a judgment on occasions when one is skeptical, the question arises: Can such practice correctly called "Skeptic*ism*"? The unstated implication is surely that the instruction is to be obeyed, not just on occasion, or even quite often, but *at all times*. If this is so, then even the skeptical imperative is prone to a type of inconsistency. To see this, we need to return to the reasons and beliefs that motivate the imperative or recommendation, and the desire to follow it. In the absence of articulated reasons, it is unlikely that anyone would want to obey the imperative or follow the recommendation. Thus, for the recommendation to be effective, the Skeptic ought to provide reasons. However, once those reasons are articulated, one must decide whether one is persuaded, and so whether one will follow the recommendation. If one is persuaded by those reasons, and tries to follow the recommendation, then one will have to go back and withhold judgment about those very reasons. But if one withholds judgment about those reasons, then one no longer has reason to follow the skeptical recommendation itself. Of course, one may still do so without being persuaded by the reasons, but one does so at the expense of the rationality of one's behavior.

As a method, Raphals says that Skepticism is simply inquiry that leads to doubt. The techniques of inculcating doubt may include logical rational argument or what Vlastos has called "complex irony," which includes rhetorical strategies of humor, ridicule, and narrative. Raphals cites Socrates' dialectical method as an example: Socrates exposes the logical faults of all positions without ever claiming

[22]Note, also, that the type of skepticism which Hansen attributes to Zhuangzi does not obviously fall prey to this kind of self-refutation, since, ostensibly at least, the claim that we cannot know which guiding discourse is the correct one is not itself a guiding discourse, or at least not a discourse of the same order.

to have found the right answer himself. Descartes' method of hyperbolic doubt is an example from modern philosophy. Descartes used a skeptical method, not because he believed the skeptical thesis but, on the contrary, because he believed that only that method could enable us to arrive at absolutely certain knowledge.

Greek Skepticism, then, is very different from modern skepticism. The skepticism that modern philosophers such as Descartes and Kant were concerned to repudiate is an epistemological thesis, a theoretical doctrine that explicitly claims that knowledge is not possible. The ancient Skeptics were not concerned to make such a claim. Their goal was practical; indeed, as Raphals points out, it was even therapeutic: They wanted to alleviate the anxieties humans suffer over the vicissitudes of life. When things seem to go well, we should enjoy our good fortune; when things seem to go badly, we should remember that they may not be so bad after all. This will lead us to emotional tranquility, since we will no longer be disturbed by whether what happens is really good for us or bad for us. All events in life will then be accepted with greater equanimity.

There are several methods for cultivating uncertainty. Raphals (1996: 31–35) documents Zhuangzi's rhetorical strategies that use humor, ridicule, and irony to undermine "claims for an innate (and knowable) criterion for epistemological and moral judgments." These she refers to as Zhuangzi's "arguments." Kjellberg (1996: 8–16) identifies arguments about the diversity of judgment and about the problem of rational criteria in Sextus and Zhuangzi, and goes on to identify what he believes to be a difference in purpose between the two philosophers.

4.2 Diversity of Judgment

The skeptical tropes of Sextus are based on the recognition that things appear differently from different points of view. Things appear differently to different creatures, to different people, to different senses, at different times, from different perspectives, when seen in different light, or under different circumstances, and so on (Kjellberg 1996: 4). If, as we naively believe, things are the way they appear, then things would have inconsistent qualities simultaneously. Since things cannot have inconsistent qualities, at most one of them can be the correct one. But since we have no independent access to reality apart from appearances, we have no means of determining which is the correct one. The Skeptical method is to counterpose these alternative appearances deliberately, in order to diminish the strength of our commitment to our original judgment, especially regarding the negative outcome of circumstances. The more strongly we consider the other perspectives, and the better arguments we can find, the weaker the hold of our formerly certain opinions. In this way, we eventually arrive at a completely balanced suspension of judgment, *epoché*.

Zhuangzi also notes that different creatures, different cultures, and different philosophers make different evaluative judgments. In the famous passage between Gaptooth and Royal Relativity, Zhuangzi points out that there are many conflicting views about what is right. Each creature has its own needs, from which it draws

its own judgments about what is good and what is not: what is good to eat, where it is good to sleep, and so on. Zhuangzi does not conclude that one cannot know, but instead closes the paragraph with a posture of resignation: it is better to forget such complexities, then one will live unperturbed by death and life, benefit and harm. One can certainly see traces of Skepticism here: diversity of values leads to suspension of judgment, which in turn leads to a successful engagement with life that avoids making a final evaluation. Raphals takes this "refrain[ing] from dogmatic judgments," or *epoché*, to be what Zhuangzi means by 明, "illumination" (Raphals 1996: 39).

4.3 Problem of the Criterion

The Skeptics also found reason to doubt the efficacy of reasoned argument (Kjellberg 1996: 5). Arguing rationally requires using standards or criteria of good argument, but how can we be sure we have the right criteria? How do we justify the criteria themselves? It seems that any attempt at justification must presuppose those very criteria, in which case the justification would be circular and so unsatisfactory. Or, should we appeal to different criteria, we would find ourselves in the position of having to justify *those* criteria. In short, we'd be back where we started, only with a different set of criteria. One is caught between the circularity of assuming of what one sets out to prove and an infinite regress. Thus, even reason and argument cannot help in establishing which, of all the possibilities, is really the case.

Zhuangzi also raises a version of the problem of the criterion, here it is the problem of the arbiter. I shall allow Zhuangzi to speak for himself: "Once you and I have started arguing . . . . Who can we get to set us right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to set us right? But if he already agrees with you how can he set us right? Shall we get someone who agrees with me to set us right? But if he already agrees with me how can he set us right? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us to set us right? But if he already disagrees with both of us how can he set us right? This being the case, you and I and others are all unable to understand one another. Shall we wait for someone else?"[23]

[23]Quoted in Kjellberg 1996: 9. I agree that this passage does indeed provide a version of the problem of the criterion, but I would also add that there is another issue at stake that has been overlooked. Zhuangzi, in the very same passage, considers two other possibilities: that in any disagreement, we might both be right, and we might both be wrong. Here, he clearly presupposes a logic that does not follow the principle of contradiction, or the principle of the excluded middle. I investigate the significance of this alternative logic in the last section below.

4.4 Emotional Tranquility

Suspension of judgment automatically brings about a dissipation of anxieties, and leaves us in a tranquil state of mind. No longer plagued by the need to know how things really will turn out, we are free to live our lives without emotional turmoil. This balanced state of mind is called *ataraxia*. Now, we are happy with what appears to us to be good, regardless of whether it really is good or not. But when we are unhappy with our circumstances, we need not allow this to upset us. We need only think of ways in which the bad circumstances may turn out to be beneficial after all (Kjellberg 1996: 3–4). Once we realize that what appears now to be bad may after all turn out to be good, we are less bothered by those circumstances. The anxiety attached to believing that what appears bad really is bad only makes things worse. Instead then, we apply the method of skeptical argumentation as a therapeutic device when things get tough for us.

There are problems with this claim. What if such methods do not lead to peace of mind? Indeed, cultivating unending uncertainty would surely lead some people to the most excruciating states of anxiety. Don't many people live in a blissful state of dogmatic bigotry? Does the Skeptic insist that a smugly contented dogmatist should cultivate uncertainty? But why? If being right is not at issue, and only being tranquil, then such a dogmatist would have no reason to adopt the Skeptic's way of life.

Like the Skeptics, Zhuangzi also seems to aim for emotional tranquility. He is concerned with how to cultivate an emotional state than enables us to deal with life's difficulties, no matter how dire, without emotional turmoil. Kjellberg explicitly considers this possibility and then rejects it on the grounds that this is not "all he is after," and also on the grounds that not all the characters we are counseled not to emulate are in states of anxiety (Kjellberg 1996: 10). He acknowledges that tranquility may be a pleasant side effect, but does not give it any more central role in Zhuangzi's philosophy.

However, that the Zhuangzian sage may have other achievements and that the negative characters may have other deficiencies, does not entail that tranquility is not a significant goal of cultivating Daoist sagehood. The goal of tranquility is in fact exemplified in a characteristic that Kjellberg notes but reinterprets in a way that I find puzzling. He interprets this description of tranquility as a description of uncertainty. Zhuangzi often describes the sage as not knowing benefit and harm, and Kjellberg takes this to mean that the sage is *uncertain* about which is which (Kjellberg 1996: 9–10). This uncertainty, he says, combined with learning and expertise, enables the sage to reach extraordinarily skillful heights. According to Kjellberg, the perfected people, *zhiren*, who succeed in the most extraordinary death-defying feats, are able to succeed because of their uncertainty. That is to say, since they are uncertain as to what is harmful to them, they are able to perform to the best of their abilities. From a philosophical point of view, this is certainly a more satisfying reading than one that takes the magical sounding passages literally, but it still remains unconvincing. Why would uncertainty make one any more skillful?

It is not clear to me why being uncertain about harm should lead to skilful performance: merely being uncertain does not necessarily mean that one does not care or is not anxious about the outcome. On the contrary, it is uncertainty that ordinarily provokes anxiety. It appears that what Kjellberg means is actually more complicated. He seems to point to an open-minded attentiveness that leads one to deal successfully with the subtleties of natural circumstances (Kjellberg 1996: 13–16), and this open-minded attentiveness follows from a suspension of faith in the kinds of "knowledge" encoded in our ordinary, and crude, linguistic distinctions (Kjellberg 1996: 15). But note that open-minded attentiveness is not the same as remaining committed to a state of uncertainty. To be attentive in this way only requires that one be more careful before settling on a course of action, not that one remain in a state of uncertainty, even if one believes that one's ordinary judgments lack an appropriate degree of subtlety. I suggest that if uncertainty has any kind of role to play in successful practice it is because of the detachment and tranquility that it is supposed to bring about. It is thus precisely the peace of mind that follows from the suspension of judgment that allows us to focus without emotional disturbance on whatever task lies ahead of us.

Finally, in Kjellberg's reading it is really only being uncertain about the harmfulness of what appears harmful that leads to tranquility. If one were to actively cultivate uncertainty about whether what appears to be beneficial really is beneficial, it would seem that the most likely emotional state to follow from this would be less tranquility, or increased anxiety. Zhuangzi, on the other hand, wants us in some sense to transcend concern not only with what is harmful, but also with what is beneficial. Notice, incidentally, that Zhuangzi does not refer to what appears to be harmful or beneficial, but actual benefit and harm. In this way, Zhuangzi cultivates an attitude more reminiscent of Stoicism than Skepticism.

4.5 Appearance and Reality

One problem with comparing Zhuangzi's philosophy with that of the Skeptics is that the epistemology of the latter depends on metaphysical distinction between Appearance and Reality. I am using this modern terminology to refer to the distinction between *phenomena* and *phantasia*, on the one hand, and *aletheia* on the other (Kjellberg 1996: 13). Note this is not just the ordinary distinction between the way things appear and the way they actually are. According to our ordinary understanding, most of the time things really are the way they appear to be; it is only in unusual circumstances that the appearances are deceiving. Perhaps one is too far to one side, or too close, or one is hallucinating, or one's view is hindered, or external conditions make things look otherwise than they actually are, as with a mirage. But, so long as such unusual conditions are not at play, things appear as they really are.

The distinction that the Skeptics articulate goes beyond this. The moment they presuppose that we can never decide under any circumstances what the reality of

the situation might be, they have articulated a *metaphysical* distinction: between a Reality that is independent of appearances and a realm of Appearance that can never truly reach the Reality that lies behind it. Now, Zhuangzi never explicitly argues for such a metaphysical dualism. Kjellberg is aware of both the ancient Skeptics presupposition and that Zhuangzi cannot be presupposed to share the same distinction. So for the comparison to work, some counterpart to the distinction must be operating in Zhuangzi's thinking. Kjellberg finds this in the distinction between 天 *tian* and 人 *ren*, the natural and the human. "Though Zhuangzi does not use terminology of this sort, he does draw a consistent distinction between *tian*, 'natural' and *ren*, 'human.'" (Kjellberg 1996: 13). According to Kjellberg, Zhuangzi uses *tian* to refer to the way things really are as opposed to the way people think of them as being. He is at pains to point out, however, that Zhuangzi's *tian* is not a metaphysical Reality that lies behind Appearances, it "is not some elusive quality of things-in-themselves lurking behind the appearances." Rather, *tian* has to do with the subtle details that cannot be captured by our crude linguistic distinctions.

Language, presumably understood here as a human, *ren*, construct, mediates a certain kind of knowledge of the world, which Kjellberg identifies as linguistic or rational knowledge. The motivation for equating linguistic with rational is unclear here, especially considering Zhuangzi's linguistic style. Zhuangzi's writing is poetic, narrative, mythical, and even when it is at its most rational, it never abandons a sense of paradox and mystery. Zhuangzi would surely be the last person to identify *tout court* the linguistic with the rational. Nevertheless, Kjellberg's point is that linguistic knowledge is knowledge mediated most particularly by the names under which we classify things, events, and processes. These classifications are crude and simplistic, and as such fail to capture the infinite array of subtle nuances and differences. Kjellberg gives an unfortunate example at this point: "Language cannot capture that a gourd may be used as a float." The example is unfortunate because in Kjellberg's sentence, language does indeed capture that: "a gourd may be used as a float." Perhaps what he meant was that the classificatory term "gourd" cannot capture the infinite array of infinitesimally developing propensities of the object/process that enable us to exploit new and intriguing possibilities in ways whose subtle differences escape our unwieldy linguistic distinctions.

Kjellberg's argument would then seem to be that our language divides the world simplistically into things that are good for us and things that are bad for us, things that bring us joy and those that give us grief. But such rough and ready dumping bins fail to do justice to the way things naturally are, independent of such artificial categories. I agree with Kjellberg that Zhuangzi believes that language fails to do justice to the intricate and subtle complexities of things and circumstances, and to the intricacies and subtleties of our skillful engagement with them, but it is not clear whether this constitutes a sufficient parallel to the Skeptic's metaphysical distinction. There are two significant problems. First, the distinction between *tian* and *ren* is not a radically dualistic one, as is the distinction between Appearance and Reality. Though humans attempt to add to and improve on nature, they are also products of nature, and as such humans are supposed to cultivate a relationship with a nature that is not unreachable. Moreover, even if natural tendencies of things and

circumstances are more subtle than our linguistic distinctions, it does not follow that we cannot be sure which of our distinctions will in the end apply. Difference in degree of precision does not give us grounds for uncertainty (except in cases of borderline decisions). We are only required to be more closely attentive to what lies before us and refrain from using tools that are too crude for the job at hand.

5 A New Interpretation

Graham, Hansen, Kjellberg, and Raphals focus on epistemological issues that are raised by chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi*. They are concerned especially with the passages that sound skeptical or relativistic.[24] Even Hansen's linguistic focus is within the context of epistemology: he switches from skepticism and relativism regarding our knowledge of the world to skepticism and relativism regarding our knowledge of which discourses give us correct access to the world. Both Graham and Hansen see Zhuangzi as responding to the universalism and realism of the Mohists, which claim there is only one way to understand the world that can be established as right and correct for all. Both Graham and Hansen also see Zhuangzi as criticizing disputation between the Ruists and the Mohists.

I shift the focus away from epistemology more directly to issues in the philosophy of language, logic, and ontology.[25] I, too, read Zhuangzi as responding to the Mohists, but I emphasize not so much their realism and universalism as their bivalent logic.[26] I also do not interpret the references to the Ru-Mo 儒墨 as referring to disputes *between* the Ruist and Mohists on what is right and wrong, but rather to both the Ruists *and* the Mohists making such artificial distinctions at all. I emphasize several intriguing passages and move them from the periphery to the centre of the interpretation. My focus will highlight the mysterious passages in which Zhuangzi makes an explicit reference to indeterminacy,[27] instructs us to

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[24]While the recent discussions of relativism and skepticism have been interesting and insightful, I do not find the passages that hint of relativism and skepticism to be decisive. There are certainly hints of such views, but they are not prevalent, and seem inconsistent with much of the rest of the text. For this reason, I find it neither necessary nor helpful to engage in a "refutation" of these philosophical tendencies. I seek instead to open up new ways of learning from the text that I hope will be productive for future research, not only into Zhuangzi's philosophy, but Daoist philosophy in general.

[25]By ontology, I mean phenomenological ontology: how we understand and experience the phenomena, the "things," that come into and go out of existence, that are born and die, with particular emphasis on our own lives and deaths. Thus, these theoretical issues also have a direct existential significance, and a bearing on how we live out our lives.

[26]Davidson and Dummett have shown that one's logic is intimately connected to the metaphysics to which one is committed: bivalence committing you to realism, rejection of bivalence to antirealism. Thus, Mohist bivalence goes hand in hand with their realism. Nevertheless, regarding Zhuangzi's response, the difference in emphasis results in a difference in interpretation.

[27]"A discourser has a discourse, but what is said is exceptionally indeterminate."

understand and assert contradictions,[28] and gives "ontological" descriptions of the emergence and dissolution of phenomena. Determinacy is ordinarily taken to refer to the establishing of a single correct standpoint (realism), and the contradictions are resolved by interpolating reference to difference points of view. I interpret indeterminacy to refer to openness of meaning and of the boundaries of things, and I see no reason to eliminate the contradictions by interpolating reference to perspectives. By changing the scene in this way, the stage is set for a new philosophical significance to emerge. Moreover, I also hope to situate my interpretation not primarily within the context of chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi*, but within the broader context of the Inner Chapters as a whole. I confine my attention here, however, largely to the philosophy expressed in "Qi Wu Lun" and, to some extent, in chapter 1, "Xiaoyao You."[29]

5.1 Mohist Logic and Bivalence

While I do not reject the interpretation of the Mohists as universalists and realists, these are not the aspects of their philosophy on which I focus my attention. I notice that the Mohists believed that social harmony requires social uniformity, and social uniformity requires not only universal values but also sharp boundaries between right and wrong (*shifei* 是非) and benefit and harm (*lihai* 利害) (Coutinho 2004: 77–89). The Mohists call this "clarity" (*ming* 明). If we are to know how to behave, we must know how to classify things correctly. The later Mohists continue this concern in the *Mohist Canon*. In fact, they are so concerned with marking a clear delineation between opposites that they articulate principles that together suggest some version of a principle of contradiction, according to which it is unacceptable both to assert and deny the same thing (Coutinho 2004: 89–108). For any dispute over what to call something, either the suggested characterization matches (*dang* 當) or it does not (*budang* 不當). For example, I might consider whether the thing (*wu* 物) before me right now is a horse. According to the Mohists the answer must be either 'yes' or 'no.' It cannot be both and it cannot be neither. In any dispute, one side, and only one, must match—one and only one of the disputants must win (*sheng* 勝). If one side matches, the other does not. It is not possible for both sides or neither side to match.

5.2 Contradiction

Zhuangzi turns this way of thinking on its head. The clarity 明 that the Mohists use to distinguish right 是 from wrong 非, is now used by Zhuangzi to name a capacity

[28] "Affirm 是 what isn't 不是, and attribute 然 what isn't so 不然!" "If you desire to affirm what is denied and deny what is affirmed, then nothing is as good as *ming* 明 illumination."

[29] Since I do not have enough space to provide extensive arguments, I include references to passages of my book, Coutinho 2004, in which these arguments are made in detail.

to affirm 是 what we deny 非, and deny what we affirm. “If you desire to affirm what is denied and deny what is affirmed, then nothing is as good as *ming* illumination” 欲是其所非而非其所是, 則莫若以明.[30] Here we find an interesting instruction to deny what is affirmed and *vice versa*. Traditionally, this is taken as a reference to the disputations between the Ruists and the Mohists, but I take it more literally as recommending that we affirm what we deny, without relativizing each affirmation and denial to a different point of view. In another passage Zhuangzi asks,

> What does it mean to “harmonize them with the grindstone of nature?” Affirm 是 what isn’t, and attribute 然 what isn’t so! If This were really This, then there would be no disputing the difference between This and not This. If So were really So, then there would be no disputing the difference between So and not So.
>
> 何謂和之以天倪?曰: 是不是, 然不然。是若果是也, 則是之異乎不是也亦無辯; 然若果然也, 則然之異乎不然也亦無辯。

And finally, if there is any doubt that Zhuangzi really does expect us to affirm and deny one and the same thing of the same thing, he gives us explicit advice on how to do so:

> To use a horse to illustrate a horse’s not being a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to illustrate a horse’s not being a horse.
>
> 以馬喻馬之非馬, 不若以非馬喻馬之非馬也.

Zhuangzi implies that we ought to affirm what we deny and deny what we affirm. Now, I think it is significant that there is in this instruction no explicit reference to points of view, nor is there even any hint that we are to resolve the contradiction by relativizing to different points of view. Indeed, the purpose seems to be to enable us to see beyond the apparent unacceptability of contradictions. But how do we do this? What is the virtue in contradicting ourselves? How can we make sense of these passages that promote contradiction?

These passages seem to have a centrality to the text and to the philosophy, but their significance remains mysterious. I think we can begin to make sense of them by turning our attention to indeterminacy and to process ontology.

5.3 Indeterminacy

“Discourse is not wind. A discourser has a discourse, but what is said is exceptionally unsettled (indeterminate)” 夫言非吹也,言者有言. 其所言者特未定也.

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[30]Traditionally, 其 is taken as having a changing reference to the Ruists and Mohists each affirming what the other denies. While this is a possible reading, and one certainly consistent with a relativist interpretation, I am not convinced that it is the simplest grammatical reading. I take 其所 as referring to the object of affirmation and denial: that which is affirmed, and that which is denied. I also take the 則 as a marker of logical consequence: *if* you desire to affirm what is denied, and *vice versa*, *then* the best thing is to use illumination.

Zhuangzi says that language, what it says, its meaning, is exceptionally "not yet determined." Graham takes the fixing, settling, or determination of meaning to be its singularity, its uniqueness. On this reading, to challenge its uniqueness is to recognize the many other ways of settling meaning. I wonder about this interpretation. After all, if meaning can be fixed in a multiplicity of ways, then it has been fixed in each of those ways, and if that were so, it would not be correct to say that meaning was not fixed at all.

The question then is what Zhuangzi means by this. Does he reject all meaning? Or is this a more moderate claim? I take the fixing of meaning to be a reference to the determination of its boundaries, the boundaries the Mohists want to have established with unmistakable clarity. To deny that meaning is determinate is not to assert that meaning has no boundaries, but only to deny that those boundaries are determinate. To say that what is said is exceptionally indeterminate, then, is to say that the boundaries between affirmation and denial, the distinction between what is so and what is not, are not clearly and sharply determined. That the negation is not a categorical negation (despite the translation of 未 as "never") but a temporal negation, "not yet," may provide a clue as to why Zhuangzi was acutely aware of indeterminacies.

5.4 Process

> The myriad things disseminating
> with different forms giving way to one another
> beginning and ending like the rounds of a wheel
> none attaining their match:
> this is the potter's wheel of nature.
> The potter's wheel of nature is the grindstone of nature.
> 萬物皆種也, 以不同形相禪, 始卒若環, 莫得其倫, 是謂天均. 天均者, 天倪也.

Zhuangzi's conception of the world—and our experience of it—is one of constant cycles of transformation. In ancient Chinese the concept of time was always understood seasonally; indeed, one very basic sense of the meaning of the word *shi* 時is "timeliness" or "seasonality." Like the worldview expressed in the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi* describes a world of opposites, each yielding to or turning into the other at appropriate times (Coutinho 2004: 169–174). Indeed, in the *Zhuangzi,* the very process of existing can be seen to presuppose passage between opposites in two phases: from nothing to something, and then a return to nothing. In a notable passage, Zhuangzi draws our attention to the two phases of this process, the emerging into existence, and the return to nothing:

> There is a beginning.
> There is not yet begun to be a beginning.
> There is not yet begun to be not yet begun to be a beginning.
> 有始也者, 有未始有始也者, 有未始有夫未始有始也者.

> There is something.
> There is nothing.
> There is not yet begun to be nothing.
> There is not yet begun to be not yet begun to be nothing.
> 有有也者, 有無也者, 有未始有無也者, 有未始有夫未始有無也者.

> Suddenly, there is nothing, but we do not yet know of something and nothing which really is something and which is nothing.
> 俄而有無矣, 而未知有無之果孰有孰無也.

Zhuangzi notices the two regions surrounding the presence of a something. At one end there is the emerging of its beginning; at the other end is its dissolution into nothing. Both of these are marked, not by a sudden, discrete transformation of non-being into being and *vice versa*, but by phases of incipience. In the penumbrae of the passing between, something and nothing blend: we do not yet have something, yet we do not have absolutely nothing either (Coutinho 166–168).

People, things, meanings, are all delimited by boundaries *feng* 封: spatial boundaries, temporal boundaries, qualitative boundaries, boundaries of understanding. Human lives in particular are delimited by two temporal boundaries: the beginning of our lives and the end. This tripartite temporal structure—nothing 無, something 有, and nothing 無—is a motif that recurs throughout the *Zhuangzi*. The process of change from nothing to something is a process of emergence 出, that from something to nothing is an entering 入. Like a wave, we emerge into presence, into thinghood, and submerge into the ocean of undifferentiation. This submergence is considered to be a process of return—with Laozi it is a turning about (*fan* 反) and with Zhuangzi it is quite explicitly a returning home (*gui* 歸). But what the *Zhuangzi* draws to our attention is not just the endless cyclical process, but also the boundaries themselves. It draws our attention away from the "things" delimited by them and forces us to focus closely on the *processes* of transformation. By focusing closely on the transitions we become aware of the continuity between something and nothing: the sharpness and clarity of the boundary dissolves, the dichotomy becomes a penumbra. From this vantage point, Zhuangzi hopes to temper our natural tendency to identify with the evanescent region, the something, between the two boundaryless boundaries (Coutinho 2004: 67). Zhuangzi vividly depicts a world in process (a worldview, incidentally, that the Mohists do not explicitly reject), in which rigid dichotomies do not hold. Things are always in subtle stages of incipient becoming, transforming into their Others through processes beneath the threshold of discernability. Sometimes they fit the boundaries of our linguistic terms neatly (now it is a horse, now it is not); at other times, during the intermediate stages, they defy the coherence and consistency of those very same boundaries.

5.5 Using a Horse That Is Not a Horse: Process and Ontology

We are now able to make sense of Zhuangzi's recommendation that we contradict ourselves. The indeterminate logic of a world in transformation helps to explain these passages. Sensitivity to vagueness and open texture remains open to the

possibility of contradictoriness in the penumbral regions. The applicability of contradictory judgments draws attention to the fact that we are dealing with borderline objects of the penumbral region. Thus, Zhuangzi does not praise contradictoriness for its own sake, but rather the fact that contradictions might well be applicable in the penumbral borderlands. In the borderlands, which might be more extensive than we generally think, getting clear involves abandoning presuppositions of mutual exclusivity that refuse to make room for contradiction.

We are also able to make sense of Zhuangzi's methodological advice "To use a horse to illustrate a horse's not being a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to illustrate a horse's not being a horse." Zhuangzi begins to hint at a method for enabling us to affirm what we deny and deny what we affirm. If we want to understand how something, a horse, may be Other to itself, not a horse, we will not get far if we insist on looking at examples of things that are clear cases of reference. Looking at examples of what are obviously horses will only confirm our suspicions that affirmation and denial are mutually exclusive. In fact, this is a very common reaction to discussions of vagueness, even among otherwise reflective people. Of course there is no vagueness, they insist, just look at all the things around us that clearly are what they are! The attempt to stretch the imagination with hypothetical counter-examples is usually met with extraordinary resistance and a determination to decide firmly and decisively one way or the other, no matter how anomalous or unfamiliar the counter-example. Zhuangzi's suggestion, then, is that we approach the matter from the other direction. Start with cases that are not so clear: a horse foetus, a horse's corpse, a pony, an ass, the evolutionary ancestors of horses, a horse with wings, a horse that can speak (Coutinho 2004: 162–163).[31] The more we allow our imaginations to dwell in the penumbral regions, the more likely we are to obtain a *gestalt* shift. We suddenly realize the ubiquity of vagueness and indeterminacy, such that even ordinary things as they undergo transformations, both ordinary and extraordinary, will slowly become what they are not. In the middle regions, in the penumbrae, their belonging to one side or the other of the invisible boundary remains stubbornly indeterminate.

Once one has become familiar with becoming unfamiliar, one will find it easier to make the explorations from home outwards. We might then start with a typical or paradigmatic case, but actively search for the seeds of its otherness. We take a prototypical case and make it less familiar, allow something here and there to slowly transform, to grow, to develop, so that the thing becomes increasingly peculiar. This is Wittgenstein's method in the *Philosophical Investigations* and Waismann's method of exploring the open texture and porosity of our concepts. When we enter

[31]For further references and a fuller discussion of the vagueness and its logic see also Coutinho 2004: 109–122, and for an extended discussion of other types of indeterminacy, see Coutinho 2004: 132–152.

the penumbra, the grip of language becomes less firm: "yes" and "no" become less clearly opposed. The deeper into the shade we go, the harder it becomes to make a persuasive decision.

5.6 Vastness, Vagueness and Tranquility

Rather than espousing skepticism or relativism about which way of life is better, I see Zhuangzi as offering a clear and unmistakable critique of petty 小 viewpoints that cling to their limitations, while encouraging a way of life that promotes vastness 大—expansiveness, flexibility, imagination, and the dissolving of the artificial boundaries through which we ordinarily limit and define ourselves. This expansive way of life is indeed rooted in the great ancestor 大宗, which I take to be 天 nature, the cosmos, the ancestral wellspring within us, and beyond us, from which our lives pour forth. The journey towards such cosmic broadmindedness frees us from the petty concerns that ordinarily cause us so much emotional disturbance. From this distant perspective, it is not only the negative emotions from which we distance ourselves, but also our moments of happiness, pleasure, and joy. We welcome them all and release them all, preferring none to any other. In this way, I see Zhuangzi having more in common with the Stoic way of life than with the Skeptics.

Zhuangzi's philosophy is that all life is in constant transformation: Things call each other into being; nature transforms them into each other and into their opposites. We are born, we are subject to illness and death; all of these are simply the natural transformations of things. The entities we take to be so real are fluid stages in the seasonal developments of things from nothing to something to nothing. They have no well-defined boundaries, but each thing dissolves into its Other. We live well when we learn to accept the natural transformations of things, when we learn to identify not with our parochially defined selves, but after expanding our boundaries to include our natural context, as well as things, people, and ways of life we might ordinarily reject as strange. The more expansive the point of view from which we observe our lives, the less subject we are to the vicissitudes of life, the less thrown around we are by circumstances, by ill health, by death, by social turmoil. We see continuities everywhere, and from the vaster perspectives of the vaster continuities our personal concerns and emotions diminish in significance. We accept all that happens in our lives, all that is unavoidable, with indifference or rather with equal pleasure. By following the transformations one is released from the anxiety of loss and the fear of death. One identifies *with* the changes, through the penumbral stages, so that one does not fear them as a loss of identity. From a point of view that leaves human concerns behind, everything is lost and everything is retained in the torrent of flux. It is only conceiving of fixed identities that creates loss. Insight (*ming*) allows us to identify with the transformations—so that identity itself becomes fluid and penumbral. When identity is itself fluid and penumbral change, can no longer be perceived as loss.

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Chapter 8
Zhuangzi's Philosophy: A Three Dimensional Reconstruction

Xiaogan Liu

In this companion, a total of four chapters are devoted to addressing the book *Zhuangzi* and its philosophies. The first (Chapter 6) discusses textual issues, possible authors, dating, and classification. The second (Chapter 7) surveys representative and important studies of Zhuangzi's philosophy, especially from the English-speaking world, and introduces alternative approaches and arguments. This is the third, which introduces a three-dimensional reconstruction of Zhuangzi's thought based on the Inner Chapters. The Outer and Miscellaneous chapters will be discussed in the following (Chapter 9), which explains the theoretical development of three groups of Zhuangzi followers who are considered the principle contributors to the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters.

1 An Experimental Approach

Studies of Zhuagzi's philosophy are so vibrant, colorful, productive, and divergent that a comprehensive survey of the state of field is difficult. However, we are fortunate to have JeeLoo Liu's terse yet methodical summary of the confusing and confused state of interpretations. Based on a review of dozens of scholars' work, Liu classifies the major research into the following groups: radical skepticism or

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perspectivism, soft skepticism or language skepticism, therapeutic skepticism or methodological skepticism, asymmetrical relativism, anti-rationalism or mysticism, and realism. Besides this, we are also reminded of the various comparative studies around the *Zhuangzi*'s thought: namely, comparing Zhuangzian ideas and styles with Derrida, Putnam, Rorty, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Neitzsche, and Aristotle (J. Liu 2006: 152–81). Liu concludes with a comprehensive interpretation of Zhuangzi's philosophy as a complex that is "a combination of *realism* with respect to Dao and the world as a whole, *relativism* with respect to our conceptual schemes and our judgments, and *skepticism* about the possibility of true knowledge" (ibid, 157). This author finds J. Liu's approach to be a good attempt at grasping Zhuangzi's philosophy comprehensively and faithfully.

Based on various reviews and summaries, we find certain common characteristics in Western research on Zhuangzi's philosophy to date: (1) Most philosophical discussion has concentrated on a few concepts and themes significant in Western philosophical traditions, such as relativism and skepticism; (2) many studies are based mainly on Chapter 2 ("The Theory of Equalizing Things"); (3) few interpreters approach Zhuangzi's philosophy as a multi-dimensional system. The preponderance of these characteristics reflects the limits of current studies of Zhuangzi's philosophy, though many of these books and articles have nonetheless made great contributions to the field.

Yes, *Zhuangzi* studies is a fascinating and demanding enterprise; its contradictions are well captured by Lee Yearley: "Few books existing anywhere are both as compelling and as mysterious as is the *Zhuangzi*; it simultaneously draws one's attention and eludes one's grasp" (Yearley 1996: 152). Indeed, Zhuangzi's thought is unique, fantastical, and densely structured, and its philosophy is presented distinctively in fables, dialogues, monologues, and stories of historical, legendary or completely fictional figures. With its style and quality, it cannot be construed via traditional concepts and definitions: To unlock its wisdom and the ideas that flow from its ambivalence and quintessential phrasing demands unusual approaches. Thus we generally agree with what JeeLoo Liu advocates: "The task laid out for readers of the *Zhuangzi* is to comprehend the whole picture of Zhuangzi's philosophical outlook, and to reorganize his different strands into a coherent theory" (J. Liu 2006: 152). This chapter may be understood as an experiment toward that end—to reorganize the multi-dimensions of Zhuangzi's thought into a possible coherent system. Hence, this chapter is different from most books or articles in *Zhuangzi* studies, since it does not have an introduction to Zhuangzi's background, due to a lack of reliable historical accounts; nor does it deal with the perspectives of rhetoric, literature, religiosity, practice, or community, to name a few common angles of approach. There are, however, a number of books and articles that might be helpful in these respects.[1]

[1]See, for example, Graham 1989, Ames 1998, Cook 2003, Kjellberg and Ivanhoe 1996, Yearley 1996, and Kohn 2014.

The approach here is based on faithful, holistic, and comprehensive analyses of the *Zhuangzi*'s various theoretical aspects, especially in the Inner Chapters, we conclude that Zhuangzi's philosophy is comprised of at least three constituent dimensions, like an organic living body.

If we imagine that Zhuangzi's philosophy is a construction, then there is a ground level, which is its first theoretical dimension, and from which other aspects of his theories grow. This ground conveys Zhuangzi's view of the lived world: full of uncertainty, predicaments, dilemmas, conflicts, and dangers. This pessimistic view is concentrated into the conventional term *ming* 命 (destiny), which explains why human beings do not have freedom and how one may escape from this undesirable worldly life. Though this dimension is neglected or ignored, and plays no significant part in a modern philosophical framework, it provides the basis for why and how Zhuangzi tries to detach from lived experience to pursue pure spiritual freedom, and then why he invents brilliant argumentation for reaching the "mind of indifference" towards the mundane world.

The canopy of Zhuangzi's philosophy is its highest dimension, which we will call the second dimension for narrative convenience. Unlike the first pessimistic dimension, this second one seems playful, colorful, and lighthearted. The canopy image gives out to full detachment from earthly life, floating or flying in the kingdom of spiritual freedom, and the experience of being united with the universe, without any concern about and entanglements in everyday life. This dimension is represented by *xiaoyao* 逍遙 (free and easy wandering) and *jiandu* 見獨 (envisioning universal uniqueness). The first and second dimensions together constitute Zhuangzi's philosophy of life, which is the essential part of Zhuangzi's thought, but seems not to be an important focus for modern philosophers.

These two dimensions involve practical wisdom about facing *ming* and realizing spiritual transcendence, while the third dimension provides systematic theories and methodological arguments in the way a ladder might ascend from the first earthly dimension to the second transcendent one. In this third dimension, the most significant ideas are the theory of equalizing things (*qiwu* 齊物) and the theory of not knowing (*buzhi* 不知), these two are usually understood as relativist and skeptical arguments, respectively. They have caused heated discussion and debate among philosophers. The three constituent dimensions are our experimental approach to comprehensively observe and represent Zhuangzi's philosophical system (Liu 2010: 186–8).

When we discuss Zhuangzi's philosophy, Dao is a key concept. Dao penetrates all three dimensions, which cohere together as a whole. In the first dimension, Dao's role is to explain and answer questions about the reality of mundane life. For example, can people really achieve their ambitious goals? Can they really grasp their destiny of glory, success, and prosperity? Can they escape from the predicaments of their given circumstances? In this fundamental dimension, Dao is the spontaneous source and ground of the world—and of human beings' *ming* (destiny) as well. Therefore, human beings cannot change their *ming*, because it ultimately unfolds in accordance with Dao.

Then how to face and cope with the spontaneous unfolding of Dao? Zhuangzi's answer is that one must reach for the experience of union with Dao to achieve freedom. This is the transcendent state represented by the second dimension, in which Zhuangzi tries to answer questions about how and where people can rid themselves of dilemmas and predicaments in regular social and political life, and what it is like to be free and easy in the world. Here Zhuangzi creates a second meaning for Dao, which involves the spiritual experience of envisioning and uniting with Dao. This state of mind is the highest form of cognition and spiritual cultivation. Similarly devout states might described as experiencing union with the universe, or with Heaven, or with the myriad things. Actually, it is an absolute detachment from the mundane world that involves a special spiritual experience. The critical point for understanding Zhuangzi's philosophy is that there are two notions of Dao: one is that Dao is the source and ground of the universe, invented by Laozi and shared by most Daoist thinkers; the other is this spiritual vision of the ultimate reality of the universe, an idea created by Zhuangzi and uniquely developed by him. This second meaning of Dao is often ignored by Zhuangzi's interpreters.

These two senses of Dao, though different as external source and subjective vision, are coherent and similar, sharing the following features: absolute uniqueness and oneness, spontaneity, infinitude, transcendence, non-temporality, no- discrimination, and no-response. These features provide perfect grounds for correcting people's regular ways of perceiving the world and allowing them to ponder on the truth of what they discern. These features of the two notions of Dao support the methodological theories in the third dimension. For example, absolute uniqueness and no-discrimination undergird the "theory of equalizing all things," while non-temporality and transcendence ground the "theory of not knowing" (Liu 2010: 108–25).

So Zhuangzi's philosophy may be characterized as a coherent system of three dimensions, throughout which we see the penetration of Dao's function and features. Since this author's orientation is historical and text-based, I aim to approximate a possible system of Zhuangzi's philosophy that represents a faithful historical reconstruction, rather than a modern creative reconstruction.[2] This approach is not exceptional, but relies on certain evidence. Basing my arguments and reconstruction on close reading and textual analyses, this chapter will build a reconstruction by quoting and analyzing the text. This is aimed to help readers to examine and judge the grounds and inference of the argument presented here.

[2]There are essential orientations in Chinese philosophical studies. One is historical and textual, and tries to approximate the possible theoretical truth of a system of thought; the other is a modern philosophical creation—a variation on a theme, so to speak. Though there may not be a sharp gap between the two, a researcher's orientation should be self-consciousness and clear. Philosophical reconstructions, then, either try to reconstruct the philosophical system according to best evidence of historical truth or engage in new philosophical developments to address social needs. See X. Liu 2008–2009 (English) and X. Liu 2009 (Chinese).

2 Mundane Life: Inevitability and Human Haplessness

The Chinese word *ming* 命 has long been used loosely without need for agreement in its definition. It has been understood and translated as fate, destiny, decree, command, or even life (Zhang 2002: 125). Which meaning is used, however, has varied among different thinkers and texts. Hence there is no single English word that adequately covers this concept. For example, in the early period *ming* referred to the command of the God of Heaven. Later, in his text, Mozi 墨子 fiercely attacks the idea predetermined fate, though that shade of meaning was seldom seen in most Chinese texts of his period. In Mencius' time, *ming* referred to anything that was beyond the power of humans to influence or alter. When Zhuangzi used *ming,* he was explaining and supporting an attitude of not seriously caring what happened to human beings (ibid.). But Zhuangzi is by no means a fatalist, since his *ming* is neither predetermined nor absolutely controlled by gods or mechanical causality. Zhuangzi assigns man's general lack of capability in mundane life to the term *ming* to ease anxiety and suffering. Zhuangzi believes that when a person is caught in circumstances of humiliation or glorification, poverty or prosperity, life and death, etc., they can do nothing to change their situation, just as they can do nothing about natural cycles of day and night. Zhuangzi is not concerned about the cause of undesirable conditions, though he believes that everything, including *ming*, arises from the spontaneous source of Dao or *tian* (heaven). Therefore, while we may use "destiny" as a token translation for Zhuangzi's *ming*, we may perhaps better understand it as a *naturally given situation*, whether of the minute or of the age. This is different from authors who use *ming* to suggest the determinations of the gods or the will of heaven.

*2.1 Living Within Naturally Given Situations (*Ming*)*

Again, for Zhuangzi, *ming* stands for the inevitability of the naturally given situation and human beings' haplessness within it. This observation and conclusion seem to be the opposite of common knowledge. People usually believe that they have the right and ability to decide what they want to do and what kind of results they can get from what they do. In fact, people's will and actions are restricted and influenced by many entangled elements and levels of agency they are not even aware of. This perception and discernment touch on issues in modern existentialist theory, and quite a few philosophers have compared Zhuangzi to Nietzsche and Sartre. Indeed, like the existentialists, Zhuangzi zooms in on the adversity and absurdity of human life in the lived world. He rounds it up like this:

> Great knowledge is all-embracing and extensive, whereas small knowledge is partial and discriminatory. Great speech blazes, whereas small speech is trifling.
>
> Whether in sleep, when the various elements of the spirit are interlocked in dreams, or when awake and the body is free to move and act, in all their contacts and associations, some

> minds are leisurely, some are deep, and some are serious. People scheme and fight with their minds. When people have small fears they are worried, and when they have great fears they are totally at a loss. One's mind shoots forth like an arrow to be the arbiter of right and wrong .... People always are sunk in what they enjoy doing, and cannot be recovered .... and as their hearts near death and cannot be given life again ... pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy, anxiety and regret, fickleness and fear ... all of these alternate within us day and night but we don't know where they come from. (Guo 1978: 51)[3]

These statements are Zhuangzi's existential vision on human beings' lack of capability and life's absurdity. Unlike the French philosopher Sartre who negates all metaphysical beings, Zhuangzi believes in transcendent Dao, but Dao, as well as gods and heaven, does not bless and protect people, and there are no laws for human beings to follow to secure a peaceful and safe life. Because Dao and heaven are spontaneous in operation, people think that they are their own masters; nevertheless, they cannot decide their final destiny. There is no guarantee that people can realize their goals or achieve their purpose. Zhuangzi repeatedly emphasizes the helplessness of human beings:

> Once we have received our completed physical form, we do not forget it while we wait for extinction. Cutting into and grinding together with things, we rush on to the end like a galloping steed no one can stop. Is this not pitiful? To toil all one's life without seeing its success and to be wearied and worn out without knowing where to end—is this not lamentable? (Guo 1978: 56)

Here, the critical message is that human beings cannot stop their galloping and toiling for their uncertain ends, and moreover, they can't know the end, even though they believe they know. Yes, some become emperors, generals, or millionaires, but their achievement depends on countless events and other peoples' actions, which they cannot fully control. Innumerable people pursue achievement but only a few of them can be the lucky ones. Moreover, even kings, generals, and millionaires cannot fully realize their will and wishes. Therefore, Zhuangzi concludes that human beings' life in this world is pitiful and lamentable.

Zhuangzi assigns human helplessness when facing inevitable destiny to the conventional term *ming*. However, the content of his *ming* is different from the traditional usage. Here are two passages that state about what *ming* is like:

> Life and death are (parts) of *ming* 命. Their alternation is constant, just like that of day and night, which is due to nature (*tian* 天). What men are unable to interfere with are the attributes of all things. (Guo 1978: 241)

[3]All translations of the *Zhuangzi* in this chapter are adopted with modification from Watson 1968, Mair 1998, Graham 1981, and Chan 1963. Two Chinese commentaries are often consulted: Chen 1983, Fang and Lu 2007. Due to limited time, the author failed to consult Ziporyn 2009, though I believe it deserves our attention. The basic Chinese version the author used is Guo 1978. The author's translation follows two principles: (1) to be faithful to the original Chinese texts themselves; (2) to make the translation readable for philosophical students who have no background in sinological training. The translation of the first two sentences in this citation is based on Zhang Binglin's 章炳麟 interpretation, cited in Chan 1963:180.

> Death and life, survival and ruin, success and failure, poverty and riches, worthiness and unworthiness, slander and fame, hunger and thirst, cold and heat—these mutations are the movement of *ming*, just like the alternation of day and night before us, but human knowledge cannot spy our their source. (ibid. 212)

According to Zhuangzi's accounts, we can conclude: (1) Zhuangzi ascribes all personal, social, and political encounters and experience to the movement of *ming*; (2) anything in human life that people cannot change and control should be taken to be the result of *ming,* which can be defined as naturally given situations; (3) for Zhuangzi, naturally given situation is like natural phenomena, such as the alternation of day and night, and has nothing to do with the will of the gods or heaven; (4) therefore, *ming* is meaningless, like the cycle of the seasons, which has no moral or emotional connotations for human beings; (5) accordingly, people should not cling to the alterations of fortunate and misfortune. In other words, people should feel at ease about the unfolding of *ming* because it is both meaningless and unchangeable.

2.2 Preparation for Transcending

The last point above is the most significant and unique to Zhuangzi's theory of *ming*, and as such it deserves our special attention. Being at ease in any given situation suggests that the Zhuangzian theory of *ming* is both pessimistic and optimistic. It is pessimistic because people are basically helpless to control what faces them in everyday life with its varied situations, yet there is optimism because if people have no illusions about the state of life, there should be nothing they could be bothered by. Being at ease towards *ming* is an attitude by which a miserable *ming* may be shifted to a neutral one, which provides a path from the passive following of *ming* to active pursuit of spiritual freedom. To understand Zhuangzi's distinctive thinking on this, let us consider an interesting story in Chapter 6 ("The Great and Venerable Teacher").

The story is involves four fabled figures, the masters Si, Yü, Li, and Lai, whose lifestyle and pursuits were exceptional. Once, while talking together, they hit upon this criterion of knowing a friend:

> "Which of us is able to think of nothingness as the head, of life as the spine, and of death as the rump? Which of us knows that the living and the dead, the surviving and the lost, are all one thing? He shall be my friend." The four men looked at each other and smiled, and none was reluctant in his heart. So they all became friends. (Guo 1978: 258)

This is a fictional application of Zhuangzi's theory of equalizing things and the proper attitude towards *ming,* the given situation. Here, what the Four Masters want to equalize are, life and death, surviving and lost, all significant representatives of the circulation of one's *ming*. More important is that all of this should be taken as equal to nothingness. Zhuangzi does not negate the reality of the world as Buddhism does, he just wants people to consider the inevitability of life and their

own helplessness in the mundane world as nothing, meaning nothing, and deserving of nothing. This attitude explains why people could feel at ease saddled with a miserable *ming,* and how they might prepare to reach for transcendent freedom. So being at ease about any given situation is the transitional pivot from which Zhuangzi actively pursues spiritual freedom. This fusion of pessimism and optimism is animated as the story continues:

> Soon afterward Master Yü fell ill and Master Si went to inquire (and hears Yü exclaiming): "Wonderful! How the maker of things is turning me into this crumbled thing."[4] "His back was hunched and his backbone was protruding. His internal organs were on the top of his body. His cheeks were buried in his navel. His shoulders were higher than his head. The hair knot on top of his head pointed up toward the sky. The energies of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 in him were all awry, but his mind was at ease as though nothing had happened. Dragging himself haltingly to the well, he looked at his reflection, and said: "Alas! The maker of things has made me crumbled up like this."
>
> "Do you resent it?" asked Master Si.
>
> "No," answered Master Yü, "why should I resent? Suppose my left arm is transformed into a cock; with it I should herald the dawn. Suppose my right arm is transformed into a sling; with it I should look for a dove to roast. Suppose my buttocks were transformed into wheels and my spirit into a horse. I should mount them. What need do I have for a chariot? Furthermore, I receive life because the time had come; I will lose it because the course passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this course, and then neither sorrow nor joy can disturb your mind. In ancient times this was called to 'release from hanging' (*xuanjie* 懸解).[5] There are those who cannot release themselves because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever overcome *tian* 天 (heaven/nature)—that's the way it's always been. Why should I resent?" (ibid.: 258–260)

The narrative continues with a similar story and dialogue between another two masters. Other stories, fables, dialogues, and monologues with the same themes are easy to find in the Inner Chapters. All these narratives present sharp contrasts: On one hand, there are horrid diseases and ravaged organs, cheeks, shoulders, and backbones; on the other hand, these characters remain peaceful in their minds, curious, with lively imaginations and making positive witticisms about their conditions. This contrast suggests that one can detach from the miseries of earthly life and remain cheerful and a peace. One's attitude should be "contented and at ease" with any situation so that the mind "cannot be disturbed by sorrow or joy." Just take Master Yü as an example: No matter how depressing his health may be, he can always shift it to a positive, even optimistic mode through curiosity and imagination. What the author wants to express is clear: by learning to keep your mind and mood

[4]Here "maker of things" is A.C. Graham's translation for *zaowuzhe* 造物者, while other translations are Creator, which might suggest God. Nevertheless, in Daoist theory, the source of the universe is never God or gods who produce the world according to will or plan.

[5]To "release from hanging" is my translation of (*xuanjie* 懸解). Here the original character *xian* 縣was borrowed for *xuan* 懸. Chan gives a useful comment on this "release." He said: "Release here means spiritual freedom and is to be sharply differentiated from Buddhist Nivana" (Chan 1963: 197).

at ease towards adversity people can mount the springboard from which to jump into a sphere of spiritual freedom, the second dimension of Zhuangzi's philosophy and the theme we will discuss in the next section.

But before we move on, we should discuss briefly the metaphysical grounds for transitioning from a miserable *ming* to spiritual freedom. Firstly, the universe is determined rather than purely random or chaotic. Two concepts are used to explain this determinism. Most generally, the universe is determined by Dao. Zhuangzi believe that Dao generates heaven and earth as the source and ground of the universe (Guo 1978: 246). More specifically, *ming* embodies the determination of Dao over human beings' destiny (ibid.: 222). Therefore people cannot and need not to do too much to try and control their life and death, prosperity and poverty, and etc. They should not waste their lives and energy trying to alter their given situations. *Ming*, in Zhuangzi's philosophy, more directly and broadly embodies the determined results of people's encounters and occasions across their whole life. Apparently, this point of view is quite pessimistic, but it actually provides the necessary condition for human beings to forget and detach from earthly life on the grounds that they should bother about anything they cannot manage; this way maintaining one's equanimity is possible.

Secondly, the most important feature of Zhuangzi's theory of *ming* is its characteristic spontaneity and purposelessness; therefore, predicaments and quandaries have no moral, social, or religious connotations. In Daoism they have nothing to do with warnings, punishment, judgment, or retribution, unlike much religious thinking. It is more like a man in a boat crossing a river. When he sees an empty boat happen along and bump into him, he will not get angry. But if there should be someone in the other boat, then he will shout out and get angry (ibid.: 675). If people understand that *ming* is like an empty boat having no meaning for anyone, then their peace of mind should not be disturbed by it.

To sum up, Zhuangzi's theory of *ming* comes with two critical points: (1) People can do nothing to change their *ming*, or naturally given situations; (2) *ming* is meaningless so people should not be bothered by it. These two points are essential conditions for Zhuangzi's transition from passively following one's *ming* to actively pursuing transcendent freedom.

3 Beyond Earthly Life: Transcendent Freedom

The second dimension of Zhuangzi's philosophy is about one's special experience detached from the everyday life, beyond mundane world. All stories, narratives, and arguments about *ming* and various misfortunes repeatedly suggest that the given situations are meaningless and unalterable, so the only desirable and available freedom lies beyond the earthly world. Zhuangzi creates many expressions to indicate this place, such as *wuheyou zhi xiang* 無何有之鄉 (Nothing-whatever land), *chengou zhi wai* 塵垢之外 (beyond the dust), *liuji zhi wai* 六極之外 (beyond the six directions), *sihai zhi wai* 四海之外 (beyond the four seas). He coins other terms

about the personal experience in this freedom, such as *xiaoyao* 逍遙 (free and easy wandering), *jiandu* 見獨 (envisioning the universal uniqueness), *zuowang* 坐忘 (sitting and oblivion), and *tongyu datong* 同於大通 (being one with the universal thoroughfare), to name a few.

3.1 Hugeness and Carefree Wandering

In this dimension, the most famous and representative terms are *xiaoyao* 逍遙 (carefree wandering) and *you* 遊 (roving), which are combined in the title of the *Zhuangzi*'s first chapter. We do not have evidence of who named this key chapter. As for the significance of *xiaoyao* and *you,* Victor Mair once pointed out that "Wandering (*xiaoyao, you*) is probably the single most important and quintessential concept in the Zhuangzi, but often overlooked because it is presented in literary rather than philosophical terms. Wandering implies a 'laid-back' attitude towards life in which one takes things as they come and flows along with the Dao unconcernedly" (Mair 1998: 385). Not surprisingly, the first chapter opens with the image of a fantastically huge bird soaring into the sky:

> There is a fish in the northern boundless ocean, its name is Kun. The Kun is so huge that no one knows how many thousand miles its body extends. It changes into a bird, and its name is Peng. Peng is so huge that no one knows how many thousands miles its back stretches. When he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds hanging from the sky. When the sea begins to stir, this bird sets off for the southern boundless ocean, which is the Lake of Heaven . . . . When Peng journeys to the southern boundless ocean, the wake it thrashes on the water is three thousand miles long, and it mounts spiraling on the whirlwind ninety thousand miles high. (Guo 1978: 2–4)

The distinctive feature of Peng is its unimaginable size. This figure deserves our special attention and analysis. First, the huge bird is a completely new creation of the author's imagining, rather than an exaggerated image of a true bird. Why did the author create such a strange figure? Why does Peng have to be so big? What is the message the author wants to convey? Second, the figure of the huge bird is put at the very beginning of the first chapter of whole book, and a similar fable about the Peng is given in the same chapter. Why this image is so important? Why did the author (or editor) want to repeat the image and message? A reasonable inference is that this is the most concentrated symbol of Zhuangzi's ideal state of life, or what he really wants to promote. To help us to understand the meaning of the symbol, consider two criticisms of Peng:

> The cicada and the little dove laugh at it [the huge bird], saying, "When we make an effort and fly up, we can get as far as the elm or the sandalwood tree, but sometimes we don't make it and just fall down on the ground. Now why is anyone going to go ninety thousand miles to the south!" . . . What can these two [little] creatures understand? (Guo 1978: 9)

Cicada and dove think that Peng's journey is eccentric and superfluous. They cannot understand Peng's situation and purpose, and the author feels pity or shame at their limited capability to know. A similar criticism goes like this:

> The little quail laughs at it [huge Peng], saying, "Where does he think he's going? I spring up into the air and come back down after not much more than a few yards. And that's the best kind of flying anyway! Where does he think he's going?" Here is [an example of] the distinction between the great and the small. (Guo 1978: 14)

Obviously, common creatures—a cicada, little dove, and little quail—do not understand the extraordinary bird and consider its distant journey and courageous effort unnecessary and insignificant. The author—probably Zhuangzi himself—defends Peng with counter-criticism, "What can these two little creatures understand?" since they simply cannot grasp "the distinction between greatness and smallness." Actually, the major theme of the distinction between the great and the small is repeatedly represented in various ways throughout the whole chapter.[6] In two stories, Zhuangzi himself is the hero. He directly counter-criticizes and mocks his good friend Huizi (HUI Shi), who cannot understand Zhuangzi's position of promoting hugeness. Thus we can infer that the symbol of the huge bird is actually a reflection of Zhuangzi own aspiration. Here is the first anecdote:

> Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "The king of Wei gave me some seeds from a huge gourd. I planted them, and when they grew, the fruit was big enough to hold five piculs. I tried using it for a water container, but it wasn't stable enough to stay upright. I split it in half to make dippers, but they were so large and unwieldy I couldn't dip them into any container. It's not that the gourds weren't fantastically big—but I decided they were of no use and so I smashed them to pieces."
>
> Zhuangzi answered, "You certainly are dense when it comes to using big things! In the state Sung there was a man who was skilled at making a salve to prevent chapped hands, for generation after generation his family had made a living by bleaching silk in water. A traveler heard about the salve and offered to buy the prescription for a hundred measures of gold. . . . The traveler got the salve and introduced it to the king of Wu, who was having trouble with the state of Yue. The king put the man in charge of his troops, and that winter they fought a naval battle with the men of Yue and gave them a bad beating. A portion of the conquered territory was awarded to the man as a fief. The salve had the power to prevent chapped hands in either case; but one man used it to get a fief, while the other one never got beyond silk bleaching—because they used it in different ways.
>
> Now you had a gourd big enough to hold five piculs. Why didn't you think of making it into a great tub so you could go floating around the rivers and lakes, instead of worrying because it was too big and unwieldy to dip into things! Obviously you still have a lot of underbrush in your head!" (Guo 1978: 36–37)

Here, Zhuangzi's idea for using the huge gourd is of no practical purpose in everyday life, like Peng's far-away journey. Following is similar anecdote, in which Huizi and Zhuangzi again criticize each other. First is Huizi's criticism of Zhuangzi for his "huge" words:

> I have a big tree of the kind men call Shu. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. It stands by the road but no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are huge and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them! (ibid.: 39)

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[6]It is clear that Chapter 1 is praising the huge Peng, but some scholars read Chapter 2's theory of equalizing things back into this chapter and think the author means there is equality between Peng and the little birds. We will address this issue when we deal with the third dimension.

Then comes Zhuangzi's counter-criticism of Huizi for his ignorance of the advantages of hugeness and uselessness:

> Now if you have a huge tree and think it a pity that it's so useless, why not plant it in the land of nothing-whatever, in the wilds that spread out into nowhere, and go roaming there to do nothing at its side but ramble around and fall asleep in its shade? It has been spared by the axe, and nothing will harm it. Even if it is useless, why should that deserve your grief? (ibid.: 40)

Between the fables of Peng and these anecdotes about Zhuangzi, there are clear parallels and associations. First, Peng is huge, Zhuangzi's words are also criticized as "huge." Second, Peng's far-away journey is criticized for being useless, and so are Zhuangzi's words and ideas. Third, the critics of Peng are creatures in earthly world; similarly, Zhuangzi's critic Huizi's position and view are also of the mundane world; Fourth, the big bird belongs to the world of myth, and so too do Zhuangzi's metaphors—the big gourd and the twisted tree. Thus, we can easily conclude that Peng is a vivid symbol of the features of what Zhuangzi wants to say and pursue, and both Peng and Zhuangzi's idealistic pursuits transcend the mundane. Now we can understand better why Peng assumes so distinctive a position in the chapter and in the book.

It becomes clear that there are two separate worlds in Zhuangzi's philosophy: one is of the cicada, the little dove and quail, and also Huizi; the other belongs to Peng and Zhuangzi. In other words, we should understand Zhuangzi's philosophy with the framework of these two worlds, one earthly or secular, the other transcendent and spiritual. Needless to say, I use these Western terms in a broad sense here. When we use Western concepts to discuss Chinese thought, we have to apply them in a slightly loose way. We cannot convey full content of Chinese philosophy through the strict sense of Western philosophical terms; this is especially true for Daoist thinkers. Sorting out the differences between Western terms and Chinese concepts takes careful and patient discernment.

3.2 To Realize Union with Dao

Zhuangzi wants to fly away from the secular world into the transcendent realm, but there is no regular path between these two worlds, so Zhuangzi also presents technical practices and exercises that are a means to realize the ideal of transcendent freedom. Three typical ones are *xinzhai* 心齋 (fasting of the mind), *zuowang* 坐忘 (sitting and oblivion), and *jiandu* 見獨 (envisioning the universal uniqueness).[7]

Let us first survey just what is meant by *xinzhai* 心齋 (fasting of the mind). In Chapter 4, the first part contains dialogues between Confucius and his disciple YEN Hui. They are presented as legendary figures and here Confucius is used to convey the author's ideas. There are about ten questions from Confucius and answers by YEN Hui. Most of the questions and answers are about the dangers Yen would

[7] The third term, *jiandu* 見獨, is a selection from the text I have made for narrative convenience.

put himself into by going to the State of Wei and to serve its king. Responding to Confucius' questions, Yen reports his preparatory tactics, but Confucius dismisses them all. Finally, Confucius suggests that Yen should fast (*zha i* 齋). Yen answers:

> "My family is poor. I haven't drunk wine or eaten any strong foods for several months. So can't that be considered fasting?"
> "That is the fast one does before a sacrifice; it is not the fasting of the mind (*xinzhai* 心齋)."
> "May I venture to ask what is fasting of the mind?"
> "Unify your attention!" Confucius said, "Listen not with your ears but with your mind. Listen not with your mind but with your *qi* 氣 (vital force) Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with tallying. *Qi* is empty and waiting for things. Dao gathers in emptiness. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind." (Guo 1978: 147)

Though the exact meaning of "fasting of the mind" is difficult to grasp, its general meaning is clear: to tune out the clatter of the mundane and make one's mind empty and undistracted by things in the empirical world. This emptiness is the state in which to receive Dao or be united with Dao. Zhuangzi's advice is to deal with practical issues from this transcendent state of mind. Similar practice is "sitting and oblivion," explained in Chapter 6. The heroes are still Confucius and YEN Hui, but this time, it is Yen who enlightens his master. The story starts with Yen's report that he has made progress.

> YEN Hui said, "I'm improving!"
> Confucius said, "What do you mean by that?"
> "I've forgotten benevolence and righteousness!"
> "That's good. But you still haven't got it."
> Another day, the two met again and Yen said, "I'm improving!"
> "What do you mean by that?"
> "I've forgotten the rites and music!"
> "That's good. But you still haven't got it."
> Another day, the two met again and Yen said, "I'm improving!"
> "What do you mean by that?"
> "I reached the state of sitting and oblivion!"
> Confucius looked startled and asked, "What do you mean by sitting and oblivion?"
> "I slough off my limbs and trunk," Yen said, "drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare. This is what I mean by sitting and oblivion."
> Confucius replied, "... I'd like to become your follower." (Guo 1978: 282–84)

In this passage, forgetting benevolence and righteousness, the rites and music suggest that one has withdrawn from the regular world, especially the Confucian ethical system. But these are not enough, so one should go further, to the state of sitting and oblivion. Obviously, words like "I slough off my limbs and trunk" are not meant literally or physically. They are just metaphors for transcending or forgetting one's body, senses, and mind, so one can become identical with the Great Thoroughfare, or the Universal Thoroughfare, a state equal to union with Dao. Again, Zhuangzi promotes an idealistic transcendent world, where one feels no worries or troubles. According to Zhuangzi, detaching from common society and going to a realm beyond it is a radical and ultimate way to deal with unavoidable troubles of the lived world.

The other technical practice is *jiandu* 見獨 (envisioning the universal uniqueness). This story also appears in Chapter 6, and involves a dialogue between a master and a visitor. The master Nü Yü is a immortal-like sage, who is vigorously pressed to teach the visitor how to stay young-looking like a child. Here is his lesson:

> So I might tell you how to meditate.[8] It is three days before one is able to transcend this world,[9] and after that ... one meditates again for seven days more, and then one is able to transcend all things in the world, and after that ... one meditates again for nine days more, and then one is able to transcend one's life. After one transcends his life, one is able to experience the brightness of dawn. And when ... he can envision the universal uniqueness ... he can do away with past and present, ... then one can experience the state where there is no life and no death. (Guo 1978: 252)

Here are the three representative steps: the first is to transcend the world, next is to transcend the myriad things, and then to transcend one's own life. Here "transcend" means "to forget." One finally forgets whole world including oneself. This transcendent state has two sides: with regard to the mundane world, the person is totally detached, the mind embraces absolutely quietness, emptiness, and nothingness; but with regard to the internal spiritual world, the person has entered an infinite, bright, pure, and indifferent kingdom, where one experiences absolute freedom, autonomy, and emancipation. Zhuangzi employs many images of vastness to portray this fantastic world, such as Peng's soaring, roaming in nothing-whatever land, sleeping in field that spreads out to nowhere, and flying beyond the six directions. This is the Zhuangzian notion of freedom.

Is this Zhuangzian freedom true or not? The answer is, it depends. It is true freedom in the sense that the person retains his own will and gets beyond all the troubles of the lived world; but it is not true freedom because the person does not actively improve anything in a realist sense. Isaiah Berlin's thoughts on this problem may help us better understand the character of Zhuangzian transcendent freedom. He wrote:

> I am the possessor of reason and will; I conceive ends and I desire to pursue them; but if I am prevented from attaining them I no longer feel master of the situation. I may be prevented by the laws of nature, or by accidents, or the activities of men, or the effect, often undersigned, of human institutions. These forces may be too much for me. What am I to do to avoid being crushed by them? I must liberate myself from desires that I know I cannot realize.... I choose to avoid defeat and waste, and therefore decide to strive for nothing that I cannot be sure to obtain. I determine myself not to desire what is unattainable.... for all that is left of myself is no longer subject to empirical fears or desire. It is as if I had performed a strategic retreat into an inner citadel—my reason, my soul, my 'noumenal'

[8]I translate the Chinese word *shou* 守 as "meditate" rather than "keeping," following from the Daoist term *shouyi* 守一, which is a special set of self-cultivation practices for pursuing longevity. *Shouyi* is a kind of meditation in a broad sense. The importance of *shou* may start from the *Laozi*, in which the term *shouzhong* 守中 (meditating on the centrality) was presented and the word *shou* is repeatedly used.

[9]Here "transcend" is Wing-tsit Chan's translation for *wai* 外. Its actual meaning is something like "to forget."

> self—which do what they may, neither external blind force, nor human malice, can touch. I have withdrawn into myself; there, and there alone, I am secure. (Berlin 2005: 181–82)

Berlin points out that in this way the Stoics and Buddhist adepts fled "the world, and escaped the yoke of society or public opinion." Zhuangzi's transcending freedom finds friends here. According to Berlin's theory, Zhuangzi's freedom is a radical or extreme case of negative freedom: one's freedom is secured only within one's "inner citadel." Intriguingly Berlin remarks that "the related notions of freedom as resistance to (or escape from) unrealizable desires, and as independence of the sphere of causality, have played a central role in politics no less than in ethics" (ibid.: 183). Although Berlin does not dismiss this "freedom in one's inner citadel," neither are his observations a comprehensive judgment on philosophies of the Stoics and Zhuangzi, nor of Buddhism and like religions. Actually, Zhuangzi's philosophy reveals and criticizes social and societal absurdities, and presents useful ideas by which people can deal with everyday life wisely and rationally. It is not so passive as Berlin's image of "freedom of an inner citadel."

There is a longstanding debate about the relation between human determinism and freedom. We might take the two dimensions of Zhuangzi's philosophy as a special answer to the questions around the relation between determination and individual freedom. In Zhuangzi's philosophy, the first dimension emphasizes natural inevitability in a universe determined by Dao and represented in human life by *ming,* and this is roughly equal to a kind of determinism; the second dimension represents a kind of freedom theory. Here the coherence and combination of the two dimensions supports a compatabilist position. This position is more reasonable and practical than alternative ones, even in the light of Berlin's theory. In China, there is a saying: Try your best in human affairs, but recognize the decree of Heaven. In West, a similar idiom runs "Man proposes, God disposes." All these expressions, like Zhuangzi's theory, incline towards compatibilism, though they are not serious philosophical argumentation. Anyway, Zhuangzi's position reminds us that even as we know and face the inevitable or necessary in social life, we still retain a certain space in which to realize individual freedom or autonomy, even if only in the personal spirit realm.

4 Methodologies: Towards Detachment and Transcendence

The first and second dimensions are mainly aesthetic and are expressed in literary terms, but the third dimension is more theoretical and philosophical in character. This dimension deals with the steps by which one can ascend from mundane inevitability to spiritual freedom. It specifically and technically describes how one can become detached from the world of conflicts and dilemmas, determined by *ming,* and achieve the highest transcendental level of spiritual freedom. Two major theories serve as the means for undertaking that ascent. One is Zhuangzi's famous argument for "equalizing all things" (*qiwu* 齊物), the other is the true knowing

of universal oneness (*zhenzhi* 真知). The two oft-used concepts of relativism and skepticism in philosophical studies on Zhuangzi are related to these two theories.

4.1 The Theory of Equalizing All Things

Let's begin with a paragraph from Chapter 2 ("The Theory of Equalizing Things"), which seems a typical statement of the relativist argument. However, if we read it carefully and completely, we find that relativism is not the author's point. The paragraph begins with the relativity of *that* and *this*:

> There is nothing that is not "that" (*bi* 彼), and there is nothing that is not "this" (*shi* 是). Things do not know that they are a "that" [of other things]; they merely know that they are "this" [from their own viewpoint.][10] Therefore, I say that "that" is dependent on "this," and "this" is caused by "that." This is the theory of mutual generation. (Guo 1978: 66)

This passage lays out the mutual dependence of the concepts "that" and "this." Opposite concepts like high and low are always mutually defined and dependent. The concepts of "that" and "this" are relatively abstract, so not all people recognize their relativity. Most people are not aware that they are also a "that." The passage goes on:

> Nevertheless, when there is life there is death, and when there is death there is life. When there is possibility, there is impossibility, and when there is impossibility, there is possibility. Following the right, there comes the wrong; and following the wrong, there comes the right. Therefore the sage does not proceed along these lines [of right and wrong, and so forth] but illuminates the matter with *tian* 天 (heaven). (ibid.)

Here, the author believes that life and death, possibility and impossibility, and right and wrong are mutually transformable and mutually contained. This theory of transformational oppositions or oppositional transformation is systematically developed by Laozi, though a similar theoretical pattern can also be found in the *Classic of Change* and the *Sunzi*.[11] The key point here derives from the empirical observation of the flow of things (life and death) and the transformation of opposite concepts (right and wrong); it does not pose a relativity argument per se. The subsequent statement, "The sage does not proceed along these lines but illuminates the matter with *tian* 天," clearly suggests that the sage's pursuit goes beyond oppositions and does not hinge on the relativity of opposite concepts. This stand is reinforced in the following passages:

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[10]The character 知 in the sentence 自知則不見 is read and translated as 是 in YAN Lingfeng's 嚴零峰 judgment because the passage is obviously talking about the relation between 彼 and 是. Cited in CHEN Guying 陳鼓應 1983: 55. The general translation of this paragraph is based on W. Chan 1963.

[11]The terms "transformational oppositions and oppositional transformations" were suggested by Douglas L. Berger in a personal communication.

> The "this" is also the "that." The "that" is also the "this." Is there really a distinction between "that" and "this"? Or is there really no distinction between "that" and "this"? When "that" and "this" have no opposites, there is the very axis of Dao (*daoshu* 道樞). Only when the axis occupies the center of a circle (of moving opposites) can things in their infinite complexities be responded to. The right is an infinity, and the wrong is also an infinity. Therefore I say that there is nothing better than to use illumination (of *tian* 天 heaven). (ibid.)

Again, the relation of "that" and "this" seems to repeat the theme of relativity, as the author goes on to elaborate how "The 'this' has one standard of right and wrong, and the 'that' also has a standard of right and wrong," which is clearly an ethical relativist position if we were to encounter it as isolated statement. However, this reading is diluted by the skeptical suggestion that the author is not sure whether or not there really is a distinction between "that" and "this." Actually, the author twice eliminates their distinction, first with skeptical questions, and by pointing to the "infinity" of each. The "axis of Dao" is obviously key here, since it represents the ideal position from which to respond to the endless cycle of movement among all oppositions. This is how to resolve the endless troublesome conflicts. Finally, the author presents the highest state of the mind: illuminated by heaven; thus, the skeptical and relativist positions are in the end swept away.

In Chapter 5 ("The Sign of Virtue Complete"), the first story is a long dialogue between Confucius and a disciple about WANG Tai, who had been mutilated by having one of his feet cut off, but remained as popular as Confucius himself. The theme here is that Wang Tai is so estimable and admired because he does not teach or talk about anything. Most of the story describes Wang's miraculously indifferent mind and his attitude towards the mundane world in mythological language. But the following passage is philosophically meaningful and concerns Wang's absolutely still mind, which is unmoved by the change of life and death, and even by earthquakes and the collapse of heaven. The disciple asks what is the meaning of Wang's not moving but letting things change freely. Here is Confucius' answer:

> If you look at things from the point of view of difference, then you may see that [the difference between] the liver and gallbladder is as [huge as] that between the states of Chu and Yue. But if you look at them from the point of view of sameness, then the myriad things are all the same. (Guo 1978: 190)

This is a typical relativist statement about sameness and difference. The consequence of your observation and conclusion depends on your perspective, whether your focus and attention are on sameness or difference. This theory might be defined as perspectivism. However, this is not the point of the dialogue. The real answer is as follows:

> [If one sees myriad things being the same] One [Wang] would not know what his ears or eyes should approve—and he lets his mind roam in the harmony of virtue. He *sees all things as the same* and does not see their loss. He regards the loss of a foot as a lump of earth lost. (ibid.: 190–91)

The long narrative about Wang describes what he is like and how he could be an extraordinary person, an immortal-like model. The key information is to see *all things as the same* (*wanwu jieyi* 萬物皆一), in other words, to equalize all things. The above perspectivist statement is just a small piece of the explanation of how to reach the stage of equalizing all things, which in turn helps one become a perfect man and roam beyond the mundane world.

To see all things as the same or see oneness is a critical and necessary technical stage from which to advance toward detachment from the earthly world and achieve spiritual freedom, or carefree wandering. All the *Zhuangzi*'s arguments, metaphors, fables, and dialogues point in the same direction. Let's consider the following passage in Chapter 2:

> What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable.... What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. Things all must have that which is so; things all must have that which is acceptable. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable. (Guo 1978: 69)

This paragraph characterizes all things to be themselves due of their own occasion, even though we don't know exactly what they are. This is compatible with the point that Dao spontaneously generates the myriad things without any specific goals, so everything has its own essence. The most important point lies in the last sentence: "There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable." This sentence suggests that every single individual thing has its own "so" and "acceptable," which in turn becomes the grounds of the theory to equalize all things, whether big or small, beautiful or ugly:

> For this reason, whether you take the example of a little stalk or a great pillar, a leper or the beautiful Xishi, things ribald and shady or things grotesque and strange, *Dao makes all into one* (*dao tong wei yi* 道通為一). Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment. All things complete or impaired, are *made into one* again. Only the man of farreaching vision knows how to *make things into one*.... Everything is made so but does not know why it is so, this is called Dao. (ibid.: 69–70)

Here most important sentence is "Dao makes all into one," with the phrase "making all into one," repeated three times. Here "one" can be understood as sameness, corollary to the equalizing of things. According to the principle and feature of Dao, stalk and pillar, leper and beauty, and various eccentric things should be taken as the same. Dao is the highest ground for equalizing the myriad things, so relativist argumentation is not necessary here. The author believes that all things are actually one or the same and it is not necessary to prove this, thus the text continues:

> To wear out your brain trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same, this is called "three in the morning." What is "three in the morning"? When a monkey trainer was handing out acorns, he said, "You get three in the morning and four in the evening." This made all the monkeys furious. "Well, then," he said, "you get four in the morning and three in the evening." The monkeys were all delighted. There was no change in the reality behind the words, and yet the monkeys responded with joy and anger.... So the sage harmonizes with right and wrong and rests on the potter's wheel of Heaven. This is called letting both alternatives proceed.

The theme of this story is also the equality of all things. But here the idea is not to teach people to see all things as one or the same; instead the argument is that all things are originally or essentially the same, so one need not bother to think about or prove their oneness and sameness. In the perspective of Dao, all things are one, all things are the same, whether people understand this or not. That the sage rests on the potter's wheel of Heaven is the same as standing with the axis of Dao (*daoshu* 道樞) and he lets the wheel of right and wrong or any kind of conflict move around him with the mind remaining calm and transcendent at the center of the circle.

In our discussion of the second dimension we emphasized that Zhuangzi applauds the bird Peng and takes hugeness as an attribute of having moved beyond the mundane world. Now we introduced Zhuangzi's standpoint that all things should be seen and evaluated as equal. What, then, is the right attitude towards Peng and the small birds? Does Zhuangzi see them as equal? If yes, Zhuangzi should not praise Peng and mock the little creatures; if no, Zhuangzi's theory appears self-contradictory, and we have to resolve this problem with one theory by negating the other. That is, we must apply the theory of equalizing things in Chapter 2 to reinterpret and negate the idea of pursuing spiritual magnitude and freedom in Chapter 1. In fact, this is just what GUO Xian 郭象 (252?–312) did in his famous and popular commentary to the *Zhuangzi*. Quite a few modern scholars still hew to Guo's path. The issue here lies in a mistaken assumption: that one philosopher can address only one theory and respond to only one problematique. This assumption is obviously wrong for mature philosophers, who must answer different problems from different perspectives. We should not suppose philosophers can cope with only one aspect of the multifarious world and multifaceted life. With textual evidence, especially in Chapter 1, we have to conclude that Guo's understanding and interpretation are mistaken, though as an annotator he provides significant new ideas and becomes a philosopher in his own right. The magnitude of the Peng figure symbolizes the freedom of the transcendent realm, while the theory of equalizing things is a vehicle for emerging from the mundane world full of discrimination and conflicts to a higher spiritual experience, which is absolutely pure and indifferent. The preference for hugeness in Chapter 1 and the theory of equalizing things in Chapter 2 are not conflict at all in their two dimensions, and they should not be put onto one theoretical plane and used to negate each other.[12]

4.2 The Theory of Not-Knowing

Another critical theory that take us from dimension one to dimension two is the idea of "true knowing." True knowing is a translation of *zhenzhi* 真知. The Chinese character *zhi* 知 is usually translated as knowledge, we translate it as knowing

[12]For a detailed discussion about Guo's methodology in philosophical construction via the practice of annotation, please see X. Liu 2008–2009: 23–45 (English) and X. Liu 2009: 175–207 (Chinese).

because the character can be used both as verb and noun, and it denotes no English meaning of knowledge in Zhuangzi's context. Actually, Zhuangzi's *zhenzhi* 真知 is a natural attribute of the "true man" (*zhenren* 真人) and contains no regular knowledge about earthly life and the world. Thus, true knowing suggests knowing nothing in everyday life, but its status is equal to experiencing union with Dao.

To understand Zhuangzi's true man and true knowledge, we have to read long passages, much of which are not obviously philosophical. However, many oft-cited philosophical texts are embedded in these seemingly irrelevant narratives. Philosophers may not read the irrelevant parts for doing purely philosophical analyses, but if researchers want to understand Zhuangzi's philosophy and thought comprehensively and accurately, they have to see the whole picture, and this can only be done by reading the text carefully from A to Z. Because many of the stories, fables, and dialogues do not interest philosophers, we try to quote them briefly but at same time as holistically as possible. We begin with a survey of a story in Chapter 6, from which we will try to ascertain the characteristics of the true man and true knowing.

> There must first be a true man before there can be *true knowing* .... The true man of ancient times ... could climb to high places and not be frightened, could enter the water and not get wet, could enter fire and not get burned. His knowing (*zhi* 知) was equal to that of one who can ascend to Dao... The True Man ... slept without dreaming and woke without care; he ate without savoring and his breath came from deep inside. The True Man breathes with his heels.... The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death.... not using the mind to repel Dao, not using man to help out Heaven... Therefore his liking was one and his not liking was one. His being one was one and his not being one was one. In being one, he was acting as a companion of Heaven. In not being one, he was acting as a companion of man... (Guo 1978: 226–35)

Although the author raises the concept of *true knowing* at the very beginning and develops a prolix description about the true man, we see little about what is his true knowing. But two points among the characteristics of the true man are worth notice. First, according to the true man, Dao and Heaven are the highest force, which people should respect and follow but realize they can do nothing about. Second, according to the true man, every thing, no matter if one likes or dislikes it, should be seen as oneness or sameness. These points are not only parts of, but also enhance the whole system of Zhuangzi's philosophy. Obviously, the true man is a Daoist immortal-like sage, and his knowing relates to nothing commonplace in the secular world. He is a symbol living in another dimension of the world. Hence, we know that Zhuangzi's true knowing is state of the Daoist sage's mind, which is actually *not-knowing* (*buzhi* 不知), namely, not pursuing any knowledge in the empirical world, but knowing Dao or a similar transcendent experience. Hence, Zhuangzi declares *buzhi* or not-knowing to be one of the highest states of mind. We should point out that Zhuangzi's "not-knowing" is distinct from ignorance. Ignorance is merely a state of lacking knowledge, while not-knowing is an active attitude assumed toward the whole mundane world, one supports the pursuit of spiritual transcendences. Actually, not-knowing is a result of and based on profound observation and deep knowledge of human society.

Chapter 7 opens with, "Nieque asked questions of WANG Ni; four times he asked and four times he was answered with *not-knowing*. So Nieque hopped about in great delight, and went on a journey to tell Master Puyizi" (Guo 1978: 287). The key point here is the great delight derived from the four repeats of "not-knowing" as the answer to his questions. Obviously, not-knowing rates great praise in Zhuangzi's philosophy, so it deserves our attention. A similar account appears in Chapter 2:

> Nieque asked WANG Ni, "Do you know wherein all things agree?"
> "How would I know that?" said Wang Ni.
> "Do you know that you don't know it?"
> "How would I know that?"
> "Then, do things know nothing?"
> "How would I know that? However, suppose I try saying something. How do I know that what I call knowing is not ignorance? How do I know that what I call ignorance is not knowing?" (Guo 1978: 91–92)

WANG Ni, almost a Daoist sage, repeats three times the answer "How would I know?" This is also praise for not-knowing, which is Zhuangzi's position towards knowing and knowledge in the mundane sense. The reason to adhere to not-knowing is that humans cannot reach reliable judgments about knowing and not knowing. Next we encounter the famous questions about the criteria of comfortable living, beauty, and food, all further illustrations of the reasonableness of not-knowing:

> Now let me ask you some questions. If a man sleeps in a damp place, his back aches and he ends up half paralyzed, but is this true of a loach? If he lives in a tree, he is terrified and shakes with fright, but is this true of a monkey? Of these three creatures, then, which one knows the right place to live?
>
> Men eat vegetables and flesh, deer eat grass, centipedes find snakes tasty, and hawks and falcons relish mice. Of these four, which knows the right taste of good food?
>
> Monkeys pair with monkeys, deer go with deer, and fish play with fish. Men claim that Maoqiang and Lady Li were beautiful, but if fish saw them they would dive to the bottom of the stream, if birds saw them they would fly away, and if deer saw them they would break into a run. Of these four, which knows the right standard for beauty in the world? (ibid.: 93)

Here Zhuangzi reveals how fruitless it is for people to prescribe what is the right place to live, the right taste for food, and right standard of beauty, though he uses animals as counter examples. In a limited community, these might not pose a problem; however, as a fundamental philosophical issue, there are no ready criteria for answering such questions. Although Zhuangzi raises the questions, he does not really intend to discuss and answer them. He just wants to use human difficulty and limitations in this context as a good reason for detaching from the earthly world.

This passage is quite famous and often quoted as an argument for relativism or skepticism. But that was not the author's purpose. The seemingly relativist and skeptical argumentation is merely a declaration for moving away from society, and so the fabled hero Wang concludes: "The rules of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of right and wrong are all hopelessly snarled and jumbled. How could I know anything about such judgments?" Obviously this is meant to explain why one should escape the turbulence and predicaments of society. Nieque, however, is not satisfied with this answer and goes further: "If you don't know what is profitable

or harmful, then does the perfect man likewise know nothing of such things?" Then Wang replies: "The perfect man is godlike. . . . A man like this rides the clouds and mist, straddles the sun and moon, and wanders beyond the four seas. Even life and death have no effect on him, much less the rules of profit and loss!" (ibid.: 96). It is clear, that the perfect man, the true man is one who enjoys the freedom of carefree wandering, and not-knowing is just the first step in detaching from troublesome regular life. Therefore, although Zhuangzi's philosophical arguments do contribute to the camps of relativism and skepticism in a substantial way, neither of these per se is Zhuangzi's philosophical focus. Zhuangzi's real aim is persuading his audience to leave behind the lived reality of conflicts and struggle, and embrace carefree wandering in pure spiritual satisfaction.

We have devoted much space to introducing the dialogue between fabled figures around the philosophical texts to demonstrate the original position and function of philosophy in the full context of Zhuangzi's thought. To understand his position on not-knowing, more arguments deserve a look. But this time, we omit the mythological background and themes, and quote only the philosophical passages. In Chapter 2, we read:

> Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have beaten me instead of my beating you, then are you really right and am I really wrong? If I have beaten you instead of your beating me, then am I really right and are you really wrong? . . . If you and I don't know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? . . . Shall we get someone who agrees with me? . . . Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? . . . Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? . . . Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can decide for each other. Shall we wait for still others? (Guo 1978: 107)

This passage concerns the general judgment of right and wrong in human knowledge and comprehension, and differs from earlier passage about the criteria of a good residence, food, and beauty. The question Zhuangzi raises here is fundamental and profound, and it reveals the ultimate limitations and weaknesses of human cognitive and inferential activities. It is noteworthy that Zhuangzi was the first Chinese thinker to propose forcefully questions regarding the limitations of human knowledge and the human ability to know. Still, Zhuangzi was not an epistemologist though he makes contributions to that field. He does not want to discuss and answer his questions but to escape the epistemological task altogether. The cognitive incapacities of human kind is one of Zhuangzi's argumentative grounds instead of a theoretical interest. Similarly, Zhuangzi points out the human incapacity to approach the truth of death:

> How do I know that loving life is not confused? And how do I know that hating death is not like a man who lost his home as a youth and does not know where to return to? Lady Li was the daughter of the border warden of Ai. When the Duke of Jin first got her, she wept until the bodice of her dress was drenched with tears. But later, when she went to live in the palace of the ruler, shared his luxurious couch with him, and ate his delicate food, she regretted that she had ever wept. How do I know that the dead will not repent having previously craved for life? (Guo 1978: 103)

Is there a world and life after death or not? This is an everlasting issue. Zhuangzi's position here seems agnostic and inclines to adopting a detached attitude towards life and death, though there are various comments scattered among the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters. Although life and death is indeed a theme in Zhuangzi's thought, his point here seems to be that we essentially cannot know the truth before we experience it.

To this point we have surveyed three arguments about the limitations and weakness of human cognition and knowledge, including that human beings cannot in the end decide even basic standards, they cannot know who is right in arguments, and they cannot know the true conditions after death. All these arguments support Zhuangzi's position that not-knowing is a right and proper position from which to face a perplexed and perplexing world, which in turn leads to the radical resolution of detaching from all that to enter a spiritually free realm. For a comprehensive picture of his position, some additional arguments should be mentioned here.

One concerns the unbroken chain of things' occasions and causes; the endlessness of the iterations in either direction cannot but obscure knowledge. The figures of this fable are Penumbra and Shadow. Here penumbra is a translation of the rarely used Chinese term *wangliang* 罔两, which denotes the sliver of lighter shade around the edges of a dark shadow. Neither Penumbra nor Shadow are independent entities. There is a chain: penumbra, shadow, and the object causing the shadow. Intriguingly, the object of the shadow is omitted. Thus, these two figures have no independent reality. Their dialogues begin with Penumbra's question:

> "A little while ago you moved, and now you stop. A little while ago you sat down and now you stand up. Why this instability of purpose?" "Do I depend on something else to be this way?" Answered Shadow. "Does that something on which I depend also depend on something else? Do I depend on anything more than a snake depends on its discarded skin or a cicada on its new wings? How can I tell why I am so or why I am not so?" (Guo 1978: 110–11)

All of us know that a penumbra depends on a shadow, and a shadow must depend on a substantial object seen in light. In this fable, however, with the object purposely omitted, the shadow loses its cause, and seems to become an independent thing. Shadow is select to speak for the author to reveal the human condition and its absurdity: all beings are seemingly independent, but actually depend on something they may never know. The implication of Penumbra's fable is that existence is an endless chain of dependency that is unknowable, although some may think they know. This point is more directly stated in Chapter 6: "Knowledge depends on something to be correct, but what it depends on is uncertain and changeable. How do we know that what I call [what is from] heaven is not really [what is from] man and what I call [what is from] man is not [what is from] heaven?" (ibid.: 225) This statement also promotes the attitude of not-knowing as regards regular knowledge and cognition. Another argument for not-knowing is based on human life's limitation. Chapter 3 opens with:

> There is a limit to our lives, but to knowledge there is no limit. To pursue with what is limited what is unlimited is a perilous thing; and when, knowing this, we still seek the increase of our knowledge, the peril cannot be averted. (Guo 1978: 115)

This statement brings forward the ultimate predicament of human cognitive activities and pursuits. The author's purpose is again to promote the attitude of not-knowing. By now we see that Zhuangzi is skeptical and liquidationist in his epistemology. But if we consider that Zhuangzi's spiritual freedom or union with Dao is a kind of knowing the ultimate reality, then we must hesitate about calling him a skeptic. For example, when Zhuangzi introduces fasting of the mind, he mentions "Listen not with your mind but with your *qi* 氣 (vital force), ... the mind stops with tallying. *Qi* is empty and waiting for things. Dao gathers in emptiness." And when he talks about sitting and oblivion he frames it as "driving out perception and intellect, casting off form, doing away with understanding, and making myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare." These kinds of statements are related to both self-cultivation toward transcendence and intuitive recognition of the universe as holistic one. These two aspects were originally of a piece, and their separation derives from our modern Westernized perspectives and philosophical framework, which simply did not exist among thinkers of ancient China.

Actually, when Zhuangzi repeatedly emphasizes the limitations of regular knowing and common knowledge, he does so to promote intuitive recognition of the source-root of the universe, which is emptiness and uniqueness and so cannot be grasped through our regular cognitive functions. Zhuangzi's narratives related to knowledge are often mixed with mythological and self-cultivational descriptions. One piece in Chapter 4 contains a representative statement with a sentence about intuition:

> I've only heard of creatures that fly with wings, never of creatures that fly with no wings. I've only heard of people knowing through knowledge, never of people *knowing through no-knowledge*.... Keep your ears and eyes tuned inward and forget about acquiring knowledge with the mind. (ibid. 150)

All of these expressions: "knowing through no-knowledge," "keeping one's ears and eyes tuned inward," and "forget about acquiring knowledge with the mind" are directives for avoiding any functions based in the senses and the rational mind. This is a typically intuitive way of knowing—the true knowing for Zhuangzi, and the not-knowing for living in the mundane world. Hence, Zhuangzi's knowledge is just true intuitive knowing. This intuitionism is an important supplement to skepticism and the liquidation of epistemology in Zhuangzi's philosophy. This is the Daoist tradition that originated with Laozi: the ultimate source of the universe cannot be reached by any regular function of human senses and reasoning, but only by intuitive wisdom.

5 Conclusion

We have analyzed three dimensions of Zhuangzi's philosophy. The first is the mundane world of predicaments and inevitability, from which Zhuangzi wants to escape. The second is the kingdom of spiritual freedom, which is where Zhuangzi

can enjoy himself in transcendent carefree wandering. The third dimension provides argumentation about the questions of why and how one can ascend from the mundane dimension to the transcendent one. This third dimension comprises the theories of equalizing things and not-knowing. These three dimensions constitute a coherent philosophical system. Another episode in Chapter 2 aptly demonstrates the coherence and unity of the multiple aspects of Zhuangzi's thought. In this episode, the author presents four descending levels of the cognitive personal mind. It begins with the highest level:

> The ancients attained the ultimate in knowing. What was that ultimate? There were those who believed that nothing existed. Such knowing is definitive and exhaustive, there is no more to add. (Guo 1978: 74)

The key point in this stage is the recognition of the nothingness as the universal utmost. It is the highest and most perfect vision because it embodies union with Dao, whose feature as the source of the universe is void or nothingness. This vision both knows the universal reality and realizes transcendent experience. Here cognition and self-cultivation share the same process simultaneously. This combination manifests a key characteristic of ancient Chinese philosophy: namely, there is no clear division between epistemological investigation and personal cultivation. At this level the vision of emptiness belongs to the second dimension; while the intuitive knowing of the emptiness of the universe belongs to true knowing, and hence is related to third dimension, the methodological perspective. In addition, this state of mind is also an opposite counterpart of the mundane world. Now let's move on to the next level:

> The next were those who believed there were things but made no distinction between them. (Ibid.)

Key point of this level is no distinctions, a perfect embodiment of the principle of equalizing all things, which points to the third or methodological dimension. Simultaneously, the abstract things with no distinctions equal oneness and sameness, which echoes the second transcendent dimension. No-distinction as a state of mind is also an axis along which one may ascend from the mundane dimension to the transcending one. Finally, the author leads us to the last two levels:

> Still the next were those who believed there was distinction but there was neither right nor wrong.
>
> When the distinction between right and wrong became prominent, Dao was thereby reduced. Because Dao was reduced, individual bias was formed. (Ibid.)

Both of these levels belong to the undesirable mundane dimension, though there are differences in degree. This earthly world is full of distinctions, bias, discrimination, and especially judgments of right and wrong. As long as people have and use the terms and standards of right and wrong, they are bound to make judgments, an enterprise that is an essential source of conflicts and struggles. Thus, Zhuangzi creates a philosophical system to argue why and how to avoid this condition, and these levels provide in a nutshell the coherence of his multi-dimensional philosophy.

To sum up, based on a close reading of the *Zhuangzi*'s Inner Chapters, we believe that Zhuangzi's philosophy has three dimensions, which constitute a coherent unity.

We hope this attempt at a faithful and comprehensive reconstruction of the system of Zhuangzi's philosophy is helpful for improving our grasp of Zhuangzi's thought.[13]

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Chapter 9
Three Groups of the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters

Xiaogan Liu with Yama Wong

In Chap. 6, we discussed the textual issues of *Zhuangzi* studies. Conclusions we can draw from that discussion include: (1) we find more positive evidence for the standpoint that the Inner Chapters should be taken as the core part of the text and represent the master's work; (2) most parts of the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters can be roughly attributed to Zhuangzi's followers; (3) Zhuangzi's followers can be generally grouped into three branches, namely, the transmitters, the anarchists, and the Huang-Lao students; and (4) each group carried on, developed, and transformed the Inner Chapters' ideas and style to various extents. In this chapter, we shall demonstrate how the theories and style of the Inner Chapters are picked up and developed in the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters; we will also discuss the philosophical and historical significance of the various deviations from the core text. These discussions will proceed based on our above classification of contributors to the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters as representing three branches of followers.

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1 Introduction

To help readers understand the relation and divergence between the Inner Chapters and the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, we shall begin by summarizing the three dimensions of theories on the Inner Chapters demonstrated in Chap. 8 of this volume.

The first dimension of Zhuangzi's philosophy focuses on the fundamental enigma of haplessness and inevitability in human existence, which is usually represented by the conventional term *ming* 命. Related to this theme, Zhuangzi reveals the predicaments and dilemmas people face in life and death, their glory and humiliation, achievements and catastrophes. The mood underlying the conversations and arguments is one of a heavy heart, though this sometimes masked by playful jokes and an ironic tone. This content and style are not generally shared by the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, which discuss longevity and unnatural death, usefulness and uselessness, and other themes in a scattered and technical way, without fundamental existential concerns.

The second dimension of Zhuangzi's philosophy describes the highest pursuit of life, that is, to realize one's spiritual freedom by transcending and detaching from our undesirable and unmanageable earthly life. This ideal freedom is embodied in *xiaoyao* 逍遙 (free and easy wandering), *jiandu* 見獨 (envisioning universal uniqueness), and *tongyu datong* 同於大通 (being united with the universal thoroughfare), to name a few. These transcendent terms also lose their central place in the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, though some chapters do contribute new arguments about the features and significance of Dao. However, their authors are not as interested in spiritual transcendence as Zhuangzi. Some god-like legendary figures do detach from earthly life, but they do not represent existential freedom so much as demonstrate miraculous powers and capabilities.

The third dimension of Zhuangzi's philosophy serves as a ladder that leads from the first dimension to the second; these are the theories of "equalizing all things" (*qiwu* 齊物) and the "true intuitive knowing" of universal oneness (*zhenzhi* 真知). A few chapters in Outer and Miscellaneous sections, especially chapters 17 and 22, make important contributions to these theories, though their theoretical and literary style are quite different. Certainly, the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters also develop new threads that are not obvious in the Inner Chapters. For example, many more stories about the skills of exceptional figures are created, a new concept of the original nature of human beings is broadly used, and new theories about the limitations and functions of language are introduced. Due to limited space, we cannot review all these scattered materials, though many of them are certainly interesting. In the following sections, we focus on the main trends of thought derived and deviating from the Inner Chapters by the three groups of Zhuangzi's followers, namely, the Transmitters, the Anarchists, and the Huang-Lao school.[1]

[1]This chapter is a brief introduction to the three groups of Zhuangzi's followers. For a detailed argument and evidence, see Liu 1994 (English) or Liu 2010 (Chinese). For different arguments, see Chap. 6 of this volume, and Graham 1990, Guan 1961, Munro 1994, and Zhang 1983.

2 The Transmitters

In the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters, one group's writings are closer to the Inner Chapters than others in terms of their ideas, themes, and style. These are chapters 17–27 and 32.[2] Among them, the most representative are Chapter 17 "Qiushui" (Autumn Floods) and Chapter 22 "Zhibeiyou" (Knowledge wanders north). We find that their authors often intentionally respond to or expound key themes and ideas from the Inner Chapters; for example, they carry on the theory of equalizing things and transcending the debates of Confucianism and Moism. Although their literary style is more straightforward and methodical, less imaginative, equivocal, and transcendental, they still try to imitate the manner of the Inner Chapters. They seem to carry forward and develop the ideas of the Inner Chapters, so we call them the Transmitters for convenience of discussion.

2.1 Dao—The Source-Root of the Universe

One significant theme of the Transmitters concerns Dao: its function and features, as well as its relation to everything in the world. It is common knowledge that the Chinese character for Dao denotes a path, a way, or a road, and it is often used to indicate general methods and political or moral principles. It was Laozi who first used the word "Dao" to mean the source and ground of the universe. Zhuangzi carried on Laozi's inventive usage and claimed briefly yet firmly that "[Dao] is its own source, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed it was there, firm from ancient times. It gave spirituality to the ghosts and to gods; it engenders heaven, and engenders earth" (Guo 1978: 246–247).[3] This concise statement is elaborated by the Transmitters into deliberations and reasoning, scattered through various chapters. Chapter 22 contributes a vivid description of the function of Dao as the ground and power that supports the existence and operation of all beings in the universe:

> That which is bright and clear is born of that which is dark and mysterious; that which is formed is born of that which has no form; that which is the spirit is born out of Dao. ... Dao is why the heaven has to be high, the land has to be broad, the sun and moon have to move in their orbits, and all things must grow and thrive! Is this not Dao? (Guo 1978: 741)

Here we see that Dao is not similar to anything in the universe but determines everything. All things conform to Dao's functional determination in their natural operations, such as how things are born, how things look, and how things behave. The chapter further elaborates explicitly on how Dao is the "source-root" from which all beings and phenomena come to take place:

[2]For discussion of our classification, see chapter 5.

[3]All translations of the *Zhuangzi* in this chapter are adopted with modification from Liu Xiaogan 1991–1992, with reference to Watson 1968, Mair 1994, and Graham 1981.

> Things, however, do not know their own root, whether they are alive or dead or square or round. In perversion it is taken to be that things have always existed as they are since the beginning. Great as it is, this whole world in all directions has never extended beyond its embrace; yet, minute as it is, the tip of an autumn hair [of an animal] is indebted to it for the completion of its form. By it, we mean the whole world is in constant vacillation and cannot remain unchanged; by it, too, the *yin* and the *yang* forces move, and the four seasons change, and within the proper order. . . . All things are contained and nourished by it, yet know not about it. This is what is called the source-root (*bengen* 本根). Through it we are able to observe the movement of heaven. (Guo 1978: 735)

The term *bengen* 本根 is worth our attention. It is a compound of the two synonyms *ben* and *gen*, both indicating a plant's root part and connoting the fundamental and critical component of complex events or beings. We translate it as "source-root" to make its philosophical meaning distinctive, indicating the function of the origin of the universe. This metaphorical term represents an important feature of Chinese metaphysics: Dao and the myriad beings of the universe constitute a continuous whole as do a tree's root and its trunk and crown. In Chinese philosophy, there is no dichotomy between metaphysical and physical, nor sacred and secular. The term *bengen* conveys the feature and function of Dao, and a critical difference between the Chinese and Western philosophical traditions. Another point worth noting is that Dao as source-root operates in a spontaneous, totally unintentional way. Thus, myriad things come into existence and continue to receive nourishment from Dao without knowing anything about its omnipresent power.

Still, the intimacy and continuity between Dao and the myriad things never overshadow their radical difference. Dao is not a thing. The Transmitters invented a way to argue and prove this. To illustrate this difference, one author stresses the uniqueness of Dao.

> There is that which was born before heaven and earth, but is it a thing? That which makes things things cannot be a thing. Things that come forth can never precede all other things, because there were already things existing then; and before that, too, there were already things existing, so on without end. (Guo 1978: 763)

This is an innovative bit of reasoning that proves Dao cannot be anything in the empirical world for which we can have reliable knowledge. If the source of the universe were a specific thing, we already know it must be produced by something else. This endless tracing proves that the universal source cannot be anything. Dao must be some entity outside regular existence. Similarly, Dao decides things' characteristics, but itself cannot be characterized. In other words, Dao has the power to endow a thing with necessary features that make it into that thing. For example, Dao makes things full and empty without itself filling or emptying; similarly it makes things wither and decay without itself withering or decaying. It establishes trunks and twigs but is itself neither a trunk nor twig; it determines when to store up or scatter but does not itself store or scatter (Guo 1978: 752). Having such mighty power, Dao transcends the myriad things but at the same time is not isolated from anything. This reasoning is the precursor of WANG Bi's arguments that prove Dao is *wu* 無 (nothingness) in his famous commentary on the *Laozi*.

2.2 Not Knowing and True Intuitive Knowing

While the Transmitters attempted to explain the indescribable qualities and function of Dao with varied reasoning and argumentation, they did not forget that human beings' abilities were limited. They seem to have kept in mind their master's view that humans can never fully understand the world, let alone Dao. Therefore, Zhuangzians at once believed in the unconditional and indispensible Dao and the possibility that humans could experience union with Dao through intuitive self-cultivation, but also refurbished the Daoist skeptical spirit regarding the normal epistemological capabilities of human beings. The author of Chapter 17 clearly points out that the magnitude of the world is beyond the scale of human knowledge:

> As for things (*wu* 物), their sum is limitless; their time never ends, their proportions are inconstant, their beginning and ending are not certain .... If what human beings know were measured, it would not be as much as what human beings do not know; the time people live is not as great as the time they do not live; it is, therefore, because we use the smallest to measure the realm of the greatest that we become confused and cannot satisfy ourselves. Looking at things from this perspective, how can we know that the tip of a hair is an adequate definition of what is the smallest? How can we know that the Heaven and Earth taken together are adequate to defining what is the greatest? (Guo 1978: 568)

People's limited lifetime means no one can learn everything in secular life. What we do not know is always more than what we know. The author, agreeing with Zhuangzi, does not encourage us to explore the unknown. A similar view is raised in Chapter 22:

> Not knowing (*buzhi* 不知) is profound and knowing is shallow. Knowing has to do with what's extrinsic; not knowing has to do with what's intrinsic. (Guo 1978: 757)

Here, "not knowing" is the attitude admitting one's limited capacity to know, which avoids the impossible pursuit of the entirety of empirical knowledge. This is a clear form of self-consciousness and different from ignorance, which suggests no knowledge. Obviously, these Transmitters preferred the wisdom of not knowing to regular knowing. Not knowing is a typical Daoist attitude towards earthly life and knowledge. The author further suggests,

> Then not knowing is (true) knowing; knowing is not knowing (knowing nothing); who can know the knowledge of not knowing? (ibid)

Here, the knowledge of not knowing also refers to intuitive knowing or direct perception, especially about Dao. Only through not knowing or intuitive knowing of Dao can we acquire Daoist *zhenzhi* 真知 (true knowledge), which is in opposition to the common knowledge of everyday life. This concept of "not knowing" perfectly echoes Zhuangzi's theory, and naturally has introduced considerable discussion about whether or not Zhuangzi was a skeptic. The Transmitters' arguments help us to answer these discussions comprehensively and circumspectly. Obviously, Zhuangzians are not merely skeptics in the manner of their Western counterparts.

2.3 The Equalization of Things

Another of Zhuangzi's theories that creates heated discussion is his doctrine on the equalization of things, which has generated arguments about whether or not Zhuangzi was a relativist. The Transmitters' essays are also useful for trying to understand this issue better. According to the Zhuangzians, true knowledge can never be acquired by our ordinary mode of understanding; that means if we want to comprehend the equality of things, our lazy minds must get out of their comfort zone. The Transmitters knew this well, so they made substantial efforts to expound this theory by contrasting a list of perspectives in Chapter 17. The key point occurs in the introductory passage:

> From the point of view of Dao, things are neither prized nor despised. From the point of view of the individual things (*wu* 物), they prize themselves and despise others. From the point of view of the common lot (*su*俗), whether one is prized or despised is not determined by the individual himself. (Guo 1978: 577)

This passage conveys that Dao, as the highest and most transcendent standpoint, is the very ground of the theory of equalizing all things. The other two perspectives, of individual things and of the "society" of things, represent the common practices and knowledge prevalent in everyday life. They are further contrasted with the view of Dao in following passage:

> From the perspective of difference (*cha* 差), if we choose to call something great because it is greater than something else, then there is nothing in the world that is not great; and if we choose to call something small because it is smaller than something else, then there is nothing which is not small.... From the perspective of function (*gong* 功), if we regard a thing as useful because there is a certain usefulness to it, then among all myriad things there are none that are not useful. If we regard a thing as useless because there is a certain uselessness to it, then among the myriad things there are none that are not useless ... From the perspective of inclination (*qu* 趣), if we regard a thing as right because there is a certain right to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not right. If we regard a thing as wrong because there is a certain wrong to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not wrong. (ibid.)

By showing various results derived from these three points of observation and evaluation, the author systematically demonstrates how apparently contradictory things can all be true according to conditions or preferences. When we overlook the relativity between things and let our preset perspective lead us to a biased conclusion, conflicts arise. This is not the end of the message: The author wants us to learn that if we recognize the relativity between things and the biases attached to fixed ways of thinking, and if we are willing to shift between perspectives to see a transcendent holistic picture, then the apparent contradictions and differences among things will be smoothed out. To do this, we are advised to follow the absolute principle of Dao:

> Therefore, from the viewpoint of Dao, what is prized and what is despised? ... Do not confine yourself narrowly in your disposition, lest you be in conflict with the principle of Dao .... Do not fix a sphere for your intent, lest you deviate from Dao. (Guo 1978: 584)

With Dao, there is no real difference among things. Following its principle, we can reach a new state of understanding, in which we experience its "flowing everywhere, as the infinite in the four directions, fenced in nowhere. Embosom all the myriad things universally—how could there be one you should give special support to? This we consider impartiality. When myriad things are viewed equally, how is it possible to say that some are long and others are short?" (ibid.). Here we see how the seed of relativist observation Zhuangzi sowed is systematically and fully developed by the author of Chapter 17, a representative work of Zhuangzi's direct-line followers. Furthermore, we see that Zhuangzians were not simply relativists. Their seemingly relativist arguments provide an approach to the greater end of equalizing all things, which in turn leads human beings to the highest mind stage—entering into the unity with Dao or the universe and detaching from the worldly life full of conflicts and absurdity.

2.4 The Natural Nature of Human Beings

The Transmitters not only carried on and developed Zhuangzi's thought, they also presented new concepts to further Zhuangzi's ideas and offered new theories. One of the most important of their ideas is the concept of *xing* 性 (nature), a term that Zhuangzi's Inner Chapters never mention. The notion of human nature developed by Zhuangzi's followers is unique among thinkers in the middle–Warring States period. Mengzi asserted positively that we are predisposed to goodness; Xunzi, on the contrary, believed that human nature is evil. Taking the middle ground, Gaozi claims that we are born neither good nor evil; whereas Daoists simply stepped away from this battle and affirmed that humans' natural nature is beyond good and evil; it is valuable in and of itself and should be kept intact without contamination by moral doctrine and judgment. Though the Transmitters do not offer a detailed discussion, their brief descriptions do arouse interest in the possibility of an unmediated human nature.

The author of Chapter 23 ("Gengsang Chu") explains that "Dao is the mandating power of virtue (*de* 德); life (*sheng* 生) is the light of virtue; nature (*xing* 性) is the essence of life. When nature moves, there is action; where action is artificial, there (nature) is lost" (Guo 1978: 810). The author lists out concisely three qualities of nature. First, nature is an inborn essence or quality and represents the original state of existence. This is actually the archetypal Daoist theory of human nature. Second, nature is already perfect at birth, and it can only be damaged by human intervention. Third, nature and virtue are intimately linked: Dao is the foundation of virtue, virtue is made manifest by life, and the essence of life is nature. Virtue and nature are thus different but mutually engaged like two sides of a single coin. Certainly, Daoist virtue (*de* 德) is different from Confucian virtue, though the Chinese character and English translation are the same. The Daoist concept of *de* is simply the embodiment of Dao within individual beings unmediated by moral suggestion. The authors of chapters 19 ("Mastering Life"), 20 ("The Mountain Tree") and 25 ("Tse-yang") also agree with this view.

The Transmitters, rather than proclaiming human nature to be good or evil, maintain that people should not think of it in that frame. Human natures are valuable and should be accepted without discrimination. Chapter 25 in one passage claims:

> The sage penetrates bafflement and complication, rounding all into a single body, yet he does not know what it is—it is his inborn nature (*xing*). . . . When people are born with good looks, you may hand them a mirror, but if you don't tell them, they will never know that they are better looking than others. Whether they know it or don't know it, whether they are told or are not told, the delight [others derive from] their good looks remains unchanged to the end, and others can go on endlessly admiring them—it is a matter of inborn nature (*xing*). The sage loves other men, and men accordingly pin labels on him, but if they do not tell him, then he will never know that he loves others. Whether he knows it or doesn't know it, whether he is told or not told, his love for others remains unchanged to the end, and others can feel endlessly at ease in it—it is a matter of inborn nature (*xing*). (Guo 1978: 880–882)

The author of this passage conveys clear messages about the Daoist theory of human nature: (1) inborn nature unfolds spontaneously and healthily, so self-consciousness, education, and conceptual judgment and evaluation are not necessary; (2) inborn nature is originally perfect and equal, no matter whether one is a sage or just regular folk; (3) inborn nature can be both aesthetic and moral, such as being good looking or loving people. This point of view suggests that at the very beginning, human natures are both perfectly beautiful and moral.

That "the sage . . . does not know what it is—it is his inborn nature" suggests that people should follow this example and know nothing about their inborn nature. Knowledge that one's nature is to be beautiful or loving is useless and redundant, so it should be omitted, although in the end it doesn't matter whether you know it or not. The ignorance, simplicity, and purity of an inborn nature are advantages that should be preserved, so "civilized" knowledge and judgment are actively harmful, not merely useless. This point is more fully developed by the Anarchist Zhuangzians.

In sum, the Transmitters believed that things are endowed at birth with the purest nature, which is free from any distortion by human intervention. This natural and original nature is perfect in its newborn-like purity and innocence that exist beyond good and evil. The theory of the nature of things is a key feature of the Transmitters' thought. Actually it is also a general feature of later Daoist philosophy: Most Daoist texts share the position that natural-born nature is valuable and should not be mediated or interrupted, not even by moral or political concerns and judgments.

3 The Anarchists

Not so faithful to the Inner Chapters as the Transmitters, the Anarchists took a different path. Rather than retreating from social and political life to pursue spiritual freedom, they chose to confront the social and political reality of the time. They radically criticized not only the monarchical powers of the era, but also the

Confucians and Moists. Their relentless condemnations fill chapters 8–10, 28, 29, 31 and 11A (the first part of Chapter 11), among which chapters 8 and 9 are the most representative.[4] The Anarchists defy any form of governance because its artificial intervention distorts people's original nature. To preserve a nature as original and perfect as that of the newly born, they uncompromisingly pursue freedom in worldly life, something quite different from the transcendent freedom that Zhuangzi had advocated and pursued.

3.1 Authentic Human Nature

As a branch of latter-day Zhuangzian philosophy, the Anarchists inherited some of their master's ideas, but took them in a new direction. They began by adopting the essence of the theory of the equality of things to attack rulers and rulership by considering evil kings and sages alike to be a curse. In Chapter 11A ("Zaiyou," part I), they claim that

> Long ago, when the sage Yao governed the world, he made the world bright and gleeful; men delighted in their nature, and there was no calm anywhere. When the tyrant Jie governed the world, he made the world weary and vexed; men found bitterness in their nature and there was no contentment anywhere. To lack either calm or to lack contentment is to go against virtue (*de* 德), and there has never been any society in the world that could negate virtue and survive for long. (Guo 1978: 364)

In the eyes of the Anarchists, a virtuous and wise ruler is no different from a tyrant because either happiness or misery that kings bring to their people will spoil their original nature. Similar attacks target high officials and even sages. The author strongly reproves people who gain prestige by risking their lives for seemingly righteous purposes as no different from rogues who risk their lives for fame and wealth. All these people, despite the differences in their social reputations and intentions, are the same, for what they do damages their inborn nature.

What the Anarchists value most is keeping one's nature free of any artificial changes. They ultimately want is a world free from any forms of governance, a place where people can exercise unrestrained freedom by following their natures. Here we can see how Zhuangzi's theory is transformed: Zhuangzi pursues spiritual transcendence of earthly life by equalizing all things; he aims to smooth out contradictions and attain unbounded spiritual freedom. The Anarchists, on the other hand, attempt to eliminate all forms of rule or stricture to preserve their original nature. They adopted the theory of equalizing things but turned it to an aggressive objective to be realized in the lived social world.

[4]For more about our classification, see chapter 5. Our Anarchist group is roughly equivalent to the "Primitivists" and "Yangists" schools identified by Graham (see Graham 1981). For a detailed discussion, see Liu 2010 (Chinese) and Liu 1994 (English).

The Anarchist chapters repeatedly emphasize the “spontaneity” of human nature, which is, however, different from the functional spontaneity of Dao and Heaven laid out in the Inner Chapters. The spontaneity of human nature for the Anarchists was a value to be protected against any forms of external interruption or oppression. So they coined the expression *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情. Although *xingming* 性命 is a compound of *xing* 性 (nature) and *ming* 命 (destiny), it obviously is weighted toward human nature, because they emphasize nature’s significance and never mention the limitations of destiny. The word *qing* 情 denotes the truth or essence of something, and has nothing to do with emotions in the Zhuangzian context. So with the essential meaning of its components in mind, we can approximately gloss the expression as the “authentic features of one’s nature and destiny.” With this phrase, Anarchists highlight not just human nature per se, but even more its original shape before it encounters any pollution from society and civilization. Here is an example of the expression’s use from Chapter 8:

> Who[ever] is ultimately correct does not lose the authentic features of his nature and destiny (*xingming zhi qing* 性命之情). So for him joined things are not webbed toes, things forking off are not superfluous fingers, the long is never too much, and the short is never too little. The duck’s legs are short, but to stretch them out would worry them; the crane’s legs are long, but to cut them down would make them sad. What is long by nature needs no cutting off; what is short by nature needs no stretching. That would be no way to get rid of worry. I wonder, then, if benevolence and righteousness are part of man’s true form? Those benevolent men—how much worrying they do! (Guo 1978: 317)

> Nowadays the benevolent men of the age lift up weary eyes, worrying over the ills of the world, while the men of no benevolence destroy the authentic features of its nature and destiny in their greed for eminence and wealth. (Ibid.: 319)

In the highest Daoist standard, everything has its original nature, so a duck’s legs should not be lengthened, and a crane’s legs should not be cut off; the same for human nature, which should not be modified, even not by benevolence and righteousness:

> My definition of expertness has nothing to do with benevolence and righteousness; it means being expert in regard to your virtue—that is all.... It means attending to the authentic features of one’s nature and destiny—that is all. When I speak of “good hearing,”... I mean simply listening to yourself. When I speak of “good eyesight,”... I mean simply looking at yourself. (Ibid.: 327)

In the Anarchists’ minds, letting one be true to his own nature was the highest good. Any one who tries to alter others’ original natures or does not accept and follow his own is considered ill-hearted. Arguments of this type continue in the same chapter and appear in other Anarchist chapters as well.

The naturalness of human nature is the Anarchists’ yardstick for judging deeds. The Anarchists scorn, more harshly and explicitly than their master, acts of benevolence and righteousness embraced by conventional sages and the politicians of the time. The author of Chapter 9 (“Horse Hoofs”) accuses a horse tamer of handling horses according to his profession’s methods but going against the true nature of horses. The author continues by denouncing the potter for shaping clay and the carpenter for crafting wood since this work disrupts the original nature of these things. The accusation does not end here. It goes on:

> Yet generation after generation sings out praises, saying, "Po Lo 伯樂 is good at handling horses! The potter and the carpenter are good at handling clay and wood!" And the same wrong is committed by men who handle the affairs of the world! (Guo 1978: 330)

The original natures of all things, whether horses, clay, or wood, are equally valuable and should not be changed even by the most excellent expert. These are just analogies used to stress the value of the inborn nature: Any change of that nature, no matter by what and for what end, is a kind of wrong: "That unwrought substance was blighted to fashion implements—this was the crime of the artisan. That Dao and its virtue were destroyed to create benevolence and righteousness—this was the fault of the sage" (Guo 1978: 336). Obviously, inborn human nature was a sharp weapon with which these anarchists could strike at all political rulers and a good cause from which to promote utopia.

3.2 Political Criticism and Utopia

So the Anarchists' accusations hounded the ruling class and politicians who promoted the values of benevolence and righteousness. They point out that moral teachings stifle people's true nature and are simply tools favored by those in power. The writer of Chapter 10 ("Rifling in Trunks") condemns in anger the hypocrisy of feudal lords who use benevolence and righteousness for their own selfish gain:

> He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be a feudal lord—yet we all know that benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords. Is this not a case of stealing benevolence, righteousness, sageness, and the wisdom? So men go racing in the footsteps of the great thieves, aiming for the rank of feudal lord, stealing benevolence and righteousness, and taking for themselves all the profits . . . (Ibid.: 350)

On the basis of their highest value, the naturalness of true nature, the Anarchists express intense contempt for the ruling class. They refuse to conform to any rules under any forms of governance; they pursue a world where people enjoy absolute freedom to actualize the true nature they are endowed with. In such a world,

> The people have their constant inborn nature. To weave their clothing, to till for their food—this is the virtue they share. They are one in it and not partisan, and it is called the Emancipation of Heaven. Therefore in the Age of Perfect Virtue . . . mountains have no paths or trails, lakes no boats or bridges. The myriad things live species by species, one group settled close to another. Birds and beasts form their flocks and herds, grass and trees grow to fullest height. So it happens that you can tie a cord to the birds and beasts and lead them about, or bend down the limb and peer into the nest of the crow and the magpie. (Ibid.: 334)

The perfect world to which the Anarchists aspired allows the natures of all things to be free from any mediation or distortion. This utopia is quite different from the "nowhere-land" (*wuheyou zhi xiang* 無何有之鄉) where Zhuangzi freely wandered. The Anarchists' hoped to actualize their utopia is this worldly life, whereas Zhuangzi's nowhere-land exists only in one's spiritual intuition and

imagination. The Anarchists inherited their master's unconventionally critical and reflective attitude, but they exercised this talent in a radical way that has transformed the great thinker's teachings into a new strain of thought. Their works played an important role in the evolution of latter-day Zhuangzian philosophy.

The Zhuangzian Anarchists provide the sharpest and fiercest political critique in the history of Chinese thought. Their theories were taken up by a later scholar, BAO Jingyan 鮑敬言 (before 363?), who adapted them to develop a doctrine called the "theory of no-monarch" (*wujun lun* 無君論). Bao claimed that the ancient times before there were any rulers were superior to the contemporary world. Many of Bao's ideas, and even certain phrases, were derived directly from Zhuangzian work. These theories were attacked under the force of Confucian teachings.[5] In early modern China, the famous thinker YAN Fu 嚴復 (1853–1921) found that quite a few points of similarity between the Zhuangzian Anarchists and the modern French philosopher Jean J. Rousseau (1712–1778),[6] because both criticize the inequality and oppression that arose with the civilization of human societies across history, and both promote a more natural social order and individual freedom. Moreover, they seem to identically pursue a natural good. Be that as it may, the political criticism leveled by Zhuangzian Anarchists is indeed distinctive and significant in the history of Chinese thought and philosophy, which otherwise is given over to Confucian ethical teachings and political rules. It indicates that certain revolutionary elements tried to break the conventional constraints of imperial dictatorship on individual natures and contest the cultural confinement imposed by Confucian tradition.

4 The Huang-Lao School

The Huang-Lao authors are so named because their works basically agree with the description in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*) about that Daoist school. The *Shiji*'s description is commonly taken to be authoritative on the characteristics of what is known as the Huang-Lao school in modern Chinese philosophical studies. Distinct from Zhuangzi's teachings, Huang-Lao authors blended useful features of Confucianism and Legalism into Daoist philosophy. Their works no longer leave social and political life behind; instead they talk extensively about issues of ethics, of what is benevolent and righteous, and techniques of governance. The Huang-Lao authors do, however, agree with Laozi and Zhuangzi that the ruler ought to take a non-intervening or non-assertive role, but they further stress that a non-active ruler must be supported by ministers who do actively take up executive duties. Chapters 12–16, 33, and 11B (the latter part of Chapter 11) are considered to be works of this school.

[5] Bao's theory was recorded and criticized in GE Hong 葛洪 (284–363)'s *Baopuzi Waipian* 抱朴子外篇 (Yang 1991).

[6] For Yan's comments on the *Zhuangzi,* see Yan 1983–1984.

Unlike the faithful Transmitters and the rebellious Anarchists, this group of Zhuangzi's followers appears to have been more worldly, practical, and rational. They attempted to modify Daoist philosophy by complementing it with the valuable bits from other schools of thought. Their synthesized works form a coherent strain of thought.[7]

4.1 Synthesizing Daoism with Confucianism and Legalism

Like Laozi, Zhuangzi often teases about the morality advocated by Confucianism and Moism. The Huang-Lao authors on the contrary appropriate some of the two schools core ideas in combination with Legalism to forge a rather different Daoism. Chapter 13 ("Dao of Heaven") gives a very clear illustration of the synthesis. Step by step the author explains that there is a series of things we must learn before we can understand the Great Dao clearly. First we must understand Heaven, then Dao and its virtue. After that, we must learn benevolence and righteousness, followed by the observance of duties, forms and names, right and wrong, and rewards and punishments. When these are all understood and properly used, knowledge and scheming are not required for everything to assume its proper place in time. The author calls this "great peace," the achievement of ideal governance (Guo 1978: 471). Even while upholding a Daoist standpoint, the author cleverly makes room for the values of the other schools. The ideas of benevolence and righteousness, and the observance of duties are borrowed from the Confucian school; while the concepts of forms and names, rewards and punishments come from the Legalists. What the author proposes here is not simply a combination of ideas of different thought systems. He sets up a deliberate ranking of the three schools: Daoism has the highest status, followed by the Confucian, and lastly the Legalist school. Chapter 33 ("All Under Heaven") gives another example of the same ranking.

> He who does not depart from the ancestral (origin of universe) is called the heavenly man; he who does not depart from the essence is called the holy man; he who does not depart from the true is called the ultimate man. . . . To make benevolence his standard of kindness, righteousness his model of reason, ritual his guide to conduct, and music his source of harmony, serene in mercy and benevolence—one who does this is called a gentleman. To employ laws to determine functions, names to indicate rank, comparisons to discover actual performance, investigations to arrive at decisions, checking them off, one, two, three, four, and in this way to assign the hundred officials to their ranks . . . (Guo 1978: 1066)

Here we see a clear order of the three schools: conforming to the Daoist ethos are the "heavenly man", the "holy man" and the "ultimate man"; disciplining oneself with the Confucian doctrines of benevolence and righteousness makes one a gentleman; and implementing the Legalist laws are the hundred officials. The ranking is obvious and though the Huang-Lao school had a clear ambition to promote Daoist thought, they nevertheless did not demean the contributions of other schools.

[7]Their project of synthesizing inspired A.C. Graham call this group the Syncretists.

An evaluation of Moism is not missing from the works of the Huang-Lao school. Chapter 33 presents both criticisms and recognitions of Moist thought. Examples of integrating Moist ideas are given in the chapter, and the same strand is also found in other chapters.

4.2 The Non-active Lord with Active Ministers

Huang-Lao writings indicate their authors' strong interest in social and political affairs; but those authors did not discard the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi altogether. Rather, they did a good job in reformulating the Daoist masters' complex idea of *wuwei* or non-action into a theory applicable to the political situation of the time. The word *wuwei* literally means "doing nothing," but actually suggests a special method of taking action according to the *Laozi*. There is no perfect English expression that captures the subtler senses of the term, so for the sake of convenience we use "non-action" as an approximation or a token for the Chinese. The Daoist concept of *wuwei* was invented by Laozi, who used it to capture the idea of a sage's way of acting, one that is attentive, peaceful, and effectual. Laozi believed that the best way to manage the world is to act according to the principle of naturalness (*ziran* 自然) and provide conditions that support the natural development of the myriad things; this generates the best social order and brings the greatest benefit to all creatures.[8] However, Laozi's ideal is difficult to understand for monarchs who rule from power, by issuing orders instead of careful management. So the ideal of *wuwei* is difficult to realize in actual governing. Thus, the Huang-Lao school carried forward this tenet but modified it, making it easier to exercise by rulers who would improve the world's complex social and political reality. Their idea was that the ruler should practice the principle of *wuwei* and have no accountability for faults or mistakes; while his ministers should undertake all activities and be responsible for any mistakes. Chapter 13 suggests that

> If superiors adopt non-action and inferiors adopt non-action as well, then inferior and superior will share the same virtue, and if inferior and superior share the same virtue, there will be none to act as minister. If inferiors adopt action and superiors adopt action as well, then superior and inferior will share the same way, and if superior and inferior share the same way, there will be none to act as lord. Superiors must adopt non-action and make the world work for them; inferiors must adopt action and work for the world. This is an unvarying truth. (Guo 1978: 465)

From the perspective of the Huang-Lao school, *wuwei* is a technique of governance, but this technique cannot work on its own. It must be complemented by *youwei* 有為 (action), someone taking necessary action, to achieve ideal governance. Non-active rulers must be served by active ministers who carry out executive duties for them.

[8] *Ziran* 自然 is not the same as the natural world or human nature. For a discussion of the meaning of Laozi's *ziran*, please see Chap. 3.

These two parties are considered a perfect match. The latter part of Chapter 11 (11B) explains this principle by pointedly contrasting the Dao of lords and the *dao* of their subjects.

> What is this thing called Dao? There is a Dao of Heaven, and a *dao* of man. To rest in non-action, and command respect—this is the Dao of Heaven. To engage in action and become entangled in it—this is the *dao* of man. The ruler is [supposed to practice] the Dao of Heaven; his subjects are [supposed to practice] the *dao* of man. The Dao of Heaven and the *dao* of man are far apart. This is something to consider carefully! (Guo 1978: 401)

Huang-Lao authors assign clear roles to the one who rules and those who serve. A non-active ruler who follows the Dao of Heaven is respectable; while diligent ministers serving their ruler conform to the *dao* of man. By uniting the ideas of *wuwei* ruler and *youwei* ministers, the Huang-Lao school cleverly synthesizes the Daoist doctrine with the Confucian and Legalist principles of preserving monarchal authority. Actually, we see this political pattern in modern world, for example, the British queen takes the role of non-action and glory, while her Cabinet takes action and is responsible for any mistakes and predicaments. We see also the non-action or "Dao of Heaven" role in Japan's emperor and Singapore's president. These are all modern versions of the Huang-Lao wisdom of combining an inactive monarch and active ministers, though they may not know about this earliest source of the idea.

4.3 Timely Adaptation

By now, we see how the Huang-Lao writers scour different thought systems for valuable ideas to weave into their own theories. Their clever syntheses tell us how adaptable these writers were. Adaptability was not only a skill they used, but also a quality they promoted in their works. They suggest that if we want to make things work, we must adapt to the flow of reality. The author of Chapter 14 animates such idea with an analogy.

> Nothing is as good as a boat for traveling on water, nothing is as good as a cart for traveling on land. But though a boat will get you over water, if you try to push it across land, you may push till your dying day and hardly move it any distance at all. Are the past and present not like the water and the land, and the states of Chou and Lu not like a boat and a cart? To hope to practice the ways of Chou in the state of Lu is like trying to push a boat over land—a great deal of work, with no success and certain danger to the person who tries it. The man who tries to do so has failed to understand the wisdom that [time's] turning has no [fixed] direction, that it responds to things flexibly and inexhaustibly. (Guo 1978: 513)

Boats are for traveling on water, carts for land. The choice of a method must fit the context where it is to be applied. When conditions change, adjustment must be made accordingly. This message is also promoted in chapters 13 and 15. What these Huang-Lao authors tried to tell us is valuable and also very true when we are situated anywhere dramatic social and political reforms are taking place. As a branch of the latter-day Zhuangzian thinkers, this eclectic school attempted to offer practical theories to meet the actual needs of a complex world.

5 Conclusion

The works of the Transmitters, Anarchists, and Huang-Lao school all demonstrate the significant changes Zhuangzi's teachings underwent as larger work, the *Zhuangzi*, took shape. Their theories constitute a latter-day Zhuangzian philosophy. Zhuangzi himself, deeply influenced by Laozi, created a path to attain the spiritually unbounded freedom; his disciples, the Transmitters, endeavored to clarify and expand their master's thought by clear reasoning. While the Anarchists delivered blows to the rationale behind all forms of rule, the Huang-Lao school tried to work out a perfect principle of governance by fusing together useful bits from various philosophical sources. The accomplishment of these changes maps out the early evolution of Zhuangzian philosophy. It illustrates as well that the flexible and transformable quality of human understanding is the fuel driving the never-ending generation of new thoughts. We can learn many more useful lessons for academic research and practical wisdom if we study the *Zhuangzi* with proper attention to the text's divisions and to careful analysis of the various groups of its chapters.[9]

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Part III
The Huang-Lao Tradition

Chapter 10
The Doctrines and Transformation of the Huang-Lao Tradition

L.K. Chen and Hiu Chuk Winnie Sung

1 Introduction

Huang-Lao 黃老 Daoism is claimed to have emerged in middle Warring States period and to have remained popular among intellectuals and statesmen into the early Han period, until the reign of Emperor Wu. In the later Han, it is associated with religious beliefs and practices that culminated in the emergence of the Celestial Masters tradition of Daoism. Huang-Lao is commonly understood as a branch of Daoism that applied Daoist doctrines to the socio-political world. Still, there has been no widespread agreement on the precise definition of Huang-Lao. The term is not defined in any of the classical texts, and contemporary scholars in general are quite reluctant to supply a definition of their own. One of the major difficulties with studying Huang-Lao lies in the lack of a definitive or authoritative source text. In order to address this problem, scholars have endeavored to glean a more comprehensive picture of the tradition from relevant historical and philosophical texts that seem to have been influenced by Huang-Lao ideas. SIMA Qian in his *Shiji*, for example, identifies the characteristics, as well as a series of adherents, of the Huang-Lao tradition that he traced back from his father, SIMA Tan, to Warring

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States masters.[1] It is by tracing the works of these figures and subsequently detecting in them consistent themes that we hope to gain a more comprehensive view of Huang-Lao. In this chapter, we will survey the textual sources of Huang-Lao and use them as a guide to our discussion of this tradition's philosophical features.[2]

It is commonly agreed among scholars that the term "Huang-Lao" is a reference to ideas drawing from the legendary Huangdi 黃帝 (Yellow Emperor) and Laozi 老子. Many scholars are also quick to note that the Huang-Lao tradition is not the mere amalgam of Huangdi's and Laozi's teachings (see Tu 1979: 102 and Csikszentmihalyi 1994: 7–14). Since none of the transmitted Warring States texts, nor any of the excavated documents, mention the names of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi together, it is unlikely that Huangdi and Laozi were intellectually related in any significant way. Besides, the connotations of the "Huang" portion of the term have always been ambiguous. Unlike the "Lao" portion, which has the *Laozi* (or *Daodejing*) as a source of Laozi's thought, there is no defining text for Huangdi. Although a number of pseudonymous books attributed to Huangdi and his ministers are recorded in the "Yiwen zhi" (Record of Literary Works) chapter of the *Hanshu*, these books cover a wide range of intellectual and esoteric traditions, such as "Daoism," "yin and yang," "warfare based on physical circumstances," "astronomy," "calendrical charts," "miscellaneous divination," "medical scriptures," "bedroom arts," and "immortality techniques".[3] It could well be the case that no definite central teaching of "Huangdi" ever existed, and therefore the name could have been easily borrowed for diverse purposes. Besides, as WU Guang aptly notes, not everyone who mentions the name of Huangdi is necessarily a Huang-Lao follower (Wu 1985). These inconsistencies involving the usages of Huangdi have prompted scholars like GU Jiegang to conclude that Huangdi is simply used as a symbol in the Huang-Lao tradition to facilitate the political propagation of Daoist ideas (Gu 1972).

Such intellectual ambiguities and complexities surrounding Huang-Lao thought have led to concerns at the overstretched use of the term "Huang-Lao." Did a philosophical school called Huang-Lao, with developed doctrines, disciples, and texts, actually exist? GUO Moruo thinks that Huang-Lao did exist as an identifiable school at the Jixia Academy (Guo 1982a: 155–187). GUO Zhanbo also refers to a "Huang-Lao school" when discussing Huang-Lao thought (Guo 2003). Mark Csikszentmihalyi, however, argues that it is a mistake to assume "a definite phenomenon called Huang-Lao" because such an assumption fails to capture the different dimensions of Huang-Lao writings. For Csikszentmihalyi, Huang-Lao

[1]It is also possible that the claim that there was a long master-disciple tradition is a post-facto assertion designed to assert legitimacy and authority for a contemporary philosophical position. See Van Ess 1993 and also Puett 2001, Chapter 5, for his argument that the *Shiji* was written with a specific political agenda in mind.

[2]It should be noted that although such a source text may once have existed, it is possible that, in fact, there has never been one.

[3]See Liu Xiaogan's *Laozi gu jin* for a table of Huangdi books (Liu 2006: 367); see also Zhang Weihua 2002: 70–74.

would be more suitably defined as "a complex or group of traditions" that had different dimensions (Csikszentmihalyi 1994: 9, 53). Reinhard Emmerich further observes that the term "Huang-Lao" is used in different senses by different ancient writers, sometimes even within the same text, highlighting again the difficulty with treating Huang-Lao as a coherent philosophical school (Emmerich 1995).[4]

The term "Huang-Lao" first appeared in the Former Han period in SIMA Qian's *Shiji* (Records of the Historian) around 100 BCE. This was followed by BAN Gu's *Hanshu* (History of the Former Han), composed around 54–92 CE. These two texts have long been considered the major sources of Huang-Lao thought. Although they provide no definition of Huang-Lao, they outline its doctrines and assign this label to masters who apparently studied them (*Shiji* 63, 74). With regard to the characteristics of Huang-Lao thought, a cursory examination of relevant passages shows that the tradition is one that emphasized Daoist ideals such as emptiness, inaction, and softness (*Shiji* 54; *Hanshu* 30). This arguably puts Huang-Lao into the Daoist camp. In the *Shiji*, "Huang-Lao" is apparently used interchangeably with *Daojia* 道家 (school of the Way) and *Dao De jia* 道德家 (school of the Way and Virtue).[5] Specialists have pointed out that the referent of *Daojia* in the *Shiji* should be the Huang-Lao tradition rather than Laozi and Zhuangzi Daoism (the Lao-Zhuang tradition) to which modern scholarship usually refers. This is so because Huang-Lao may well have been a prominent intellectual and political ideology in the early Han period just prior to the time when the *Shiji* was composed (Hsiao 1979: 552–6). Moreover, since SIMA Tan studied with a Huang-Lao master, it is reasonable to presume that his description of the *Daojia* was informed by his Huang-Lao background.[6] Hence, the descriptions of *Daojia* in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* have been closely consulted for understanding the features of Huang-Lao thought in many studies.[7]

While historians have generally associated Huang-Lao thought with the Daoist camp, the major philosophical figures identified as having studied Huang-Lao are not paradigmatic Daoists. They include SONG Xing 宋銒, TIAN Pian 田駢, SHEN Dao 慎到, SHEN Buhai 申不害, and HAN Fei 韓非. With the exception of SONG Xing, who is usually considered a Mohist, the rest are renowned for their close associations with the Legalist tradition. If we pay attention to how SIMA Qian

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[4]The authors are grateful to an anonymous referee for this helpful reference and comment.

[5]As mentioned above, there is some controversy over whether Huang-Lao existed as a "school." For this reason, we will leave the term "Daojia" untranslated in this chapter.

[6]Scholars have agreed with almost unanimity that the referent of the terms "Daojia" or "Dao de jia" in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* is Huang-Lao. See, for example, Schwartz 1985: 237–54 and Roth 1991b: 38. HE Qimin notes that the term "Lao-Zhuang" was first used during the Wei and Qin period (He 1967: 103–15). LIU Xiaogan, however, points out that the term "Lao-Zhuang" first appeared in the "Yaolue 要略" (Essentials) section of the *Huainanzi* in early Han dynasty (Liu 1987: 299–300 and 2006: 368). For the study of "Yaolue", see Judson Murray 2004.

[7]While there are good reasons to believe that SIMA Tan's description of the *Daojia* refers to the Huang-Lao tradition, one should be aware that Sima mentions only "Daojia" but never "Huang-Lao jia".

and BAN Gu describe Huang-Lao features in terms of a technique of governing, this linkage of Huang-Lao to the Legalists is actually not too surprising. As later discussion will show, it is likely that the Huang-Lao tradition arose out of a need to apply Laozi's philosophy to political ends during the Warring States period. Although the Huang-Lao thinkers also upheld certain key Daoist concepts such as that of *dao*, *de*, and *wuwei*, their goal is noticeably more concerned with effective governmental administration. For this reason, scholars have almost unanimously stressed the importance of differentiating Huang-Lao from Lao-Zhuang Daoism. Herrlee Creel and Benjamin Schwartz have respectively identified Huang-Lao as "purposive" or "instrumental" Daoism.[8] REN Jiyu asserts that Huang-Lao is not a continuation of Lao-Zhuang philosophy (Ren 1966: 43). In mainland China, the tendency has been to go so far as to identify Huang-Lao with Legalism rather than Lao-Zhuang Daoism. FENG Youlan, for example, regards Huang-Lao as a "unification" of Daoism and Legalism (Feng 1982, v.3: 195). The following discussion will bring to light the relationship between Huang-Lao and other strands of thought. Since most of these intellectual associations occurred in the Jixia 稷下Academy, it is important to have an overview of the historical context wherein the interactions of ideas began.

2 Historical Context

The conventional view on the origin of Huang-Lao is that this tradition originated in the northeastern state of Qi 齊 in the Warring States period. According to this view, the propagation of Huang-Lao thought probably began with the Tian 田 ruling house. In 379 BCE the Tian (originally from the state of Chen) usurped the throne from the native Jiang 姜 house and established a new regime. Having offended the surrounding dukes and lords, the newly installed ruler was keen to shake off his image as a usurper, and he devised a variety of intellectual, religious, and political means to assert his legitimacy. One bronze inscription cast for King Wei of Qi (357–320 BCE) refers to Huangdi as the "ancestor on high" of the royal house of Tian. Since Huangdi was the most celebrated of ancestral icons, a link with an origin of high antiquity may have considerably repaired the damage done to Tian's reputation by his usurpation. Beyond establishing an ancestral icon, Tian also wanted to establish an academy that would facilitate interstate intellectual exchange.

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[8]Herrlee Creel understands "purposive" Daoism as the aspect that originates from "the attempt to utilize an essentially mystical doctrine for the furtherment of personal ambitions and political purposes." Although Creel does not explicitly apply the term "purposive" to Huang-Lao, his identification of Huang-Lao as the "purposive" aspect of Daoism is evident in his discussion on *wuwei* in Chapter 4. Creel thinks that "purposive" Daoists were those who developed SHEN Buhai's concept of *wuwei* (Creel 1970: 46–78). See Schwartz's discussion on Huang-Lao as instrumental Daoism in Schwartz 1985: 237 et seq.

Hence, the Jixia Academy was founded to attract great minds.[9] The ruling house particularly favored the thought of Laozi because Qi had long followed a course of governance that emphasized practicality and centralization of power. With regard to practicality, Laozi's concepts of inaction (*wuwei*), quiescence (*jing*), and spontaneity (*ziran*) are easy to apply as administrative concepts.[10] Concerning the Tian need to centralize and solidify their grip on power, the *Laozi* text is often believed to have contained cryptic messages about the art of rulership. As Schwartz puts it, it is sometimes read as "an esoteric handbook of wily statecraft" (Schwartz 1985: 213). Hence, Laozi's thought also served the Tian need for political consolidation. With the expansion of scholarly exchange at the Jixia Academy, the teachings of Huang-Lao spread to different states and became an intellectual vogue of the time. It is no surprise then that all the figures in the *Shiji* said to have Huang-Lao allegiances were in some way associated with the Jixia Academy.[11]

3 Textual Sources and Intellectual Associations

One of the major difficulties in studying Huang-Lao is the lack of a definitive source text for the tradition. But as we have also seen, substantial connections existed between the Huang-Lao tradition and other schools of thought. This opens up the possibility of looking for sources of Huang-Lao philosophy in texts of other traditions. Since the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* mentioned some specifics of Huang-Lao doctrines and the names of masters associated with it, an examination of common themes across related texts will help us more fully understand the distinguishing features of Huang-Lao philosophy.

The excavation of the *Boshu* 帛書 (*Silk Manuscripts*) at Mawangdui in 1973 is an exciting find for scholars.[12] According to the *Hanshu* ("Yiwen zhi"), the

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[9]For a detailed survey of scholars who visited the Jixia Academy, see Jin 1930. There are also scholarly doubts concerning the history of the Jixia Academy. Nathan Sivin, for example, argued that a Jixia Academy never existed. see Sivin 1995.

[10]Since the nature of present discussion does not require an in-depth examination of the textual terms, we will rely on commonly accepted English translations to facilitate discussion, unless noted otherwise.

[11]Another less popular account of the origins of Huang-Lao, that posed by DING Yuanming, says that another branch of Huang-Lao Daoism began back in the fifth–fourth century BCE in the southern state of Chu. Ding claims that this was the earlier branch. The main support for this view comes from taking the Huang-Lao silk manuscripts as the earliest Huang-Lao texts, completed around 400 BCE, which is earlier than the bronze inscription cited above, and earlier than the founding of the Jixia Academy in Qi. Besides the silk manuscripts, sections of the Outer Chapters of the Z*huangzi* and of the G*uanzi* also seem to form a continuation of Huang-Lao thought.

[12]Since it is disputable whether the *Boshu* texts are the "Four Canons of Huangdi" works mentioned in *Hanshu*, the present discussion simply use the term "Boshu" for purposes of clarity and convenience.

long-lost *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經 (Four Canons of Huangdi) had four volumes (*juan* 卷). Coincidentally, the Mawangdui manuscripts included "lost texts" written consecutively on a single piece of silk, which also consists of four parts, two of them using the word "canon" (*jing* 經) in their titles: *Jing Fa* 經法 (The Canon: Law), *Jing* 經 (The Canon), *Cheng* 誠 (Designations), and *Daoyuan* 道源 (Dao the Origin) (Yates 1997). These similarities prompted TANG Lan to identify the *Boshu* as the "Four Canons of Huangdi" mentioned in the *Hanshu* (Tang 1975: 7–38).[13] But many scholars have remained skeptical about this identification. The major criticism was launched by QIU Xigui in 1993. According to Qiu, the name "Huangdi" is mentioned in only one of the four. In addition, the four manuscripts do not correspond with early records of Yellow Emperor books in other texts (Qiu 1993). LIU Xiaogan has also raised concern over how the overtly legalistic tone of the *Boshu* may be reckoned compatible with other features of Huang-Lao thought (Liu 1987). In light of these controversies, we should be cautious and perhaps regard the *Boshu* as one important source instead of the definitive source of the Huang-Lao tradition.[14]

Part of the *Guanzi* 管子 has long been recognized as an important source for Huang-Lao ideas. This is primarily because the *Hanshu* identifies SONG Xing 宋銒 (371–289 BCE) and YIN Wen 尹文 (350–285 BCE) as the key Huang-Lao thinkers at the Jixia Academy.[15] One influential argument expressed by GUO Moruo (KUO Mo-jo 郭沫若) identifies SONG Xing and YIN Wen as the authors of the four core chapters of the *Guanzi*—"Bai xin 白心," "Nei ye 內業," "Xinshu shang 心術上," and "Xinshu xia 心術下."[16] Recent scholarship has disputed this reading primarily on the grounds that the texts are not consistent with the known teachings of Song and Yin.[17] In spite of their disagreement with Guo's account of authorship, most scholars nevertheless believe that authors of a Huang-Lao persuasion wrote a substantial part of the *Guanzi*. FENG Youlan, for instance, understands four key chapters of the *Guanzi* as constituting a "system" of Huang-Lao thought

[13]See also Leo S. Chang and YU Feng for a tabulation of works relevant to Huangdi in the "Yiwen zhi" chapter of the *Hanshu* (Chang and Feng 1998: 201–4).

[14]Chapter 13 of this volume contains a detailed discussion of the *Boshu* or silk Manuscripts.

[15]CHEN Ligui provides a list of studies on the relationship between the *Guanzi*, the Jixia Academy, and Huang-Lao in Chen 1998.

[16]Guo argues that "Bai xin" chapter was written by Yin while the two "Xin shu" chapters and "Nei ye" were written by Song (Guo 1982b). In DU Guoxiang's analysis of the influence of Huang-Lao on Xunzi, he also associates Song and Yin with the *Guanzi* (Du 1962). Other scholars who follow Guo's account include LIU Jie, PAN Fu'en and SHI Changdong (Liu 1958: 238–42; Pan and Shi 1980: 51). LIU Jie even regards these four chapters of the *Guanzi* to be the origin of Daoist thought, composed prior to the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* (Liu 1958: 244, 258).

[17]See the important interpretations of the *Guanzi* advanced by Machida, Rickett, and Roth (Machida 1985; Rickett 1965; Roth 1999).

(Feng 1982 vol. 2: 198–99).[18] Feng's claim is further substantiated by recent studies that find a close intellectual compatibility between the *Boshu* and these four chapters of the *Guanzi*.[19] Their common themes and ideas include the practices of ordering the heart/mind (*xin* 心) for ordering a country; the extension of natural Dao to political Dao; emphasis on the superiority of the ruler, law (*fa* 法), and forms and names (*xingming* 刑名); promotion of personal cultivation techniques as governing techniques; amalgamation of the concepts Dao, virtue (*de* 德), principle (*li* 理), and law (*fa*). Not only do these themes run across both the *Boshu* and the *Guanzi*, they also correlate with the basic features of Huang-Lao thought described in the *Shiji*.[20]

The *Zhuangzi* 莊子 is another text that contains strands of Huang-Lao thought. Early in the Qing dynasty, WANG Fuzhi made the observation that the "Tian dao" chapter was composed sometime "between the Qin and the Han by those who studied the methods of Huang-Lao" (Liu 1994: 48). Schwartz claims that the "syncretistic" chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (chs. 12–14, parts of chs. 11, 15, and 33, according to Angus Graham's classification) are Huang-Lao sections (Schwartz 1985: 216). Unfortunately, Schwartz has not provided any reasons for such identification. It is only quite recently that the linkage of the *Zhuangzi* to Huang-Lao thought has been thoroughly investigated by LIU Xiaogan. In a major textual study of the *Zhuangzi*, Liu classifies chapters 12–16, 33, and part of 11 as written by the Huang-Lao masters.[21] According to Liu, the ideas expressed in these chapters are notably different from those in the seven Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*; instead they are consistent with SIMA Tan's description of the Huang-Lao tradition in the *Shiji* (Liu 1994: 121–34, 1987: 299–317). In light of this textual evidence, it is important to consult the outer chapters of the *Zhuangzi* when studying Huang-Lao thought.

Legalist texts also supplement our understanding of Huang-Lao. According to the *Shiji*, the leading legalist philosophers—SHEN Buhai 申不害, SHEN Dao 慎到, and HAN Fei 韓非—were all said to have studied Huang-Lao doctrines (*Shiji* 63, 74).[22] The Huang-Lao link with SHEN Buhai is examined in a detailed study

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[18]Roth also finds it plausible that TIAN Pian was the author of the "Nei ye," who is one of the figures identified in the *Shiji* as having studied Huang-Lao and hence he argues that the "Nei ye" is the earliest representative of the Huang-Lao tradition (Roth 1999: 23–30).

[19]Basing himself on the Huang-Lao *Boshu*, CHEN Ligui investigated the Huang-Lao ideas in the *Guanzi* (Chen 1991: 109–48). See also a tabulation of the parallels between the *Boshu* and the *Guanzi* in Chang and Feng 1998: 208–11.

[20]For further discussion about *Guanzi*, please see Chap. 10 of this volume.

[21]For a brief discussion of the thought of these chapters, see part III of Chap. 8 in this volume.

[22]Creel believes that the Legalist school arose from two schools of thought, one led by SHEN Buhai and the other by SHANG Yang (Creel 1970: 92–120). KANAYA Osamu divides Legalist thought into two lines. One line was formed by LI Kui, SHANG Yang, and HAN Fei and the other line was formed by SHEN Dao, SHEN Buhai, sections of the *Guanzi* and the *Hanfeizi*, and Huang-Lao (Kanaya 1982). It is worth noting that Robin Yates (2009) doubts, in the light of newly discovered legal texts, that there could have been any influence of HAN Fei or SHEN Buhai's ideas on the legal system of the state and empire of Qin.

conducted by JIN Dejian, who has compared various of Shen's statements with the *Laozi* and confirmed Sima's account of Shen (Jin 1962).[23] In more recent literature, scholars have also made note of ideas in the *Shenzi* 申子 that are consistent with political thought found in the *Jing Fa* of the *Boshu* and the four core chapters of the *Guanzi* (Chen 1991: 180–94). With regard to SHEN Dao, the "Tian xia" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* describes him as a Daoist, whereas in the "Yiwen zhi" he is classified as a Legalist. In reconciling these divergent records, FENG Youlan takes the middle ground. According to Feng, SHEN Dao represents the move of Daoist thought toward Legalist thought, a move that characterizes Huang-Lao. Feng therefore regards SHEN Dao as the founder of the Huang-Lao tradition (Feng 1982, v.2: 195). In this regard, CHEN Ligui has conducted detailed analyses of sections in the *Shenzi* 慎子 (SHEN Dao) that conform to Huang-Lao concepts (Chen 1991: 154–180). The *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 is in large part a fusion of three Legalist traditions, that of SHEN Buhai, SHEN Dao, and SHANG Yang. Since SHEN Buhai and SHEN Dao are influenced by Huang-Lao, it is reasonable to presume that the *Hanfeizi* contains resources for Huang-Lao thought. The fact that the *Hanfeizi* comments on and interprets the *Laozi* further reinforces this perceived connection with Huang-Lao.[24] Schwartz, and many other scholars, considers these commentaries on the *Laozi* as adhering to the spirit of Huang-Lao (Schwartz 1985: 343). Besides, the *Hanfeizi* also expounds on conceptions of Dao, of personal cultivation techniques, and of law (*fa*), and theorizes the proper relationship between ruler and minister, in a somewhat similar fashion to those found in the *Boshu* and the *Guanzi* (Chen 1998: 194–234). Ideas pertinent to Huang-Lao thought can be found in the "Zhu dao," "Yang quan," "Jie Lao," "Yu Lao," "Er bing," and "Nan shi" chapters of the *Hanfeizi*. Recent scholarship, however, has been increasingly mindful of the limitations and problems of understanding Huang-Lao solely in terms of Legalist thought. XIA Zengyou, for example, points out that the content of the "Jie Lao" and "Yu Lao" chapters are unrelated to Huangdi, thereby giving pause to the hasty identification of these two chapters as Huang-Lao sections (Xia 1955: 338). That said, one still has to acknowledge the significance of these Legalist texts in enriching our understanding of Huang-Lao.

Another important source for Huang-Lao thought is the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, which was composed during the Former Han. Since Huang-Lao was the most prominent ideology in the early Han dynasty, much of its teachings were absorbed into the *Huainanzi*.[25] Moreover, the *Huainanzi* is an eclectic text, and the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Guanzi*, and the *Hanfeizi* all exerted strong influence on its composition (Roth 1991a: 93–99; Rickett 1965: 23). Since these texts also contain Huang-Lao doctrines, it is reasonable to expect traces of Huang-Lao thought in

[23]For a complete reconstruction of the fragments of SHEN Buhai's writings, see Thompson 1970 and Creel 1974 and the relevant information to the bibliography.

[24]See, for example, "Jie Lao" and "Yu Lao" chapters of the *Hanfeizi*.

[25]See Queen 1996 for an insightful discussion of the possible influence of Huang-Lao ideas in DONG Zhongshu's 董仲舒 *Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露.

the *Huainanzi*, which is known for its syncretism. K.C. Hsiao claims that the *Huainanzi* is “the principal representative of [Daoism] during Han,” an identification that is widely endorsed (Hsiao 1979: 572–7).[26] However, Roger Ames and Angus Graham have both raised doubts about its specific linkage to Huang-Lao thought. They identify an anti-authoritarian tendency in the *Huainanzi* that is incompatible with Huang-Lao political percepts.[27] John Major, however, does not think this anti-authoritarian tendency is problematic. In Major’s view, Huang-Lao philosophy featured prominently in chapters 3–5 is indeed an anti-authoritarian one (Major 1993: 12–14).[28] More recently, Sarah Queen argues that the authors of the *Huainanzi* have never affiliated with the Huang-Lao tradition nor interested in defending any of the Huang-Lao doctrines (Queen 2001).

The above list is by no means exhaustive. It only provides a sketch of the major philosophical texts closely associated with Huang-Lao. *Wenzi* 文子, *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子, and Parts of *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü Buwei*) for example, are other relevant sources for elements of Huang-Lao thought.[29] In what follows, we will examine certain key features of this thought by drawing on these texts.[30]

4 Key Concepts of Huang-Lao Philosophy

The *Shiji* contains two passages that describe the Huang-Lao philosophy. One discusses Huang-Lao in relation to other traditions of thought:

> The [*Daojia*] makes intelligence quintessential and daimonic, concentrated and unified, every prompting in accord with the formless, in tranquility bringing the myriad things to sufficiency. As for the [technique (*shu* 術)] which is theirs, it is grounded in the overall harmonies of the Yin-Yang school, selects the best from the [Ru] and Mohists, picks out the essentials of the Schools of Names and Law. It shifts with the times and changes in response to other things; in establishing as custom and applying in practice there is nothing to which it is inappropriate; its point is condensed but easy to hold on to, the effort is little but to much effect. (*Shiji* 130; trans. Graham 1989: 378)[31]

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[26]Scholars who endorse this view include Roth and Major (Roth 1991a: 606; Major: 1993: 8).

[27]The important “Zhu shu” chapter, for example, mentions only Shennong, the rival of Huangdi who embodies decentralization (Graham 1991). Roger Ames discusses the anti-authoritarian tendency in the *Huainanzi* (Ames 1994).

[28]See Chap. 14 of this volume for further discussion of the *Huainanzi*. See also Major et al. (2010) for a recently published complete English translation of the *Huainanzi*.

[29]See Chaps. 11 and 13 of this volume for discussion of *Wenzi* and *Heguanzi*.

[30]Because of the nature of the present essay, we will not be able to discuss why certain chapters are taken as Huang-Lao here. In matters related to classifying the source texts as Huang-Lao, we will refer to previous textual studies.

[31]Graham translates *jia* as “school.” But as mentioned above, it is unlikely that Huang-Lao existed as a school with developed doctrines, disciples, and texts.

Another passage identifies the characteristics of Huang-Lao philosophy:

> The [*Daojia*] is inaction [*wuwei* 無為], but it also says that nothing is left undone. Its essentials are easy to practice, but its speech is difficult to understand. Its techniques are based on emptiness and non-existence; its usage is based on following and compliance [*yin xun* 因循]; it has no complete tendency, no constant form. Therefore, it is capable of investigating the facts of all things. It does not put itself ahead of things; it does not place itself behind things; that is why it can be the master of things. (*Shiji* 130)

These two passages are extremely important in the sense that not only do they highlight the main features of Huang-Lao thought, they also provide key leads that enable scholars to trace and identify Huang-Lao thought in other source texts.

4.1 Wuwei

One of the main concepts highlighted in the passage above is *wuwei* 無爲 (inaction). Indeed, the compound expression "*qingjing wuwei* 清靜無為" (quiescence and inaction) is conventionally regarded as one of the hallmarks of Huang-Lao philosophy (Feng 1982, v.3: 10–19; Ren 1966: 37). In the *Shiji*, the *Daojia* (referring to Huang-Lao) is characterized by *wuwei*. It is also said that CAO Can 曹參 used Huang-Lao techniques as the essentials of his governing style; this is described as combining "quiescence" (*qingjing*) and "inaction" (*wuwei*) (*Shiji* 54). Although both Laozi and Huang-Lao advocate *wuwei*, the connotations of the term differ substantially for each. For Laozi, *wuwei* pertains primarily to general principle and self-cultivation. For one to be without *wei* means giving up conventional pursuits and purposeful behaviors and encouraging more natural responses. Since *wuwei* requires a good understanding of the philosophy of reversal, namely, that all things eventually revert to their opposites, it does not come easily. To properly perceive the natural workings of things, one must be divested of acquired common knowledge, wisdom, and norms. Hence, only sages are capable of mastering this high level of spiritual attainment (Liu 1999). Although some interpreters have proposed a political understanding of Laozi's *wuwei*, in the text itself, there is minimal explicit discussion about how *wuwei* should be adopted as a means or device for political control.

Compared with the *Laozi*, the discussions of how *wuwei* can be concretely applied in governance are far more extensive and explicit in Huang-Lao. Two significant changes are the politicization of *wuwei* and the integration of *wuwei* and *youwei*. These changes can be readily observed in the "Tian dao" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, which says:

> The man above must do nothing [*wuwei*] and be the employer of the empire, the men below must do something [*youwei*] and be employed by the empire; this is the irreplaceable [Dao]. (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001: 261)

Related to this is another passage in the *Zhuangzi*'s "Zai you" chapter, which expresses again the idea that *wuwei* pertains only to the ruler:

> To be exalted by Doing Nothing [*wuwei*] is the [Dao] of Heaven, to be tied by doing something is the [Dao] of Man. The sovereign's is the [Dao] of Heaven, the minister's is the [Dao] of Man. That the [Dao] of Heaven and of Man are far apart is not to be overlooked." (*Zhuangzi* 11; trans. Graham 2001: 265)

A similar understanding is also found in the *Shenzi* (SHEN Dao):

> The [Dao] of ruler and ministers is that the ministers labour themselves with tasks while the ruler has nothing to do. The ruler is relaxed and happy while the ministers bear responsibility for tasks. The ministers use all their intelligence and strength to better the things they are doing, in which the ruler takes no part but merely looks upward and [all] is accomplished. (*Shenzi* 3)

As we see from the Huang-Lao accounts of *wuwei*, both the scope and subject of *wuwei* have significantly changed from what we find in the *Laozi*. The idea that features prominently in the Huang-Lao conception is that in governing, the lines of demarcation between ruler and subjects must be clearly drawn. The focus of *wuwei* has shifted from Laozi's general principle and spiritual matters to operational political affairs. In other words, *wuwei* has become a political policy. Moreover, *wuwei* and *youwei*, two opposite normative concepts in the *Laozi*, are no longer oppositional in Huang-Lao thought. Instead, *wuwei* pertains to the ruler while *youwei* pertains to the ruled. It is not only acceptable but even necessary for the ministers to be *youwei* because the ruler needs the labor of these "vassals" to remain idle himself and observe the unfolding of things. In this sense, political *wuwei* is complemented or even made possible by *youwei*.

4.2 Fa and Xingming

In light of the Huang-Lao understanding of Dao, we can now examine the distinctive usage of *fa* 法 (law) in the Huang-Lao tradition. *Fa* is also the cardinal concept in Legalist thought, but a sharp distinction must be drawn between the two traditions' different conceptions of *fa*.[32] The very opening of "Dao *fa*" treatise in the *Jing Fa* writes:

> It is out of Dao that [*fa*] comes into being. These [*fa*], prescribed according to the calculus of gains and losses, are yardsticks to measure and to distinguish what is correct from what is incorrect. Therefore, he who has mastered Dao formulates [*fa*] but dares not violate them. Once the [*fa*] have been formulated, he dares not ignore them. [Therefore,] only after one is able to keep oneself (conscientiously) within the bounds of [*fa*], will one see and know (things) All-under-Heaven without being misled. (*Jing Fa* 1; trans. Chang and Feng 1998: 100)

[32]It is controversial as to whether a Legalist "school" actually existed in the Warring States period. We will not deal with that problem here, but instead use the term "legalism" to refer to legalistic ideas in general.

The idea that "*Dao* gives birth to (*sheng* 生) *fa*" is what significantly differentiates Huang-Lao *fa* from Legalist *fa*. Tu Weiming published an influential article not long after the excavation of the *Boshu* and made the critical observation that Huang-Lao thought in the *Boshu* is not legalistic (Tu 1979: 104). According to Tu, while Legalist *fa* is concerned only with the imposition with positive law, Huang-Lao *fa* demands from the ruler an understanding of Dao. Randall Peerenboom further strengthens this argument. Based on theories of law, Peerenboom contrasts Huang-Lao *fa* with the Legalists' positive law and argues that the teachings of the *Boshu* support natural law (Peerenboom 1990). In other words, Huang-Lao *fa* cannot be the arbitrary rule of men or any law that rules. Instead, it has to be grounded in a moral foundation—Dao.[33] John Major finds further support for this legal naturalism reading in *Huainanzi* 3–5, which express the idea that human activities are determined by cosmological principles (Major 1993: 11). Echoes of this view can also be found in the *Guanzi*, which says:

> Affairs are supervised by [*fa*]. [*Fa* is] derived from authority [*quan*] and authority is derived from the [Dao]. (*Guanzi* 36; trans. Rickett 1965: 175)

Hanfeizi 29 also shows *fa* as conforming to Dao:

> If in accordance with [Dao, *fa*] is successfully enforced, the superior man will rejoice and the great culprit will give way. (*Hanfeizi* 29; trans. Liao 1959, vol. 1: 280)

Common across these texts is the idea that *fa* is grounded in Dao. Dao is the ultimate source for the legitimacy and execution of *fa*. For this reason, the ruler has no prerogative to change the law. It is said in the *Guanzi* that the ruler has to first observe the law himself:

> . . . the enlightened prince, knowing the people must take the superior as their heart, establishes laws [*fa*] for his own good order and institutes ceremonies for his own rectification. (*Guanzi* 16; trans. Rickett 1965: 102)

The idea that a ruler is subject to *fa* and therefore bound by it is distinctive in Huang-Lao. This substantially differentiates Huang-Lao *fa* from San Jin Qin legalism. In the latter, a ruler was not regarded as bound by *fa* and was therefore beyond its control.

Any discussion of the Huang-Lao concept *fa* is not complete without mentioning its correlated concept, *xingming* (forms and names). In the *Boshu*, it is said that the content of *fa* is *xingming*. The character *xing*[a] 刑, when considered in isolation, is frequently rendered as "punishments" or "penal law" in English. Due to this notion of punishment in *xing*[a], *xingming* is sometimes taken to mean criminal law or punishments (Giles 1912: 577). But it should be noted that, in classical Chinese, *xing*[a] is synonymous and used interchangeably with its homonym *xing*[b] 形, which

[33]The main difference between positivists and naturalists are their views on the connection between law and morality. The former claims that there is no necessary connection between law and morality but the latter argues that there is. We should be mindful that this distinction is drawn from the Western tradition and therefore it might have limitations for explaining early Chinese philosophical concepts.

means "form" or "shape". When paired with *ming*, *xing* is usually used in the second sense. The "Tian dao" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, for instance, explicitly uses the character "xing[b]" instead of "xing[a]" when it talks about *xingming*. Creel carefully examines the usages of "xingming" during the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods and concludes that *xingming* should be most appropriately translated as "official title and the performance which is the real manifestation of what it implies" (Creel 1970: 84). He points out that the term is first used meaningfully by SHEN Buhai to denote a technique of bureaucratic management. In this light, the emphasis of *xingming* is not on punishments but on the correspondence between job title and actual performance. If the title is well defined, the correct or desired performance of the minister ensues and hence, there will be no need for a ruler to actively take part in governance. When considering Creel's argument one should note that the concept he attributed to SHEN Buhai does not actually occur in any of the surviving *Shenzi* fragments; furthermore, his argument was made before the discovery of the *Boshu*. In the *Boshu* the emphasis of *xingming* is on Dao as the source of authority and justification for proper definitions of job titles. Just as *fa* is grounded in Dao, so is *xingming*: It is said in the *Jing Fa* that:

> The right way to understand all these is to remain in a state of [vacuity,] formlessness and non-being. Only if one remains in such a state, may he thereby know that (all things) necessarily possess their forms and names as soon as they come into existence, even though they are as small as autumn down. As soon as forms and names are established, the distinction between black and white becomes manifest . . . there will be no way to escape from them without a trace or to hide from regulation . . . [all things] will correct themselves. (*Jing Fa* 1; trans. Chang and Feng 1998, modified: 101–4)

As Robin Yates points out, this passage shows that the forms and names of all things emanate from Dao. In other words, they cannot be issued as arbitrary, authoritative commands. And to be able to categorize these forms and shapes and institutionalize *xingming*, the ruler himself has to be in Dao (Yates 1997: 24). For Yates, *xingming* has to do with ontology, not with the bureaucratic procedure Creel asserts. The connection between Dao and *xingming* is also highlighted in the "Tian dao" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*,

> Therefore, when the book says "There is [form (*xing*)], there is name (*ming*)]," though [*xingming*] did not exist among the men of old; they are not what they put first. When the men of old expounded the great [Dao], at the fifth of the stages [*xingming*] deserved a mention, by the ninth it was time to talk about reward and punishment. (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001, modified: 262)

In view of Huang-Lao concepts of *fa* and *xingming*, we can now better understand what it meant for the ruler to be *wuwei*. If the ruler has discerned the pattern (*li*) of Dao, he will be able to assign the proper names and roles to his subjects accordingly. Subsequently, the subjects will carry out all of their tasks orderly and leave nothing undone for the ruler (*Zhuangzi* 12). The implication of this is that the ruler needs to have a good understanding of Dao before he can introduce *fa* and *xingming* and thus manifest *wuwei*.

4.3 Dao

The concept of Dao 道 (The Way) is the anchor of Laozi's philosophy—and indeed, of the different strands of thought classified as *Daojia* in the *Shiji*. According to Laozi's descriptions, Dao is the origin of the world but it is not part of the world. It is beyond sensible representation and conceptual representation, an undifferentiated state that unifies all oppositions but transcends all things (*Laozi* ch. 14, 21, 25, 34, 39, 39, 42). For the Huang-Lao, Dao also has the characteristic of being vacuous, spontaneous, and all-encompassing. Nonetheless, it does not transcend the natural world; it is still the origin of life;. The *Daoyuan* section of the *Boshu* describes Dao as "*wu* 無 (non-existing)" and "*xu* 虛 (empty, vacuous)" but also "*shishi mengmeng* 濕濕夢夢 (misty and blurred)."[34] The "Ming li" treatise of the *Jing Fa* states:

> There is a thing which comes into . . . [Dao] is based on earth and at the same time transcends heaven. Yet no one has ever seen its form. Everything between heaven and earth is entirely filled with [Dao]. Yet no one knows its name. (*Jing Fa* 9; trans. Chang and Feng 1998: 141)

The expression of metaphysical realism is evident—Dao is no longer the unfathomable and undifferentiating state but has become concretized as some tangible substance in the world. Although Dao for Huang-Lao is also held to be the highest state of existence and also regarded as beyond sensible representation, the realm it covers has clearly shifted from that which is beyond the world to what is in the world. In "Xin shu I" of the *Guanzi*, Dao is defined as that which "lies between Heaven and earth" and "fills the world and exists everywhere people are . . . and all around fills the nine regions" (*Guanzi* ch.49; trans. Rickett 1965: 162, 173). This shows that although Dao is still all-encompassing, it has also become part of the natural world in Huang-Lao thought. It is not regarded as mysterious, but as embodying a certain order and hierarchy. In the "Tian dao" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, it is said that Dao "observes the proper placement of age and seniority" (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham: 261). Due to this concretization, Dao and practical daily-life matters are inevitably intimately connected. For this reason, the Huang-Lao Dao is usually discussed in terms of "the *dao* of the emperor," the *dao* of the sage," the *dao* to make proper use of people" in Huang-Lao texts (see for example, *Zhuangzi* 12, 13).

Another significant point of difference is the superiority of Heaven over Dao. According to LIU Xiaogan's analysis of the Huang-Lao chapters in the *Zhuangzi*, Heaven seems to have taken a superior position to Dao in the Huang-Lao chapters. There we find the following statements:

> *De* [is completed] in Dao, and Dao in Heaven. (*Zhuangzi* 12, author's trans.)

[34] Yates's translation of *shi* as "misty" is more capable of capturing the concreteness and metaphysical realism of Dao in Huang-Lao than Chang's and Feng's translation (Yates trans. 1997: 173).

And,

> The power [*de*] which is in the emperor or king has heaven and earth for its ancestors, [Dao] and [*de*] as its masters, Doing Nothing [*wuwei*] as its norm. (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001, modified: 260)

The compelling idea is that Heaven, instead of Dao, is the progenitor. Here, Dao seems to be what connects Heaven and the human. This further shows that Dao, in Huang-Lao thought, is not an absolute existence independent of Heaven and Earth. The implication of the superiority of Heaven is that it accentuates the importance of human beings in harmony or resonating with Heaven. This is reflected in the new emphasis on the concept of yin-yang. As earlier discussed, SIMA Tan describes the teachings of Huang-Lao tradition as "grounded in the overall harmonies of the Yin-Yang school." In the *Boshu* there are discussions about distinctions between opposites, such as Heaven and Earth, male and female, the four seasons, ruler and ministers, big and small, in terms of yin and yang.[35] In the *Guanzi*, discussions of the Five Phases touch on an array of different topics, ranging from seasonal change, political and military strategies, to mundane everyday affairs. When it comes to the *Huainanzi*, discussions of yin-yang have become even more elaborate and refined. *Huainanzi* 5, for example, gives vivid illustrations of the need for rulers to make political decisions in conformity to actual external circumstances.

Because of its conception of Dao as a concretized lived Dao, the focus of Huang-Lao philosophy is on the practical realm. Since Dao, Heaven, and humanity are seen as a unity, the political blueprint of Huang-Lao must be one that encourages compliance with Dao and correspondence between Heaven and humanity. This is reflected in the concept of *shu*.

4.4 Shu

Shu is another important concept in Huang-Lao thought. Ames translates *shu* as "techniques of rulership" (Ames 1994: 10). Although this term is yet another cardinal Legalist concept, its connotation and application is very different in Huang-Lao tradition. As we saw earlier, SIMA Tan described the teachings of the *Daojia* as a kind of *shu*. In the *Shiji*, it is also said that SHEN Dao and TIAN Bian studied "the techniques (*shu*) of *Dao* and *de*" in the Huang-Lao tradition (*Shiji* 74). In the *Hanshu* we find reference to Huang-Lao teachings as *shu* expressed in even stronger terms. According to BAN Gu, the teachings of the *Daojia* are "techniques (*shu*) of the ruler who faces South," a expression that usually bears a rather derogatory connotation and refers to techniques that disregard moral concerns and aim only at

[35] Robin Yates brings to light the influence of the Yin-Yang school on the development of Huang-Lao thought (Yates 1997: 10–16).

controlling or winning over adversaries (*Hanshu* 30).[36] In the *Boshu*, there are also explicit endorsements of *wang shu* 王術 (techniques of the king).[37] It is against this background that some scholars think that Huang-Lao teaching was not concerned with personal cultivation and therefore link it definitely with the Legalist tradition.[38]

Even so, there are good reasons to think there is more to Huang-Lao thought than mere political technique. The four chapters of *Guanzi*, for example, clearly take clarity, orderliness, impartiality, and fairness to be political ideals, rather than gaining power or scheming.

When we look more closely at how the *shu* of Huang-Lao is understood in the *Shiji*, we find that it is understood in terms of timeliness and compliance:

> As for the [technique (*shu*)] which is theirs . . . it shifts with the times and changes in response to other things. (*Shiji* 130; trans. Graham 1989: 378)
>
> Its techniques are based on emptiness and non-existence; its usage is based on following and compliance [*yin xun* 因循]. (*Shiji* 130)

In both passages, *shu* is defined in terms of complying (*yin*) with a given context.[39] Crucial to our understanding of Huang-Lao's *shu*, then, is the idea of being attentive to and complying with changing external circumstances. This is underscored by a passage that discusses the difference between boat and cart in "Tian yun" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*:

> On water it is convenient to travel by boat, on dry land in a carriage; if you were to try to push a boat on land because it goes so well on water, you could last out the age without travelling an inch . . . At the present day, to have an urge to get the institutions of Chou running in Lu is like pushing a boat on dry land, there is no result for all your labour, you're certain to bring disaster on yourself. He has never known about the turns which have no fixed direction, about being unrestricted in responding to things. (*Zhuangzi* 14; trans. Graham 2001: 192)

We further find in the *Huainanzi* that *wuwei* is defined in terms of (*yin*):

> *Wuwei* means that one should take no action ahead of things; what the so-called "nothing is left undone" means is that one should take action in a way that complies with (*yin*) what is done by things. (*Huainanzi* 14)

The connection between *shu* and *wuwei* illustrates the outcome of complying with external circumstances. Since these circumstances are beyond one's control, one should comply in the most optimal way so as to maximize the situation for oneself, which also means that futile efforts will be minimized. This explains why *wei*, in the *Huainanzi*, is taken to only refer to actions that are contrary to nature, such as

[36] See also Leo S. Chang and YU Feng for a more detailed discussion on "techniques of the ruler who faces South" (Chang and Feng 1998: 22).

[37] "Da fen" chapter of *Jing Fa*, for instance, discusses *wang shu* extensively.

[38] GUO Moruo even called the Daoist *shu* of Huang-Lao a "big devil" (Guo 1982a: 187).

[39] Timeliness (*shi* 時) and compliance (*yin* 因) are two important concepts in the *Guanzi* and the *Shenzi*.

irrigating a mountain from a lowland river. Actions that require minimal effort, such as taking a boat on water or an adapted cart across the desert, are called *wuwei* because they are in compliance with the nature of things (*Huainanzi* 19).

What significantly sets Huang-Lao thought apart from the Legalist is its justification of *shu*. The emphasis of the Legalist *shu* is on power acquisition and political manipulation. The core of the Huang-Lao concept of *shu*, on the other hand, is grounded in Dao, which determines the circumstances from which *shu* is derived. This is so because Dao possesses certain regularities. In the "Tian di" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, it is said Dao is what makes distinctions possible:

> Use [Dao] to examine words, and names throughout the empire will be correct; use [Dao] to examine portions, and the duties of ruler and minister will be clear; use [Dao] to examine abilities, and the offices of the empire will be ordered; use [Dao] to examine no matter what, and the responses of the myriad things will be at your disposal. (*Zhuangzi* 12; trans. Graham 2001: 269)

Since Dao can be a reference for making distinctions, it must have a certain order or regularity. The Huang-Lao concept of *shu* underscores this order in Dao. For one to comply with the circumstances of nature, one must first acquire a comprehensive understanding of Dao. In this sense, the Huang-Lao *shu* and the Legalist *shu* can be differentiated in two ways. The first difference is straightforward: the Huang-Lao *shu* has *Dao* as the basis of its validation. The second is more implicit. From the preceding discussion, we see how one cannot arbitrarily carry out just any *shu* but needs to act in accordance with Dao. Achieving this condition depends on one's penetrating insight into Dao, which is to be achieved through personal cultivation, an element that is passed over by the Legalists.

4.5 Personal Cultivation

Two concepts that epitomize the Huang-Lao conception of personal cultivation are *xu* 虛 (emptiness, vacuity) and *jing* 靜 (stillness, quiescence). As a noun, *xu* refers to the state of being empty or vacuous; as a verb, it refers to the act of emptying oneself of certain things. *Jing* denotes a state of stillness when used as a noun and to the act of stilling disturbances as a verb. The states of *xu* and *jing* are desirable for Huang-Lao thinkers because it is in these conditions that one may gain penetrating insights into Dao. Just as water reflects things when it is still and clear, a heart/mind that is still and free of impurities functions as "the reflector of heaven and earth, the mirror of myriad things" (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001: 259). Without this comprehensive understanding of things, a ruler will not be able to discern the patterns of Dao and subsequently assign the proper tasks. Hence, the embodiment of *wuwei* comes through the practice of *xu* and *jing*:

> Emptiness [*xu*] and stillness [*jing*] . . . [and] doing nothing [*wuwei*], are the even levels of heaven and earth, the utmost reach of [Dao] and the Power [*de*]; therefore emperor, king or sage finds rest in them. Emptying [*xu*] he is still [*jing*], in stillness he is moved, and when he moves he succeeds. In stillness he does nothing [*wuwei*]; and if he does nothing, those charged with affairs are put to the test. (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001: 259).

The *Guanzi* is a major source for Huang-Lao concepts of personal cultivation. Harold Roth observes that the vital essence (*jing* 精), which is a concentrated form of vital energies (*qi* 氣), is understood as an aspect of Dao in the "Nei ye" chapter of the *Guanzi*.[40] The filling of vital essence in one's heart/mind indicates the obtainment of Dao (*Guanzi* 49). But if the heart/mind is disturbed or full of impurities, the vital essence will leave the mind. In order to provide "a lodging place for the vital essence," the heart/mind needs to be tranquil and spacious (*Guanzi* 49; trans. Roth 1991a: 614). In order for the heart/mind to be undisturbed (*jing*), one needs to first empty (*xu*) the impurities in the heart/mind. *Xu*, in this sense, is the process of ridding the heart/mind of desires and prejudices so as to make room for the vital energies to move in it. Eventually, the vital essence will concentrate to a point that gives rise to an enlightened knowledge of Dao. It is by this enlightened knowledge that appropriate responses to external circumstances (*shu*) can be made (*Guanzi* 49). Schwartz succinctly summarizes this cultivation process as follows:

> Here we have something that might be called a mystical "cosmorphism" in which a finite human being comes to embody the essence of nonbeing and is able to use his gnosis to establish the [Dao-*shu*], "the methods of the *dao*," which control the human world (Schwartz 1985: 249).

If we bracket Schwartz's usages of metaphysical terms, the central idea is that the connection between humans and Dao is integral to Huang-Lao thought. Not only should human affairs correspond to Dao, they are actually grounded in Dao.[41]

The importance of personal cultivation is also reflected in the emphasis on ethical attributes for the Huang-Lao thinkers. In the Huang-Lao chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, matters of governance are frequently discussed alongside Confucian virtues (*Zhuangzi* 12, 15). The "Tian dao" chapter, for example, says:

> Therefore the men of old who made clear the great [Dao] first made Heaven clear, and the [Dao] and the Power were next: and when the [Dao] and Power were clear, Goodwill [*ren*] and Duty [*yi*] were next . . . portions and responsibilities were next . . . forms and names [*xingming*] were next . . . putting the suitable man in charge was next, inquiry and inspection were next . . . judging right or wrong was next, and when judging right or wrong was clear, reward and punishment [*shang-fa*] were next. (*Zhuangzi* 13; trans. Graham 2001: 261–62)

Interestingly, we see the two paramount Confucian ethical attributes *ren* and *yi* in the above passage. This demonstrates how Huang-Lao thinkers regarded *xingming* and rewards and punishments should be derived from certain ethical attributes. This is

[40] Roth conducted a detailed analysis of the psychological component in early Daoistic conceptions of self-cultivation in thought. For Roth, early Daoistic thought should be those of Huang-Lao instead of Lao-Zhuang. Roth first examines the psychological basis of self-cultivation in the "Nei ye" of the *Guanzi* and moves on to examine the extension of self-cultivation to the political in the two "Xin shu" chapters and the *Huainanzi* (Roth 1991a). See also a discussion on SONG Xing's emphasis on inner equanimity in Schwartz 1985: 237–42.

[41] Similar ideas about the association between personal cultivation and an understanding of Dao is also found in the *Huainanzi*. As Michael Puett has argued, the "Jingshen xun" chapter of the *Huainanzi* identifies a cultivated person as someone who is in tune with natural patterns (Puett 2004).

also evident in the *Guanzi*, there are notable attempts to ground *fa* in Confucian ethical attributes. Rites (*li* 禮), propriety (*yi* 義), uprightness (*lian* 廉), and disgrace (*chi* 恥) are identified as the "four safeguards" of a state.[42] According to "Xin shu Part I", *li* is the guided expression of appropriate feelings, *yi* is appropriateness, *fa* is the last resort to reinforce rules.[43] It is clear that, for Huang-Lao thinkers, legal measures should only be introduced by those who have ethical attributes.

Let us now revisit the claim that Huang-Lao philosophy is about operational politics. At first glance, the Huang-Lao concepts *wuwei*, *fa*, *xing*, might suggest that Huang-Lao philosophy is only concerned about political regulation but not personal cultivation. This speculation is not entirely far-fetched because there is an obvious increase in the discussions of operational politics in Huang-Lao literature. In the *Laozi*, concepts such as *wuwei*, *ziran* (spontaneity), *xu* (emptiness, vacuity), *jing* (quiescence, purity) are often discussed in terms of regulating one's own body. There is no assertion in the *Laozi* that the goal is to triumph over others; but in the *Boshu*, these concepts are discussed in terms of regulating government with no mention of nurturing the individual. For instance, in the "Shun dao" (Following Dao) treatise of *Jing* we find the reason one preserves the soft is to wait for the extremity of male that may then be taken advantage of. In the "Ci xiong" treatise, it is said that: "gains garnered through masculine conduct should not be considered good fortune, and the losses suffered due to feminine conduct should result in future rewards."[44] This textual evidence seems to suggest that the concepts of "softness" or "femininity" are transformed in Huang-Lao thought into a technique for controlling or winning over others.

Nonetheless, as the above analysis shows, Dao is the ultimate justification for all of these concepts in Huang-Lao tradition. Its practical aspect not only requires one to acknowledge this authority of Dao, it also requires the ruler to internalize and apply Dao in practice. For this reason, self-cultivation is also indispensable in the Huang-Lao tradition.

5 Conclusion

We have provided here a cursory examination of Huang-Lao thought and reflected on its syncretic nature. We have seen how key concepts in Daoism, Legalism, and Confucianism remerge in the Huang-Lao tradition with different meanings and

[42]Compare the discussion on *si wei* (four safeguards) in *Guanzi* 1 with, for example, *Analects* 1.13 and 17.16.

[43]The rules for ascending or descending to [the hall], of bowing and yielding [to others], of having degrees of honored and lowly, and the distinctions of near and distant kin, we call [*li*] . . . Relations between prince and minister, father and son, and man and man we call [*yi*] . . . [*fa*] is the means by which uniformity is produced so men will have to act as they should (*Guanzi* 36; trans. Rickett 1965: 175).

[44]"Ci xiong (Male and Female)" of *Jing*; trans. Chang and Feng 1998: 104.

implications. *Wuwei*, being a major Daoist concept, has gone through substantial renovations. Although *wuwei* pertains only to the ruler, it is only possible with an understanding of Dao. This is so because the Huang-Lao Dao is a concretized Dao that embodies order and hierarchy. To perceive the pattern(s) of Dao, one has to first cultivate the heart/mind to be *xu* (empty, vacuous) and *jing* (still, quiet). This means that the seemingly Legalist concepts *shu* (technique), *fa* (law), and *xingming* (forms and names) are all intimately connected with personal cultivation and possession of Confucian ethical attributes—*ren* and *yi*. In this light, the Huang-Lao tradition can be viewed as having incorporated elements from different strands of thought and developed a system of thought with its own distinctive features. Although there remain many controversies and uncertainties surrounding the Huang-Lao tradition, we hope to have at least sketched out the major issues into which future research can extend its investigations. These issues are critical to our understanding not only of the philosophy of Huang-Lao but also of Daoism and the development of early Chinese thought in general.

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Chapter 11
Daoism in the *Guanzi*

Harold D. Roth

1 Introduction

The *Guanzi* 管子 is a collection of texts in 76 *pian* (sections) traditionally ascribed to the seventh-century BCE statesman, GUAN Zhong 管仲, a famous prime minister who served under Duke Huan 桓公 of Qi 齊, a state on the Shandong peninsula. There is now a strong scholarly consensus, however, that the prime minister had nothing to do with the writing of this work but, rather, served as an exemplar for the kinds of statecraft advocated therein (Rickett 1993: 246–49). The original part of the collection (or "proto-*Guanzi*") likely dates to the latter half of the fourth century BCE and was a product of the philosopher-retainers who served the Qi state and who are known to history as the "Jixia 稷下Academy."[1] This assemblage of retainers, or knights (*shi* 士), representing many of the major intellectual traditions of the late Warring States period, existed for more than a century in Qi, starting in about 345 BCE, and it is their ideas that form the basis for the more than half of the *Guanzi*. Many scholars, including Allyn Rickett and KANAYA Osamu 金谷治, agree that the *Guanzi* was added to until the middle of the second century BCE

[1]It has become scholarly dogma in recent years to follow Nathan Sivin in doubting the existence of such an academy as myth. But a recent article by Andrew S. Meyer persuasively argues for the both the existence of such a "community of knights" and their decisive influence on Warring states intellectual history for a period of more than 130 years. For details see Sivin 1995: 28 and Meyer 2010–11.

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(Rickett 1985: 14–15; Kanaya 1987: 328–29).[2] Kanaya identifies four strata that date back to the origins of Jixia, when King Wei (威王) created patronage positions for intellectuals to provide advice on government, down to 122 BCE, when the court of Huainan fell.[3] They assert that some of the last chapters of the text were written under the Huainan king LIU An's patronage. For the most part, each section of the work comprises its own distinct text rather than being a distinct chapter in a unified, coherent work. So unlike the patronage texts, the *Lüshi chunqiu* (239 BCE) and the *Huainanzi* (139 BCE), the *Guanzi* is not a work whose contents were written according to an overarching plan. It is, instead, a collection of distinct works, most of which seem to have been written independently, although occasionally groups of short texts appear to be the related products of a particular intellectual tradition.

The intellectual filiations of the *Guanzi* are rather diverse. Despite the fact that it was initially classified as "Daoist" in the bibliographical section of the *History of the Former Han*, it has generally become known as a "Legalist" work, a perhaps misleading label. While it does deal primarily with political and economic thought, it eschews the harsh authoritarian policies advocated by the better-known representative of that intellectual tradition such as Lord Shang and Hanfeizi. Some of its texts do advocate ruling through a system of rewards and punishments and techniques of bureaucratic organization usually associated with these Legalist thinkers, but the work contains other texts that discuss specific economic policies dealing with money and commodities and still others that espouse Confucian and Daoist ideas. In recent years scholars, looking at the text as a whole, have argued that it should be considered a Huang-Lao work (Kanaya 1987: 301–60) or have identified which of its constitutive works should be so classified (Hu 1995). The *Guanzi* in fact contains four texts that present a cosmology of the Way and a philosophy of inner cultivation and its application to rulership that are similar to ideas found in the major works of classical Daoism, the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi*. These four texts, often collectively referred to as the "Techniques of the Mind" (*Xinshu*) texts are as follows: *Neiye* 内業 (*Inward Training*), *Xinshu shang, Xinshu xia,* 心術上, 下 (*Techniques of the Mind I and II*) *Baixin* 白心 (*The Purified Mind*).

There is a range of scholarly opinions about the dating, chronology, and authorship of the four *Xinshu* texts, but we cannot understand this without knowing their textual characteristics. *Neiye* is a collection of rhymed, tetrasyllabic verses; *Xinshu*, *shang* is an essay in eight sections that contains both a basic text of mixed verse and prose, and a prose commentary; *Xinshu*, *xia* is an original essay in seven major sections, each of which is further divided into a number of subsections, many of which are in verse. About two-thirds of the material in this text comes from the middle sections of *Neiye*. *Baixin* is an original essay in sixteen sections of mixed prose and verse. GUO Moruo 郭沫若 asserts that all four were written by the Huang-Lao thinkers SONG Xing 宋鈃 and YIN Wen 尹文 at Jixia circa 320 BCE. Because these texts share irregular rhymes with other Daoist works that originated in the

[2]The principle sources on the dating of the *Guanzi* are: Luo 1931, Haloun 1951: 85–120, van der Loon 1952: 357–393, and Rickett 1985: 14–15.

[3]For further details on the history of Jixia, see Chien 1985: 231–35, 540–74.

state of Chu 楚, Allyn Rickett thinks the four come from that region and were either brought to Jixia or incorporated into the *Guanzi* after it was transmitted out of Qi. He states that *Neiye* is the oldest of the group and dates from the fourth century BCE; the latest work in the group is the prose commentary section of *Xinshu*, *shang* (Rickett 1985: 24–7, 56–8, 69–70). Kanaya and QIU Xigui 裘錫圭 argue that these texts were written by Daoists at Jixia, TIAN Pian 田駢 and SHEN Dao 慎到 (Qiu 1980: 68–84; Kanaya 1987: 348–9). Kanaya avers that *Neiye* is derived from the two *Xinshu* texts. Despite this range of opinions, there is consensus that these works were written by thinkers history has categorized as "Daoist."

After considerable research of my own, I have determined that *Neiye* is the oldest work in the group and shares many philosophical and literary features with its younger sibling, the *Laozi* (Roth 1994: 11–16; 1999: 185–203). It is thus the oldest extant text of the classical Daoist tradition. The two *Xinshu* works are later and apply the *Neiye*'s ideas on the Way and inner cultivation to problems of government. The basic text of *Xinshu*, *shang* dates from about 250 BCE, and its commentary to the first half decade of the Han dynasty. *Xinshu*, *xia* deliberately rearranges the central verses of *Neiye* and applies them to a theory of sage rulership (Roth 1994). *Baixin* also falls into the category of an applied Daoist theory of rulership based on the philosophy and practice of the *Neiye*.

2 Neiye (Inward Training)

Inward Training is a collection of twenty-six passages of rhymed—mostly four characters/line (tetrasyllabic)—verses on the nature of the Way and its manifestations as vital essence (*jing* 精) and vital energy (*qi* 氣). It describes how an adept can follow breath cultivation practices to achieve tranquility (*jing* 靜) and build up potency (*de* 德), and by so doing directly experience these greater cosmic energies.[4] This text appears to be part of the oldest stratum of the *Guanzi* and hence was probably first written during the early days of Jixia, circa 325 BCE. However, its verse format suggests the probability of oral transmission for an unknown period prior to this.

The underlying philosophy of *Neiye* is grounded in a concept of the Way as a transcendent yet immanent, imperceptible yet graspable, universal force that shares many features of the Way found in the *Laozi*. For example, we read in Verse IV:

Clear! as though right by your side.
Vague! as though you are not going to get it.
Indiscernable! as though beyond the limitless.
The test of this is not far off:
Daily we make use of its potency.
The Way is what infuses the physical form,

[4]Other scholars divide the text into different numbers of distinct verses. For example, Gustav Haloun finds 22 distinct verses (see Riegel 1978: 143–69); MA Feibai (1990) sees fifteen. Allyn Rickett (1998: 39–55) finds 15 sections that he further subdivides into an additional 18 sections. For further details, see Roth 1999: 12–15.

Yet people are unable to fix it in place.
It goes forth but does not return,
It comes back but does not stay.
Silent! none can hear its sound.
Suddenly stopping! it abides within the mind.
Obscure! you do not see its form.
Surging forth! it arises with me.
We do not see its form,
We do not hear its sound,
Yet we can perceive an order to its accomplishments.
We call it "the Way."[5]

Neiye differs from the *Laozi* in the extent to which it explicitly emphasizes that this Way can be directly experienced by human beings through a deliberate program of what I have called inner cultivation:

Verse V:

The Way has no fixed position;
It abides within the excellent mind.
When the mind is tranquil and the vital breath is regular,
The Way can thereby be halted.
That Way is not distant from us;
When people attain it they are sustained
That Way is not separated from us;
When people accord with it they are harmonious.
Therefore: Concentrated! As if you could be roped together with it.
Indiscernable! As if beyond all locations.
The true state of that Way:
How could it be conceived of and pronounced upon?
Cultivate your mind, make your thoughts tranquil,
And the Way can thereby be grasped.[6]

Neiye strongly recommends a regimen for grasping the elusive Way: cultivate inner tranquility and potency through a practice of concentrating on the vital breath (*qi*):

Verse XVII

For all [to practice] this Way
You must coil, you must contract,
You must uncoil, you must expand,
You must be firm, you must be regular [in the practice].
Hold fast to this to this excellent [practice]; do not let go of it.
Chase away excessive [perception]; abandon trivial [thoughts].
And when you reach its ultimate limit
You will return to the Way and its Potency.[7]

[5] Roth (1999: 53–54).

[6] Roth 1999: 54–55.

[7] Roth 1999: 78–79.

The consistent practice of breathing awareness while seated in a fixed position that *Neiye* refers to as "aligning the four limbs," "aligning the physical form," and keeping the body firm and unmoving, produces gradually increasing degrees of tranquility and the concomitant reduction in emotions, thoughts, perceptions, and desires that are necessary to empty out the mind and grasp or to return to the Way (Roth 1999: 104–12). *Neiye* speaks of these techniques as a concentration or refinement of the vital breath and associates them with a high degree of mental focus, sometimes referring to this in a phrase that will become important to many later forms of Daoist and Buddhist meditation: "to focus on the One and cast off disturbances" *shouyi er qi wan-ke* 守一而棄萬苛.[8]

According to *Neiye*, as one improves in these practices and gradually brings the Way to halt more and more often in one's awareness, there are a related series of physical and psychological benefits that accrue, including health and vitality, suppleness, freely circulating vital breath, mental calmness, equanimity, balance, and repose. These yield a mind that is well-ordered, stable, and aligned, and that has developed enhanced perceptual acuity. Thus the adept is able to: "mirror things with great purity; perceive things with great clarity."[9]

Neiye also presents an interesting set of ideas that seem to provide almost a physiological substrate to the Way and that underlie its theories of inner cultivation. The text speaks of the vital essence (*jing*) in terms that are very similar to how it conceives of the Way. For example:

Verses I and II:

The vital essence of all things:
It is this that brings them to life.
It generates the five grains below
And becomes the constellated stars above. . . .

II

Therefore this vital energy is:
Bright!—as if ascending the heavens;
Dark!—as if entering an abyss;
Vast!—as if dwelling in an ocean;
Lofty!—as if dwelling on a mountain peak.
Therefore this vital energy
Cannot be halted by force,
Yet can be secured by potency.
Cannot be summoned by speech,
Yet can be welcomed by the awareness.
Reverently hold onto it and do not lose it:
This is called "developing potency."
When potency develops and wisdom emerges,
The myriad things will, to the last one, be grasped.

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[8]Roth 1999: 92–93. For a study of the occurrence of this phrase, *shouyi*, see Livia Kohn, "Guarding the One: Concentrative Meditation in Taoism," in Kohn 1989: 125–58.

[9]Roth 1999: 76–77.

The vital essence is understood to be a highly refined and concentrated form of the vital breath or vital energy (*qi*). While it occurs outside human beings as stars, and the seminal properties of all phenomena, it also can be generated by adepts through inner cultivation practices that produce tranquility and generate potency. Because it shares some predicates with the Way, some scholar have postulated that, in *Neiye*, vital essence is really synonymous with the Way (Ma 1990: 8; Zhao 1989: 122). While *Neiye* shares a cosmology and inner cultivation practice with the *Laozi*, this theory of vital energy and vital essence differentiate it and show a striking similarity with later Daoist self cultivation practices. Another such similarity is in the idea of the spirit (*shen* 神), which *Neiye* states resides within the mind but which can only be reached by "diligently cleaning out its lodging place" (*jingchu qi she* 敬除其舍) through inner cultivation practice.[10] While beyond human conception, it is nonetheless the source of psychological order and wisdom about worldly phenomena, and it is associated with a rarefied form of vital essence.

3 Xinshu, Shang (Techniques of the Mind I)

Xinshu, *shang* is devoted to demonstrating how its prescribed methods of inner cultivation give the ruler the means to respond spontaneously and harmoniously to any situation that may arise. Its methods are largely similar to those found in *Neiye* and include limiting lusts and desires, emptying the mind of thoughts and precedents, and developing a profound tranquility. It is divided into two parts: the first is a series of authoritative statements, mostly in rhymed verse, and the second (and longer part) is a line-by-line commentary on these verses. While there is no scholarly consensus on this, the prevailing opinion is that the first part dates from the mid-third century BC and that the second is an early Han work from about 180 BCE (Roth 1994: 12–13).

According to *Xinshu, shang,* the universe contains precise homologies between its different levels, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. If a ruler is able to cultivate "non-action" (*wuwei*) and so govern his own person, he will be able to extend this to the state:

I [Basic Text][11]

The position of the mind in the body
[Is analogous to] the position of the ruler [in the state].
The functioning of the nine apertures

[10] Roth 1999: 70–71.

[11] 13/1a5–8. All *Guanzi* references are to the *Sibu congkan* (SBCK) edition. Textual emendations are all taken from Guo et al. 1955: 633–49. For details on each of them see Guo et al. 1955, which collects the text critical comments of the major Qing and Republican scholars in addition to the author-editors. In subsequent notes I will only give the name of the scholar whose emendation I follow. All translations given here are my own.

[Is analogous to] the responsibilities of the officials.
When the mind keeps to its Way,
The nine apertures will comply with their inherent patterns (*li* 理).[12]
When lusts and desires fill the mind to overflowing,
The eyes do not see colors, the ears do not hear sounds.
When the one above departs from the Way,[13]
The ones below will be lose sight of their tasks.
Therefore we say, "the techniques of the mind are to take no action and yet control the apertures."[14]

For *Xinshu*, *shang* the enlightened ruler's way of governing the state is also a manifestation of *wuwei*. It is to not interfere with one's officials, just as the mind does not interfere with the spontaneous functioning of the perceptual organs. This spontaneous functioning is itself guided by its own inherent patterns (*li*) that derive from its individual nature and its relationship to the whole body. However, "patterns" in English has a stronger determinative force than does *li.* A pattern is a regular form or order (e.g., behavioral pattern) and suggests that things or activities must conform to it exactly with little room for individual variation. *Li* admits of freedom within structure; in third and second century BCE Daoist works, *li* guides the spontaneous responses that develop from the natures of things. Because of *li*, sages can accord with the Way and practice non-action—essentially here nonintervention—and the cosmos will function smoothly. The sages' facility to cleave to the Way can only be attained through practicing the "techniques of the mind," in other words, the inner cultivation practices found in *Neiye*:

III [Basic Text]

The Way is not distant yet it is difficult to reach its limit.
It dwells together with human beings yet it is difficult to find.
If you empty out your desires
The numinous mind will enter its lodging.
If you sweep out what is impure,
The spirit will stay in its dwelling.[15]

The image of inner cultivation practice as sweeping out the impurities of the mind to allow the spirit to enter in *Xinshu*, *shang* is strikingly similar to the image of "diligently cleaning out lodging place" of the spirit in *Neiye* and demonstrates a close relationship between the two works. This is further demonstrated by the commentary on this passage:

Only the sage is able to find this empty Way. Therefore the text says:

"It dwells together with human beings yet it is difficult to find."

---

[12]In texts of this period, *li* 理 is often translated as "patterns" or "inherent patterns." This idea comes from its initial use to represent the faint patterns in jade.

[13]Deleting *gu yue* (therefore it says) at the start of the sentence, following many scholars.

[14]Moving this sentence here from a position in the comment section (just before the final line) to which it was erroneously displaced, following GUO Moruo.

[15]SBCK13/1a10–12.

What the sage controls is the concentration of his Vital Breath.
When you get rid of desires you become expansive.
When you are expansive, you become tranquil.
When you are tranquil, then your Vital Breath will be concentrated.
When it is concentrated then [your mind] will attain complete solitude.
When it attains complete solitude, it will be illumined.
When it is illumined, then it will be numinous.
The spirit is the most honored one.
Therefore, if the building is not cleaned out,
Then the honored one will not lodge there.
Therefore the text says:

"If it is not pure then the spirit will not dwell there."[16]

Concentrating vital breath to attain tranquility is one of the essential practices of inner cultivation. In addition, the sorites-style elaboration of the stages of breath meditation here is found in a number of early and often overlooked sources of classical Daoism, including certain essays in the *Lüshi chunqiu* and in the so-called Huang-Lao *Boshu* 黃老帛書 (Roth 1997). These sources lend additional support to the argument that the oldest texts of classical Daoism were produced in lineages of teachers and students who followed this distinctive form of meditative practice.

Xinshu, shang not only shows definite links to *Neiye*, it also borrows ideas from other intellectual lineages of the late Warring States period. For example, the text demonstrates familiarity with the Nominalist ideas that all phenomena have inherent names:

Section VII: Basic Text

Things inherently have forms; forms inherently have names.
Persons who match names [and forms], call them Sages.
Therefore, one must know the unspoken word and the non-acting deed.[17]
Only then will one know how the Way sorts things out ....[18]

Only self-cultivated sages have arrived at the unique ability to clearly perceive the forms of all living things and the patterns and shapes of all human situations also can fashion well-defined names and appropriate categories of behavior for each and every one of them. The commentary section to this basic text explains why in Daoist terms:

... The unspoken words [of sages] are [spontaneously] responsive.

To be responsive is to take others just as they are. Take control of their names; pay attention to how they develop.[19] *This is the Way to be responsive.*[20]

[16] SBCK 13/2b7–10.

[17] Adding *zhiyan* (words) after *buyan* (unspoken), following WANG Niansun.

[18] SBCK 13/1b12–2a3.

[19] Deleting *ying* (respond) as an erroneous insertion, following WANG Yinzhi.

[20] Reading *zhi* (it, of, this) as *ci* (this), following many scholars.

The Way of non-acting is to adapt to [other things]. Adapting means that nothing is added to them and nothing is subtracted from them. To make the name by adapting to the form, this is the technique of adaptation.[21]

Names are what the Sages makes use of to sort out all living things.

The basic text and commentary to this section demonstrate an interesting Daoist-based syncretism. Sages who practice non-action (*wuwei*) can, without reflection, spontaneously respond (*ying* 應) to all things, take them as they are, assign their names and then essentially leave things be, adapting (*yin* 因) to them without asserting their own individual viewpoint. This is how sages sort through things, determine their relative value and priority.

In another section *Xinshu*, *shang* places the cultivation of the ruler in a greater cosmic context and defines a number of key terms associated with the establishment of good order in human society. Among the terms so defined are the Confucian notions of the rites (*li* 禮), "rightness" (*yi* 義), and the and Legalist concept of "laws" (*fa* 法). The way in which they are defined provides an excellent example of the syncretic use of ideas from other intellectual traditions redefined and reorganized within a cosmology of the Way:

V. [Basic Text]

What is empty and formless, we call the Way.[22]
What transforms and nurtures the myriad things, we call Potency.
What is involved in the interactions between ruler and official, father and son, and among all human beings, we call Rightness (i).
What determines the various levels of superior or inferior address, taking or yielding, honoring or dishonoring and of familiarity and distance in relationships, we call the Rites (li).[23]
What subjects things both small and great to a uniform way of execution and extermination, prohibition and punishment, we call the Law (fa).[24]

V. [Commentary]:

The Way of Heaven is empty and formless.[25] *Empty and so it does not bend; formless and so there is nothing to oppose it. There is nothing to oppose it.*[26] *Therefore it flows everywhere through all living things and it does not alter.*

[21] Responsiveness refers to the sage's ability to spontaneously perceive things "just as they are" and to, without any forethought, react to them in a completely appropriate and harmonious manner. Adaptation refers to the sages' ability to go along with other things and not force them into a predetermined mould. These are cardinal qualities of the Daoist sage in this text and other related ones that some believe are part of the Huang-Lao tradition. For details see Roth 1991: 599–650.

[22] Emending *wu* (nothing) to *er* (and), following WANG Niansun.

[23] Emending *zhi* (possessive particle) to *you* (have) following DING Shihan.

[24] SBCK 13/1b2–5. Emending *wei* (not yet) to *da* (great), following GUO Moruo.

[25] Reading *qi* (its) as *er* (and), following XU Weiyü.

[26] Emending *wei* (position) to *di* (oppose), following WANG Yinzhi.

Potency is the lodging place of the Way. Things attain it and are thereby born. The living attain it and thereby understand the vital essence of the Way.[27] *Therefore "Potency" is to attain. "To attain" means to attain the means by which things are so.*[28]

It is what does not act that is called the Way. It is what lodges [the Way], that is called Potency. Therefore, there is no gap between the Way and Potency. Therefore to speak of them is not to separate them. That there is no gap between them addresses how Potency lodges the Way.[29]

"Rightness" means that each [person] keeps to what is suitable (yi 宜). "Rites" are what adapt to the genuine feelings of human beings, go along with the inherent patterns (li) of what is right for them, and then creates limitations and embellishments. Therefore, "rites" mean "to have inherent patterns." Inherent patterns are what clarify [interpersonal] distinctions in order to illustrate the meaning of rightness. Therefore, rites are derived from rightness; rightness is derived from inherent patterns; and inherent patterns are derived from the Way.[30]

Laws are the means by which [all people of] the same generation are made to conform.[31] *Therefore execution and extermination, prohibition and punishment are used to unify them. Therefore, human endeavors are supervised by laws; laws are derived from political authority (qüan); and political authority is derived from the Way.*[32]

To summarize then, *Xinshu*, *shang* presents the core ideas of government led by sages who have cultivated themselves according to the apophatic meditative practices advocated in *Neiye*. Such sages attain a tranquility free of emotions, desires, and hence subjective bias, herein symbolized by the *Laozian* notions of emptiness and non-action, neither of which is emphasized in *Neiye*. (This is some of the evidence that both the basic text and commentary of *Xinshu*, *shang* were written after the *Laozi*, hence post-250 BCE). Applying these to government, sage rulers are able to accurately ascertain and utilize the inherent names of things and the underlying patterns through which all things interact with one another; they are thereby able to determine suitable activities for the people and rites for the expression of human emotions. Such dispassionate sage rulers are also able to employ laws with which to control the populace, but ultimately all these laws derive from the political authority of sage-rulers who in turn derive authority from their realization of the Way. This is nicely summarized in the final section of the basic text:

VIII [Basic Text]

Most people can be executed because they dislike death.
They can be harmed because they like profit.
But noble persons (*junzi* 君子) *are not enticed by likes*
Nor oppressed by dislikes.

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[27] Deleting *zhi* (knowledge), following ZHANG Wenhu.

[28] Following the word order suggested by GUO Moruo.

[29] Restoring *wu* (no) before *jian* (gap) and deleting *li* (pattern), following WANG Yinzhi.

[30] Emending *yin* (adapt) to *qü* (derive) based on parallels in the previous sentences. Also emending *yi* (suitable) to Dao (Way), following GUO Moruo.

[31] Emending *qü* (derive) to *shih* (generation), following YÜ Yüe.

[32] SBCK 13/3a2–3b1.

Calm and quiescent, they act without effort,
And they discard wisdom and precedent.
Their responses are not contrived.
Their movements are not chosen.
The mistake lies in intervening directly oneself.
The fault lies in altering and transforming things.
Therefore the ruler who has the Way:
At rest seems to be without knowledge, and
In response to things seems to fit together with them.
This is the Way of stillness and adaptation.[33]

Thus *Xinshu*, *shang* argues that there is an intricate relationship between the inner cultivation of tranquility in rulers and the development of a facility and the authority to govern. This cultivation of a balance between inner quality and outer virtue is the "Way of tranquility and adaptation" (*jingyin zhi Dao* 靜因之道*)*, a catchphrase that finds striking parallels in the last stratum of the *Zhuangzi*'s "in stillness a sage, in motion a king" (*ching er sheng, dong er wang;* ch. 13) and "inner sageliness and outer kingliness"(*neisheng, waiwang;* ch. 33). A. C. Graham refers to this stratum as the "Syncretist Chapters," and Liu Xiaogan links them to the Huang-Lao Daoists (Graham 1986: 313–21; Liu 1993: 121–34). While Graham's and Liu's identifications differ, both accurately note the Daoist-based syncretism of these *Zhuangzi* chapters, an intellectual position quite similar to that of other major sources of later classical Daoism, including the *Huainanzi*.

4 Xinshu, Xia (Techniques of the Mind, II)

Xinshu, *xia* is a prose essay in seven major sections, each divided into varying numbers of subsections, many of which are in verse. Its principal theme is the application of inner cultivation techniques to rulership. About two-thirds of the material in this text comes from the middle section of *Neiye* and the remainder consists of prose that explicates its political application. Above I noted that it contains a deliberate restatement and rearrangement of the *Neiye* material and was thus compiled at a later date, which I estimate to be in the latter half of the third century BCE, at approximately the same time that the commentarial sections of its companion work, *Xinshu, shang*, were written (Roth 1994). Although an analysis of how material from *Neiye* was adapted is significant for determining the chronology of the four Daoist works in the *Guanzi*, philosophically it would add little if anything of significance. The intimate connections that can be shown between *Neiye* and the two *Xinshu* texts suggests the possibility of their having been produced in the same intellectual lineage. Certainly the text and practices advocated within *Neiye* were known to the authors of the *Xinshu* texts.

[33] SBCK 13/2a3–7.

5 Baixin (The Purified Mind)

The fourth and final work in this traditional grouping is *Baixin*, which has the same general interest in Daoistically cultivated rulership, but seems to be textually distinct from the other three. While it certainly shares ideas and orientations with the other three texts, its locutions are so unique that some scholars would not even classify it with them (Kanaya 1987: 265). Its sixteen sections seems to be less a logically linked series of arguments such as we find in the two *Xinshu* texts and seem more a collection of sayings or teachings of a master taken down by pupils. In addition, the title of this collection does not occur within it, nor is there any set of ideas that approximates it. Its advice on sage rulership is more general than that of *Xinshu, shang* and it contains little of the concrete practices of inner cultivation found in the other three texts. Nonetheless, it shares their cosmology of the Way, and at certain points expresses it with a more rhapsodic beauty:

Section IX

Something binds the Heavens together; something supports the Earth.
If nothing bound the Heavens together then the Heavens would fall down.
If nothing supported the Earth then the Earth would collapse.
Now this something that binds together and holds up, how much more does it do this for human beings? Humans do have something that regulates them.
It can be compared to the movements of the drumming of thunder. Since it cannot arouse itself there is something that arouses it. Now what is this Something? It is like this:

If you look for it you cannot see it.
If you listen for it you cannot hear it.
It is spread throughout the world, filling it up,
Yet we do not see how it is crammed in.
It gathers in the skin and flesh,
And is visible in the complexion.
If we try to track its comings and goings.
None can understand its timing.
It is spread out through the square Earth.
It swirls throughout the circular Heavens.
Swirling and swirling! None can grasp its Gateway.
Thus the mouth, because of it, makes sounds.
The ears, because of it, hear (sounds).
The eyes have it for vision.
The hands have it for grasping.
The feet have it for treading.
These things all have something they conceal within.[34]

This passage calls to mind two other early sources on the cosmology of the Way, *Daoyüan* 道原 ("The Source That is the Way") from the Mawangdui Huang-Lao *Silk Manuscripts* and the similarly titled "Yüandao" 原道 ("Originating in the Way")

[34]SBCK 13/8b1–9. The section divisions are my own.

from the *Huainanzi*. At other times it presents the Way in terms more reminiscent of the three other texts:

Section XIII

The Way is great like the Heavens;
It is vast like the Earth;
It is heavy like a stone;
It is light like a feather.
It is that which the people make use of,
Yet those who know this are few.
How near is the Way, yet no one is able to work with it!
To discard the near and pursue the far, what a waste of strength![35]

The idea that the Way is "near at hand" makes it possible for people to directly experience it. *Baixin* closes with two sections that provide advice on how to do this, which are as specific as this work gets. Here is the first:

Section XV

Therefore I say: "If I wish to care for my own self,
I must first know my true disposition (qing 情)."
Contemplate all within the six directions
In order to examine your inner self (*neishen* 內身).
If by this you come to understand the inner image (*xiang* 象)*[of the Way].*
You will know how to actualize your own true disposition.
When you know how to actualize your own true disposition
You will thereby know how to nurture life (*yangsheng* 養生).
Moving to left or right, front or back, you will always return to this place.
Grasp this symbol; accord with this inner image.
And respectfully welcome whatever comes.
Now no matter what comes,
You must follow this Way:
Do not shift from it, do not add to it
And your allotted years will be long.
Harmonize things by returning to your center
And your body and nature will nourish each other.[36]

This section advises contemplating all within the external world and realizing how its basis in the Way is the same as your own. You can then understand that acting in accord with the Way is your basic disposition, and you will be able to use it as your guide through the vicissitudes of life. Doing this will also allow you to attain harmony in your actions and allow "your body and your natural tendencies to nourish each other." This is the process of "nurturing life," a phrase found in many classical and later Daoist sources; it epitomizes the practice of inner cultivation.

These four *Xinshu* texts in the *Guanzi* provide important and often overlooked testimony to the early development of Daoist thought, especially when we can see them independent of the beliefs of the Chinese literati tradition that holds the *Laozi*

[35]SBCK 13/10/9–10.

[36]SBCK 13/10a11–b5.

and “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi* as the sole foundational works of classical Daoism. These four texts show clear signs of having been produced within one or two related master-disciple lineages that followed the same inner cultivation practices I have argued underlie the philosophy of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* (Roth 1999: 173–85). Indeed, there are distinct literary similarities between the former work and these texts, as the linguist William Baxter has pointed out:

> For our purposes, the similarities in form among these texts are as important as the similarities of ideas, for they show that the *Laozi* is not a text in a vacuum, it represents a genre of which there are other examples.... A reasonable conjecture would be that the *Laozi* and [these] similar texts emerged from a distinctive tradition of philosophical verse with strong oral elements and little concept of individual authorship. (Baxter 1998: 242, 249)

This is such a distinctive form of verse (tetrasyllabic, rhymed, often irregularly) that I have argued it constitutes its own distinctive genre, early “Daoist wisdom poetry” (Roth 1999: 192). While the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* later came to be regarded as the foundational works of Daoist philosophy, these four *Xinshu* texts, at the time they were written, were perhaps every bit as significant, even though they did not survive the vagaries and judgments of history. As Baxter so well put it,

> Of course these *Kuan-tzu* chapters ... failed to reach the status of “classic” (*ching*) and from a modern point of view they may seem far less important than the *Lao-tzu*.... But the compilers of these (*Kuan-tzu*) texts could not have known in advance that the *Lao-tzu* would win out in such spectacular fashion. If we wish to clarify the early history of the genre which the *Lao-tzu* represents, these other texts could turn out to be as important as the *Lao-tzu* itself. (Baxter 1998: 242–43)

Indeed, the picture of classical Daoist philosophy is not complete without taking these four *Xinshu* texts from the *Guanzi* into account. I have argued that they help support the theory that classical works of Daoist philosophy were produced in a number of distinct, perhaps regional, master-disciple lineages, all of whom practiced similar methods of breathing meditation, “inner cultivation,” that enabled them to personally and directly access the principle or force that they regarded as the very source of the cosmos, the ineffable Way (Roth 1994: 34–37).

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Chapter 12
"Pheasant Cap Master"

Carine Defoort

Heguanzi (鶡冠子, third century BCE) is a treatise of 19 chapters attributed to the "Pheasant Cap Master." The treatise suffered an eclipse of about 12 centuries—from the early ninth till the late twentieth century—during which it was seldom read and almost never mentioned in academic discussions of early Chinese philosophy.[1] But ideas for which *Heguanzi* gained recognition before and after this period of neglect—the vicissitudes of political ambition and frustration, the veneration of the One and its relation to multiplicity, and the nature of Heaven's order and transcendence—still stand as pillars of its thought. I will discuss these three themes as the core of *Heguanzi*'s contribution to early Chinese philosophy.

Political frustration, the oldest of these themes, seems to have first captured the attention of intellectuals in the Tang dynasty. At the end of his life, the great Tang poet, DU Fu (712–770), compared himself to the Pheasant Cap Master when expressing his political despair and loneliness: "My whole life I've been a Heguanzi. I sigh about the world and wear deerskin" 生年鶡冠子, 歎世鹿皮.[2] The image of a frustrated advisor and rough hermit was perhaps a dominant view of Heguanzi until the Tang scholar LIU Zongyuan (773–819) trashed the book. Being fond of the *Owl Rhapsody* written by the Han scholar JIA Yi (201–169), which expresses feelings of frustration and fatalism, Liu says:

[1]Exceptions in Western academia are Wieger 1917, Forke 1927/1964, and Hackman 1927.

[2]The poem "Deaf," written in the year 767. See von Zach 1952, II: 641, "Mein ganzes Leven lang war ich ein zweiter Ho-kuan-tze [. . .]; ich beklage die Welt und lebe wie einst der Alte mit dem Hirschfell (zurüchgezogen in den Bergen)." In the year 770 Du Fu wrote in the poem "Made in a Boat on the Small Hanshi Festival," "Alone and lonely, leaning on the table, I wear a pheasant cap." See von Zach 1952, II: 794.

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> When I read Jia Yi's *Owl Rhapsody* I admired its verses. Yet scholars thought it was entirely taken from *Heguanzi*. In my comings and goings in the capital, I sought a copy of *Heguanzi* but did not find one. It was only when I arrived in Changsha that for the first time I got a hold of this treatise. I read it. It consisted entirely of base and shallow statements. Only the bits (Jia) Yi had quoted were beautiful. Of the rest, nothing was acceptable. I think an amateur forged this treatise and he, instead, took the *Owl Rhapsody* to embellish it with literary style. It cannot be true that Yi took from it.
>
> 余讀賈誼鵩賦. 嘉其辭而學者以為盡出鶡冠子. 余往來京師求鶡冠子無所見. 至長沙始得其書. 讀之盡鄙淺言也. 唯誼所引用為美. 餘無可者. 吾意好事者偽為其書反用鵩賦以文飾之. 非誼有所取之. (*Bian Heguanzi* in *Liu Hedongji* 4.10–11)

Other studies followed, most critical of *Heguanzi*, until the discovery in 1973 of four silk manuscripts (the Huang-Lao *Boshu*) in a tomb at Mawangdui, which were remarkably similar to *Heguanzi* in language and thought. Because of this discovery, together with changing expectations concerning the authenticity and authorship of ancient Chinese texts, there has been a revival of *Heguanzi* studies in the last decades of the twentieth century. At this point, two other themes—"veneration of the One" and "the model of Heaven"—came to the fore in *Heguanzi* studies. Many scholars have noted that this treatise stands out for its reflections on unity and its veneration of the One (*yi*).[3] Whether in politics, astronomy, or cosmology, the Pheasant Cap Master's "One" is the axis around which everything revolves and the inexhaustible source of energetic order.

This image relates to the third central theme in *Heguanzi* studies, namely the regularity and reliability of Heaven (*tian*). In early Chinese texts Heaven often symbolizes an entity that transcends humans: not only because it stretches high above our heads, but also because, according to some, it sends down mandates and calamities, or because it is an impressive model of order and regularity. Modern scholars studying the early masters have wondered exactly how transcendent Heaven was and how absolute its order. Agreeing with Marcel Granet's claim that the early Chinese did not think of it in terms of divine law, Joseph Needham nevertheless searched for passages in the classical corpus that would allow one to translate *fa* as "law" in the sense of "laws of nature." This aroused his interest in some "strangely interesting passages" in the *Pheasant Cap Master* (Needham 1956: 547). Since the discovery of the silk manuscripts identified with Huang-Lao at Mawangdui, many scholars have argued that the treatise does indeed contain such a concept of order.

A coherent presentation of these three themes would be an adequate introduction to Pheasant Cap Master's philosophy were it not for the many complexities and problems involved in its interpretation. In recent studies, some scholars have been so eager to defend the *Heguanzi* against its traditional dismissal that they have overplayed its coherence, authenticity, comprehensiveness, and chronological priority in relation to other texts. But many uncertainties surround this treatise, and its text is often incomprehensible due to corruptions or idiosyncratic terminology. This presentation will therefore begin with (1) an overview of Heguanzi, as a person

[3]See, among others, Wieger 1917: 248, Forke 1927/1964: 530, Graham 1989: 509, Xing 1995: 338–343, Ding 1996: 26.

and book; then turn to (2) its textual complexities and (3) general "Daoist" content; and finally move towards what I would identify as (4) the specific nexus of ideas that characterize the Pheasant Cap Master's thought.

1 Heguanzi as Person and Book

Since its reevaluation after the Mawangdui discovery, a considerable part of *Heguanzi* scholarship has focused on the provenance and dates of the person Heguanzi. As for his provenance, the current consensus, based on administrative terms, language, terminology, rhyme, and parallels with other sources (among them the Huang-Lao *Boshu*), confirms the early Han view that the Pheasant Cap Master hailed from Chu.[4] While some scholars further specify that he was from the Huainan region in western Chu,[5] others have pointed out revealing connections with alternative states, mostly Zhao.[6] The consensus concerning Heguanzi's dates has settled around the second half of the third century BCE, not only because the book in general exhibits ideas that are typical for the unification drive of the late Warring States era, but also because of hints at the mismanagement by the ruler of a large but failing state (presumably Chu) in chapter 7, and the mention of one datable event (242 BCE) in chapter 12, the victory of general Pang Xuan of Zhao.[7] Respect for the taboo of *zhèng* shows that the received version was at least partly redacted under Qin rule.[8]

In relation to these discussions, three points should be kept in mind. First, all the information ever provided on the presumed author(s) is derived from no other source than the book itself; and, like the *Laozi*, the *Heguanzi* is remarkably sparse in its concrete information. Second, academic attempts to identify Heguanzi, Pang Xuan, and other members of the Pang family are often inspired by the questionable belief that everyone mentioned in the book can be consistently identified with actual historical figures. We should keep in mind that ideas and sayings may have been attributed to figures who cannot be accurately historically identified. And third, speculation about the dates and provenance of the author(s) are closely related to other textual matters, such as the possibility of multiple-authorship (e.g., by a master and his disciples), commentarial intrusions, conflation of two sources, and the direction of borrowing in the case of *Heguanzi* passages that also occur in other early sources.

[4]Ban Gu was the first to identify Heguanzi as a man from Chu. See *Hanshu* 30.1730. See also Tan 1986: 57, Li 1983: 56, Cao 1988: 80.

[5]See Sun 2001: 93–95.

[6]See e.g., Qian 1986: 484–85, Cao 1988: 80, Wells 2007, Yeung 2007: 31.

[7]See Xu 2005: 90–94. A minority of scholars think that it is a Han treatise. See Hosokawa 1979: 11–13, Chen 1980: 224, Du 1984: 53.

[8]正 was the personal name of the First Emperor (259–210). The use of *duàn* (端) for *zhèng* (正 and 政) is most obvious in chapters 1, 2 and 15. See Defoort 1997: 24–25, 217.

The book *Heguanzi,* while promoting a philosophy of unity, is itself an example of variety in more than one sense. The variance in content, more fully treated below, has caused suspicion about the book's authorship and coherence. The length of its chapters ranges from extremely short (only 135 characters in chapter 3) to rather long (chapter 9 contains 2,404 characters). A distinction is generally made between its seven dialogue and 12 essay chapters, while further differences within these two groups can be identified. Among the dialogue chapters, five portray Pangzi in a staged conversation, asking advice from Master Heguan. These are chapter 7, "Surpassed from Nearby" (*Jin die* 近迭)[9]; chapter 8, "Measuring the Myriad Things" (*Duo wan* 度萬); chapter 9, "Kingly Blade" (*Wang fu* 王鈇); chapter 14, "Military Policy" (*Bing zheng* 兵政); and chapter 15, "Learning" (*Xuewen* 學問). The disciple, Pangzi, is generally considered to be General Pang Xuan from Zhao, who defeated Yan in 242 BCE and led the campaign of the allied states against Qin one year later. This general is the common link between the five dialogue chapters and the two remaining dialogues, namely, chapter 16, "Worthies of the Age" (*Shi xian* 世賢) and chapter 19, "King Wuling" (*Wuling wang* 武靈王). In the former, Pang Xuan gives advice to King Daoxiang of Zhao (r. 244–236); in the latter somebody called Pang Huan (perhaps also Pang Xuan)[10] teaches King Wuling of Zhao (r. 325–299). While Heguanzi is not mentioned, the Pangs act as masters to the kings of Zhao. This is one of the reasons why many scholars have cast doubt on the authenticity of these two chapters. The suspicion that the current *Heguanzi* is a conflation of different texts is sometimes expanded to other chapters and inspired by the fact that the *Hanshu* mentions lost Pang Xuan treatises.[11]

There is also considerable variety among the 12 essay chapters. First, chapters 10 and 11, "Supreme Flood" (*Tai hong* 泰鴻) and "Supreme Indistinctness" (*Tai lu* 泰錄)[12] belong together and may originally have constituted one chapter. As the titles suggest, they share an interest in the floodlike origin of things and, more importantly, they contain a long dialogue between Supreme Majesty (Tai Huang) and Supreme One (Tai Yi), in which the latter concludes his answer at the end of chapter 11 to a set of questions initiated by the former at the beginning of chapter

[9] Or "Arms Surpassed" if we emend 近 (near) to 兵 (arms). 近 does not occur in the chapter, which talks about an army (兵) being surpassed before even starting to fight.

[10] The commentary remarks that one edition has "PANG Xuan" instead of "PANG Huan." The alternatives mentioned in the commentary often seem superior to the received version. LU Dian is scrupulous in not changing the edition but mentioning variants in his commentary. See Defoort 1997: 57–59.

[11] See Graham 1989: 503. Aside from chapters 16 and 19, WU Guang (1985: 155) also rejects the first part of chapter 12. In *Hanshu* 30.1739 and 1757, two PANG Xuan chapters were listed under "Diplomats" (*zongheng*) and three among "Tactics and Strategy" (*quan mou*). Apparently a military *Heguanzi* treatise, under "Tactics and Strategy" was excised by BAN Gu (see *Hanshu* 30.1757).

[12] The character 錄 (record) does not occur in chapter 11, but the expression *lulu* 錄錄 (indistinct) occurs in chapter 10:14/4 describing things as they just come into being. Hence my translation of the title.

10.[13] Immediately following are chapters 12 and 13, "Arms of the Age" (*Shi bing* 世兵) and "Complete Knowledge" (*Bei zhi* 備知). These are also sometimes read together as promoting primitivism,[14] although chapter 12 complicates matters by consisting of two very different parts.[15] Next, chapters 17 and 18, "Heaven's Beam" (*Tian quan* 天權) and "Able to (act as) Heaven" (*Neng tian* 能天) may also have a special relation: They are both relatively incomprehensible—perhaps due to textual corruption or cryptic content—and pitched between the two most problematic chapters (the dialogue chapters 16 and 19, in which the person Heguanzi does not figure), which makes some scholars suspicious about them, too.[16] The five remaining essays are chapter 1, "Broad Selection" (*Bo xuan* 博選); chapter 2, "Manifesting Hopes" (*Zhu xi* 著希); chapter 3, "Procedure by Night" (*Ye xing* 夜行); chapter 4, "Heaven's Model" (*Tian ze* 天則); chapter 5, "Circular Flow" (*Huan liu* 環流); and chapter 6, "Starting-point of the Way" (*Dao duan* 道端). Several of these share long passages with other early sources and have been studied in relation to them.

2 Textual Complexities

Interpretation of Heguanzi's thought is seriously hindered by the text's complexity. Even those scholars who, unlike LIU Zongyuan, were impressed or intrigued by it, did not deny its corruption. The Tang scholar, HAN Yu (768–824), for instance, thought that "after reading its expressions three times, I felt sorry that its characters were deficient and corrupt" 余三讀其辭而悲之文字脱繆 (*Du Heguanzi* 11.15b). The Song commentator, LU Dian (1042–1102), whose commentary is attached to the received version in all existing complete editions, agreed:

> Often, it seems like one who, scattered and confused, has no home. But its strange expressions and mysterious meanings are also numerous. ... The instances where the wording is deficient, corrupt, and impossible to check are many.
>
> 時若散亂而無家者. 然其言旨而有也 [...] 文字繆不可考者多矣. (*He guan zi xu* 序)

As a final example, Joseph Needham (1900–1995) learned about the *Heguanzi* from Gustav Haloun (1898–1951) only a few days before the latter's death. "I had telephoned him to ask a question about that strange book the *Ho Kuan Tzu*, and he had descanted impromptu for a quarter of an hour on the complexities of its

[13]Since the two chapters are one long dialogue framed in an essay, they are not considered dialogue chapters. For the argument that they originally formed one chapter, see Huang 2002: 5.

[14]Graham (1989: 521) describes them as exposing primitivist ideas fitting in the interregnum between Qin and Han.

[15]See e.g., Li 2003: 21–28.

[16]Neugebauer (1986: 23–37) rejects chapters 14–19; Ōgata (1982: 64) rejects chapters 12, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

composition. It is distressing indeed that I was not able to have his criticism on a single page of the present work" (Needham 1954: 10). But Needham remembered from this conversation that the "work is extremely difficult to date because it is highly composite.... Until it[s date] has been critically established," he claims, "interpretations are premature" (Needham 1956: 547). Two dominant sources we have helping us to think through its textual complexity are, on the one hand, parallels in relatively contemporary texts (mostly fourth and third centuries BCE) and, on the one hand, indirect evidence of the *Heguanzi* in later sources predating its complete received editions.

As for the first, the number of parallels with other texts scattered throughout *Heguanzi* in contemporary texts are one possible reason for suspecting textual corruption. Although in early China there was nothing wrong with quoting other texts, oral wisdom, or common lore, the parallels in some *Heguanzi* chapters can run very long and are more or less corrupt. For instance, chapter 4 discusses personnel management in terms that are very similar those in *Guanzi* "Li zheng" 立政,[17] and chapter 9 presents the perfect administration of the mythical ruler Chengjiu in sentences that are closely parallel to *Guanzi*'s "Xiao kuang" 小匡 and *Guoyu*'s "Jin yu" 晉語.[18] Most striking is perhaps chapter 12: its first part argues for taking the long view in moments of military defeat, in phrases close to those in a letter in *Zhanguoce*, "Qi ce" 齊策[19]; and in its second part Pheasant Cap Master suddenly turns poetic, sounding like JIA Yi's reflective owl. Although there is no scholarly consensus on each and every case, a detailed comparison of the various sources has convinced me that the *Heguanzi* text is often more corrupt and inconsistent, not only in the given passage but also in relation to the surrounding text in that specific chapter. If the parallel source can be dated to pre-Qin times, the resemblance suggests that the *Heguanzi* author(s) or a very early commentator may have used fragments they knew from other texts, with the inconsistencies indicating later intrusions or sloppy work. But if the citation is as long and exclusive as it is with JIA Yi's *Owl Rhymeprose*, written as late as 174 BCE, then I am tempted to agree with LIU Zongyuan that "later amateurs forged the text."[20]

The second source for thinking through the textual complexity of this book, namely the indirect evidence of *Heguanzi* quotes preserved in encyclopedias, anthologies, and other sources, allows for some hope that we may be able to restore the original version of the text. These sources not only predate the first complete extant *Heguanzi* edition (nl. *Daozang* of 1445 CE), but they are almost always clearly of a superior quality and therefore probably representative of the source text. The most relevant instance is the *Yongle dadian* 永乐大典 (Great Encyclopedia

[17]Compare with the "seven points to observe" in Rickett 1985: 113.

[18]See Defoort 1997: 48–52.

[19]Compare with Crump 1970–1979: 205–8.

[20]For JIA Yi, see above. See also Defoort 1997: 60–70 and Li 2003: 25–28. Many scholars believe that the *Heguanzi* may have been the source text of JIA Yi's *Owl Rhapsody*. See Ye 1994: 101, Xiong 2001: 94, Xiao 2003: 73, and Wells 2007.

of Emperor Yongle), completed in 1408, in which chapter 11 of *Heguanzi* has been entirely preserved. One of the chief differences between this version and the received one concerns the idea of "original energy" (*yuanqi* 元氣). Following WU Guang, many recent scholars have attributed to Pheasant Cap Master the earliest manifestation of "the theory of 'original energy'" and have called this his most important contribution to ancient philosophy. WU Guang has argued that, since this theory was traditionally considered to date from the Han, "if we accept the *Heguanzi* as a pre-Qin ancient text, this traditional idea has to be revised from its very roots." (Wu 1985: 158) The expression "original energy," however, occurs only once in the received *Heguanzi*, namely in chapter 11. But, interestingly, indirect evidence from the *Yongle dadian* does not have this expression. This provides strong evidence that the chapter—and indeed the whole book—originally did not once mention "*yuanqi*". Given that the expression occurs regularly in LU Dian's commentary, it is possible that the occurrence in chapter 11 is in fact a commentarial interpolation.[21]

In many other instances, however, the commentary is actually a valuable source of indirect evidence, as when LU Dian carefully indicates alternative readings on the basis of other *Heguanzi* editions at hand. Complaining in his preface about the wording of the *Pheasant Cap Master*, he was resolved to refrain from emending the corrupt text: "I was pained by it. Hence, I made explanations for what could be known; and for what could not be checked, I preserved my doubts, awaiting a learned and profound scholar [to provide clarification]" 余竊閔之. 故為釋其可知者而其不可考者輒疑焉, 以俟博洽君子. The occasional one-word commentary "in doubt" 疑 confirms this resolution.[22] The indirect evidence of older *Heguanzi* editions not only shows how corrupt the received text sometimes is, but also provides valuable alternative readings. If a new modern edition of the *Heguanzi* were made, those sources should be taken into account.[23]

3 Daoist Thought

Leaving its textual complexities behind and probing the *Heguanzi*'s thought, one may again be discouraged, this time by its mixed content. The treatise combines wide interest in what we would distinguish as politics, military matters, personnel administration, and diplomacy. Moreover, analogies and occasional remarks indicate expertise in astronomy, calendar and divination, hygiene or meditation practices, and at least some knowledge of music, medicine, and various other technical matters.[24] For late Warring States masters, political interest in ordering

[21]For a detailed discussion and for other examples, see Defoort 1997: 78–91.

[22]See Defoort 1997: 57–59.

[23]Until now this has only been done very partially in, for example, the ICS concordance and in the edition by Huang 2002.

[24]See Yu 2004.

the world was the rule rather than the exception. Heguanzi's military expertise is not only suggested by his pheasant-feather cap, a symbol of military valor,[25] it is also confirmed by the content of at least five chapters (7, 12, 14, 17, and 19). The selection of political personnel, specifically for high positions and diplomatic missions, is also repeatedly discussed as a crucial aspect of bringing about order.

But this range of topics is not why Pheasant Cap Master's thought is called 'mixed' (*za* 雜). The Tang scholar HAN Yu remarked that *Heguanzi* "mixes [the ideas of] Huang-Lao and Forms-and-names" 雜黃老刑名 and its commentator, LU Dian, concurs in his preface to the book that "his [Heguangzi's] way is eclectic. The text he wrote is first rooted in Huang-Lao and branches out into Forms-and-names." 其道踳駮. 著書初本黃老而末流迪於刑名. (*Du Heguanzi* 11.15b) This mixture of Huang-Lao and Forms-and-names did not particularly bother HAN Yu and LU Dian. Nor should it have, considering what Sima Tan had in mind when he described Daoism (*Daojia*), the category under which Ban Gu classified the *Heguanzi*.[26] The Daoist method, according to Sima Tan, chooses the best from other trends of thought (hence the text's later characterization as "mixed"). The result is a specific syncretism: proceeding from non-action, responsiveness, and reliance (hence "rooted in Huang-Lao") and applied to politics and administration (hence "branching out to Forms-and-names"). Below I will use these aspects of the oldest Daoist label to characterize *Heguanzi*'s complex but relatively coherent strands of thought.

3.1 Specifics of the Daoist Mix

Sima Tan remarks that the Daoists, "as for their method, rely on the great stream of the Yin-Yang [specialists], choose the best of Ru and Mo, and adopt the crucial [methods] of the Name and Law [specialists]" 其為術也, 因陰陽之大順, 采儒墨之善, 撮名法之要 (*Shiji* 130: 3289). All these strands can indeed be identified in the *Heguanzi*. To begin with the concepts of yin and yang, Pheasant Cap Master often discusses these in combination with the Five Phases and other correlative sets of three, six, or most often, nine items. In a dialogue with his disciple, the master explains how the workings of Heaven and earth resonate with the order among humans.

> Heaven refers to spirit, earth to form. When the earth is moist, fire is generated from it; when Heaven dries up, water is generated from it. If laws are fierce and punishment biased, then

[25]The pheasant feather cap was described in the *Hou Han shu* as a symbol of valor introduced by King Wuling for Zhao as a military headdress. See Defoort 1997: 16.

[26]It was classified as *daojia* in *Hanshu* 30.1730, *Suishu* 34.1001, *Jiu Tangshu* 47.2029, *(Xin) Tangshu* 59.1516 (subdivision immortals), and in *Songshi* 205.5180; it was *Quan mou* in the *Qi lüe* (in *Taiping yulan* 685.6a); and *zajia* (Eclectic) in the *Siku tiyao* 2455. See Defoort 1997: 225–227.

> spirit moistens. If spirit moistens, Heaven does not generate water. If notes are[27] [. . .] and when sounds are upside down, then form withers. If form withers, then the earth does not generate fire. If water and fire are not generated, yin and yang lack the means to complete energy.[. . .] Heaven and man share the same figures; earth and man have the same pattern. [. . .] Yin and yang are the regulators of energy; Heaven and earth are the regulators of form and spirit; the sage is the regulator of power, laws and directives are the regulators of the four seasons.
>
> 天者神也, 地者形也, 地濕而火生焉, 天燥而水生焉. 法猛刑頗則神濕, 神濕則天不生水. 音◊聲倒則形燥. 形燥則地不生火. 水火不生, 則陰陽無以成氣 [. . .]. 天人同文, 地人同理.[. . .] 陰陽者氣之正也, 天地者形神之正也, 聖人者德之正也, 法令者四時之正 也. (8:8/11–17)

Heguanzi's universe is full of energy, with a flow of *qi* circulating between Heaven and earth. While the heat of the sky (the sun) causes moist (rain) to descend, the coolness of the earth causes fire to rise. This mutual generation of opposite forces can be thought of in sexual terms: the seeds from Heaven that drop onto the soil, impregnates it with an invisible but formative spirit. As the earth regularly gets informed and starts growing various sorts of visible shapes, they rise up to the sky like warm flickering flames. What is remarkable, at least for modern Western readers, is that this energetic flow does not end at the frontier between what we consider nature and culture. Laws and music can disturb this flow of cosmic mating by, respectively, causing the sky to moisten or the soil to dry up. According to Pheasant Cap Master, this interaction is due to the fact that humans share patterns of order with Heaven and earth.

Secondly, as for the Daoists "choosing the best of Ru and Mo," the *Heguanzi*'s full support of Ru (Confucian) values has often been pointed out. It is highlighted in the various lists of virtues promoted throughout the book. Since human beings have a role to play in the energetic flow between Heaven and earth, their responsibility in the world is crucial. At one point Pheasant Cap Master insists on the priority of the "military" (*bing* 兵), but specifying that by this he means: "ritual, justice, loyalty, and reliability" 兵者禮義忠信也 (7: 7/3).[28] In a chapter on personnel management, he describes the contributions of various officials according to their virtues.

> That is why former kings, when installing men of cultivation, selected the worthy and employed the capable, and there was no partiality in the age. The humane person dwelled left, the loyal minister in front, the just minister at the right, and the sagely person was behind. As things at the left modeled themselves on the humane, life began in the spring; as things in front modeled themselves on the loyal, achievements were set up in the summer; as things on the right modeled themselves on the just, they would ripen in autumn, and since things in the back modeled themselves on the sage, they were stored in winter.

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[27]There is a missing character in the Daozang edition, which is the oldest extant complete edition, and the one that I follow.

[28]He explains, presumably about those to be attacked by the "military," that "as they deviate from the Way, they dare with the mean to oppose the noble and, being unjust, they dare with the small (states) to encroach upon the large" 失道, 故敢以賤逆貴;不義, 故敢以小侵大 (7:7/4, repeated in 9:12/6). This is almost the exact opposite of the Mohist criticism of the noble oppressing the mean and the large taking from the small. (in *Mozi* 15 and 16).

是以先王置士也, 舉賢用能, 無阿於世. 仁人居左, 忠臣居前, 義臣居右, 聖人居後. 左法仁則春生殖, 前法忠則夏功立; 右法義則秋成熟, 後法聖則冬閉藏. (6: 5/15–17)

Mohist ideas are not often noticed in *Heguanzi*, but his plea here and elsewhere for "selecting the worthy and employing the capable," his criticism of hereditary rule, his use of metaphors such as the compass and carpenter's square (*gui ju* 規矩), his stress on love (*ai* 愛) and benefit (*li* 利) can all be considered Mohist ideas, many of which had become common sense among late Warring States masters.

Finally, Sima Tan's description of *daojia* as "adopting the crucial [methods] of the Name and Law [specialists]" is also appropriate in *Heguanzi*'s case. Laws, directives, orders, instructions, rewards, and punishments all have their value, and reflection on language (*ming*) is always related to the realm of politics.

Law values following [the ruler's] pronouncements. Pronouncements are the "ancestors" of the myriad things. What he pronounces right, is what law clings to; what he pronounces wrong, is what the law dissociates itself from. Because right is clung to by law, it thrives; because wrong is dissociated from by law, it perishes. Since laws (sometimes) do not follow his pronouncements, the "ancestors" get thrown into disorder.

法貴如言. 言者萬物之宗也. 是者法之所與親也, 非者法之所與離也. 是與法親, 故强; 非與法離, 故亡. 法不如言, 故亂其宗. (5: 4/19–21)

Therefore, mandates should always come from the ruler alone, the One man. But as Sima Tan put it, Daoists are interested in what is *crucial* (*yao* 要) in these administrative matters. Likewise, Pheasant Cap Master only values laws and directives insofar as they are part of the powerful flow that orders the universe. The invisible energy in the center initiates a pattern that gradually becomes visible and, only at the edges, receives support from legal and juridical measures. If these measures are not inspired by the central transformative power, then laws can only hurt and cause disorder. Closer to the center than laws, and therefore more effective and valuable, he places customs (*su* 俗), education (*jiao* 教) and concern (*ai* 愛) for the people whom he wants to see gathered in one family (*jia* 家).

3.2 Rooted in Huang-Lao ... Branching Out in Forms-and-Names

But for Sima Tan *daojia* is not just any mixture of different trends of thought: it stems from specific insights or practices and therefore leads to wonderful results.

It enables one's quintessential spirit to be concentrated and unified, to move in accordance with the formless, and to provide abundantly for the myriad things. [...] Setting up customs and applied in practices, it is nowhere unsuitable. Its point is condensed but easy to hold on to. For little work, there is much effect.

道家使人精神專一, 動合無形, 贍足萬物 [...] 與時遷移, 應物變化, 立俗施事, 無所不宜, 指約而易操, 事少而功多. (*Shiji* 130.3289)

This combination of little effort at the formless level and much effect in ordering the world is probably the idea that LU Dian, in line with HAN Yu, describes as

“rooted in Huang-Lao” and “branching out in Forms-and-names.” Huangdi 黃帝 (the Yellow Thearch), however, does not figure prominently in this text (he is mentioned just once in chapter 12); Pheasant Cap Master tends to ascribe ideal rule to less well-known sage-rulers, perhaps some of his own invention, such as Chengjiu 成鳩 and the Unadorned Majestic Inner Emperor 素皇内帝 in chapter 9; and the Nine Majesties 九皇, Supreme Majesty 太皇 and Supreme One 太一 who come up mainly in chapters 10 and 11.

Heguanzi's shortest chapter, “Procedure by Night,” captures well the combination of a visible and ordered world on the one hand and its invisible, dark source on the other.

> Heaven refers to figures, earth to patterns, the moon to excision [punishment/cutting], the sun to accretion [bounty/potency], the four seasons to arrangement, measures and statistics to segments, yin and yang to energy, the five phases to activity, the five policies to the Ways, the five tones to attunement [. . .] rewards and punishment to covenants. All these have their check, something that makes them as they are.
>
> Behind, we do not see its back,
> in front, we do not see its head.
> Completing achievements and fulfilling tasks, nobody knows its qualities.
> Pictures are not able to contain it, names not able to refer to it.
> Forced to give it an explanation, I say:
> Vast! Vague! Yet within are images.
> Vague! Vast! Yet within are things.
> Dark! Mysterious! Yet within is quintessence.
>
> Being utterly reliable, thoroughly comprehending what is genuine, and returning to the featureless, where even ghosts are not able to see, he is able to do things for others. This means that the sage values proceeding by night.
>
> 天文也, 地理也, 月刑也, 日德也, 四時檢也, 度數節也, 陰陽氣也, 五行業也, 五政道也, 五音調也 [. . .] 賞罰約也. 此皆有驗, 有所以然者: 隨而不見其後, 迎而不見其首, 成功遂事, 莫知其狀, 圖弗能載, 名弗能舉, 强為之説. 曰芴乎芒乎, 中有象乎, 芒乎芴乎, 中有物乎, 窅乎冥乎, 中有精乎. 致信究情, 復反無貌, 鬼不能見, 能爲人業. 故聖人貴夜行. (3: 2/11–15)[29]

The first part, in prose, is a general description of cosmic as well as political correlations that define the measurable and verifiable world. The next part is poetic and borrows heavily from the *Laozi* to invoke the dark, subtle, unnamable, yet powerful source of order.[30] Only the sage is able to proceed at this mysterious level: to see and act at a point where others, even ghosts, fail to perceive anything at all.

The *Heguanzi* sometimes dwells on the dark power of this source (floodlike in chapters 10 and 11) and sometimes describes in detail the political system that can derive from it (Chengjiu's system in chapter 9). But quite often it combines

[29] For the penultimate line “where even ghosts are not able to see, he is able to do things for others,” I follow the variant reading preserved in the commentary. The commentary moreover explains that “the one who is good at undertaking enterprises for others is subtle and minute. Even ghosts are not able to pry into his secrecy.”

[30] The three consecutive parallels are with, respectively, *Laozi* 14, 17, and 21.

them by tracing the energetic flood from its inexhaustible fountainhead down to the human world. One example of this occurs in the consecutive description of the "five regulations" (*wu zheng* 五正), ranging from the best to the less desirable: The first, Spiritual Transformation, lies "in what-is-not-yet-there" 神化者於未有; the second, Ordering through Officials, "leads the way at the roots" 官治者道於本; while the third, Ordering by Education, "cultivates things in oneself" 教治者脩諸己. The fourth, Ordering by Adaptation, "does not change customs" 因治者不變俗; and the fifth, Ordering Through Affairs, "makes corrections at the twigs" 事治者矯之於末 (8: 9/18–20). A second example of different stages on one scale is the three brothers practicing medicine: The oldest and best doctor, when facing a disease "watches the spirits before they have taken shape and dispels them. Therefore, his fame does not go beyond our home" 長兄於病視神未有形而除之. 故名不出於家 (16: 21/26–27). The second brother attends to the fine hair on the skin and is more widely known. The third and worst doctor uses acupuncture, drugs, and surgery; therefore he is famous among the feudal lords. The medical analogy is used to make a political point: "When ruling, do not go after fame; when ordering, be without form" 治之無名, 使之無形 (16: 22/3). Like the ruler of the first regulation mentioned above, "the good doctor transforms [his patient], the clumsy doctor spoils him" 故良醫化之, 拙醫敗之 (16: 22/3).

4 Three Central Themes

Thus far. Pheasant Cap Master's thought looks consistent with the Han label *Daojia* and relatively coherent in its interests and inspiration. But Lu Dian also remarked that this treatise "is in need of a place to stay. Often, it seems like one who, scattered and confused, has no home." Indeed, the book has puzzled many scholars and invited different interpretations especially concerning the three core ideas introduced at the outset of this chapter.

4.1 A Frustrated Hermit or Political Idealist?

What is it about Heguanzi that made him a symbol of frustration and loneliness for Du Fu and his contemporaries?[31] The loneliness or isolation may be related to his reputation since at least the Han. Heguanzi was known as a "hermit living in

[31] Du Fu refers to Heguan(zi) in two poems, "Deaf" and "Made in a Boat on the Small Hanshi Festival." Han Yu also seems to be particularly touched by a line about the fate of timing in being successful (see below). Liu Zongyuan's contemporaries, who believed that *Heguanzi* was the source of Jia Yi's *Owl Rhymeprose*, must also have known the fatalist lines from the second part of chapter 12.

the mountain forest, his clothes threadbare and his shoes worn out, using pheasant feathers for a hat [. . .] and breaking with [Pang] Xuan as soon as [the general] became illustrious in Zhao because Heguanzi feared he would be recommended by him” 隠居山林, 衣弊履穿, 以鶡為冠, [. . .] 煖後顯於趙. 鶡冠子懼其薦已也. 乃與煖絶焉.[32] The element of frustration and despair comes from the book itself. Heguanzi is profoundly disillusioned, which may have inspired the idea that he retreated into reclusion at the end of his life. Chapter 7 “Surpassed from Nearby” combines feelings of defeat, frustration, and rancor, when it alludes to a certain state which, in spite of its military superiority, lost dominance because of the ruler’s arrogance and his advisors’ diplomatic blunders. The disciple, Pangzi, first reminds his master of the saying that “with a huge territory, states are wealthy; with a vast population, the military is strong; and with the military strong, one is first to realizes one’s intentions in the empire” 地大者國實, 民衆者兵强, 兵强者先得意於天下 (7: 7/8–9); then he asks why reality is so different. Having warned his disciple about the sensitivity of this topic (今者所問, 子慎勿言) since in the current circumstances, “the inadequate encroach upon the worthy [. . .] and the people do not dare to speak” 不肖侵賢 [. . .] 百姓不敢言 (7: 7/11–12), Pheasant Cap Master nevertheless courageously explains that:

> If the knights have a surplus of force but are unable to use it to “be first to realize [their ruler’s] intention in the empire,” it is because their lord is unworthy and his behavior arrogantly exuberant. If he is unworthy, he is incapable of non-action and cannot be assisted in the utmost action. If he is arrogant, he treats rivals lightly; as a result he consults with his favorites about things that they do not know how to do, he employs others to undertake what is not their job, and he forcefully wishes to wrest away victory from those who are not his rivals. Not considering the disaster of a whole life, he enjoys the pleasures of the moment.
>
> 士有餘力而不能以先得志於天下者, 其君不賢而行驕溢也. 不賢則不能無為而不可與致為. 驕則輕敵; 輕敵則與所私謀其所不知為, 使非其任, 力欲取勝於非其敵. 不計終身之患, 樂須臾之說. (7: 7/12–14)

Then comes a long complaint followed by a statement that recurs in the *Heguanzi,* that “mistakes are made above, penalties executed below” 過生於上, 罪死於下 (7: 7/16, also 4: 4/5–6 & 8: 8/25–26).

> How serious the harm caused by those who lack understanding! How sad the reach of this disaster! This is the mistake of leaning on nobles and leaving the way, of underestimating others and overestimating oneself. That is why before the general had even launched the chariots, his army could be overtaken.
>
> 大乎哉, 夫弗知之害. 悲乎哉, 其禍之所極. 此倚貴離道、少人自有之咎也. 是故師未發軔, 而兵可迭也. (7: 7/21–22)

While in relations between states, winning the people’s hearts is more efficient than conquering territory by shedding blood, Pheasant Cap Master’s focus is on relations within his own state, most specifically on the situation at court. Rulers

[32] *Taiping yulan*, 510.4–5 & 410.6 quoting *Zhenyin zhuan*. For more information about bibliographical notices on Pheasant Cap Master, see Defoort 1997: 14–17.

fail to recognize men of talent, are unable to deserve or attract them, and are not reliable. Some rulers never see the light: “How sad, those covered, blindfolded, separated and blocked men! They collapse before being defeated, and get captured before they have died” 悲乎, 夫蔽象鬲塞之人: 未敗而崩, 未死而禽 (17: 23/13). Such rulers’ honest advisers are even more to be pitied. When they happen to work for someone who throws the age into chaos, they can never do well because:

> he takes mediocre knowledge to be a great idea, he takes recklessness as the way and profit-seeking as one’s authentic nature. If you do not share his dislikes, you cannot be on friendly terms with him; if you do share his dislikes, there still is mutual hatred. When advisers mention humaneness, he considers it fraud; when they are inspired by justice, he considers it bragging; when with a fair mindset they directly report to him, he still does not trust them.
>
> 以麤智為造意, 以中險為道, 以利為情. 若不相與同惡則不能相親; 相與同惡則有相憎. 說者言仁則以為誣; 發於義則以為誇; 平心而直告之則有弗信. (2: 2/1–3)

Men of worth cannot communicate with this sort of ruler. “How bitter that a person of worth must hide in a disorderly age!” 苦乎哉, 賢人之潛亂世也. Pheasant Cap Master insists that in such a situation “men go against their authentic feelings and able men of cultivation disguise their true nature” 故人乖其誠, 能士隱其實情, never speaking up or following their own mind. He therefore insists that, “when observing worthy men in a disordered age, be careful not to consider this their fixed nature” 故觀賢人之於亂世也, 其慎勿以為定情也 (2: 2/4–7).

But despite the frustration and despair that may have determined Pheasant Cap Master’s reputation in DU Fu’s days, the treatise is also brimming with political enthusiasm and detailed schemes. Marnix Wells has therefore argued that he “was no escapist mystic but, as the martial symbolism of his headgear suggests, a prophet of an emergent world order, about to be born from the midst of tumultuous conflict.” Heguanzi’s many suggestions and organizational schema show him to be a forward-looking advisor.[33] Considering his analysis of political problems it is not surprising that most of his suggestions concern personnel management: “Whoever employs men by selection will reign; whoever selects men on the basis of the fact that they are already employed, will perish” 擇人而用之者王, 用人而擇之者亡 (7: 7/10–11). His meritocratic advise is: Do not trust advisors who happen to enjoy a high position (perhaps by having inherited it), but carefully select those you want to use. The ruler needs all sorts of assistants: “As the changes of cold and warm are not transformed by one quintessence, the affairs of the empire cannot be understood by one man alone” 寒温之變非一精之所化也, 天下之事非一人之所能獨知也 (6: 11–12). The ruler’s major task is therefore to attract officials: “What is called power, is the ability to get to use others” 所謂德者能得人者也 (5: 4/26). Like the Big Dipper regulating the seasons by rotating in the center of the sky, the ruler needs to be surrounded by men of different characters and expertise: the humane to his left, the loyal in front, the just at his right, and the sagely person behind, each of them responsible for one season of the year (6: 5/15–17).

[33] Wells 2004. See also Cao 1988: 79 and Shangyuan 2002: 17.

> These four high officials are those the lord selects from outside. The lord is Heaven: if Heaven does not open gates and doors, he causes the subjects to harm each other; if those who advance persons of worth get high rewards, the subjects will not hide each other's merits. [. . .]
>
> The roots issue from the One man,
> hence, I call him Heaven.
> Nothing does not receive his decree,
> he cannot be given a name,
> hence I call him spirit.
>
> The pole of the utmost spirit sees without erring, cherishes ambitions without delusion, works at the regulation of the whole state. The shape of the whole state completely lies in his person.
>
> 此四大夫者君之所取於外也. 君者天也: 天不開門戶使下相害也. 進賢受上賞則下不相蔽 [. . .] 本出一人, 故謂之天. 莫不受命, 不可為名, 故謂之神. 至神之極, 見之不忒, 匈乖不惑, 務正一國. 一國之刑具在於身. (6: 5/18–22)

While "the ministers' skill is to know their job" 臣術知事, the ruler has to "know men" 君道知人 (6: 5/23–24) and select the character and expertise that go with each different job. Heguanzi gives advice about how to recognize the specific virtues and how to put them to work: "to overlook property and the division of goods, employ the humane" 故臨貨分財, 使仁, "to confront troubles and cope with difficulties, employ the courageous" 犯患應難, 使勇, "to make up phrases in response to statements, employ the eloquent" 受言結辭, 使辯, "to ponder affairs and fix schemes, employ the clever" 慮事定計, 使智, "to maintain peace by lining people up, employ the incorruptible" 理民處平, 使謙, "to entertain guests and organize audiences, employ the ritual" 賓奏贊見, 使禮, "to use the people and win over the masses, employ the worthy" 用民獲衆, 使賢, "the reliable are to be sent on interstate missions." 出封越境適絶國, 使信, and, most importantly, the sage is used to "regulate the world and control the lords" 制天地御諸侯, 使聖 (6: 5/24–26).

The "Kingly Blade" chapter elaborates more broadly on the ideal administration of the whole population, an achievement Heguanzi attributes to the lineage of a mythical ancient ruler. What made this Chengjiu family so successful is that the rulers held onto the "Heavenly matrix" 天曲 and "solar calculation" 日術, which is the "regulation of towns and structuring of cities so that people watch each other's habits" 其制邑理都使矔習者 (9: 10/23). The "Heavenly matrix" technique amounts to the organization of the population along spatial lines of ever-more encompassing units: starting from homes (家), assembled in squads (伍), gathered in villages (里), organized in village-groups (扁), collected in counties (鄉), joined in districts (縣), and finally divided in prefectures (郡). The technique of "solar calculation" adds a temporal frame that regulates timely inspections and reports by the leaders of these units according to points on the calendar.

Such a view might remind one of Lord Shang's strict policies, were it not for the ideal vision of one big family, in which parental love and filial respect thrive, barbarians are attracted to the political center, and the ruler is able to "plant customs and set up transformations" 樹俗立化, another recurrent idiosyncratic expression in the *Heguanzi* (9: 10/4–5, also 7: 6/26, 9: 10/19 & 11/28). It is by affection rather

than by harsh laws or strict instructions that this ideal empire will come about: "To the lord who is as affectionate to the people as to his own children, without calling them, they will come of their own accord" 是以為人君親其民如子者, 弗召自來 (6: 6/14).

So here is a prophet of an emerging order, sparkling with enthusiasm, eager to give political advice, rejoicing in new terminology, presenting organizational schemes, lists of values or selection techniques, all contributing to a detailed blueprint for unifying the world. Despite this—or rather because of it—Pheasant Cap Master also despairs at the situation in his own state and is deeply disappointed with its arrogant, unworthy ruler. At the end of the last chapter that features Pangzi in conversation with his master, the disciple asks: "If this is the empire's utmost way, why then do the rulers of the age reject it?" 此天下至道而世主廢之, 何哉. Heguanzi explains that his time is yet to come because "there is no constancy in what is considered valuable or mean: the timing makes them what they are" 貴賤無常: 時使物然 (15: 21/13–14), an insight that was deeply appreciated in Tang times by the likes of HAN Yu (*Du Heguanzi* 11.15b).

4.2 The One and the Way

A second important theme in the *Heguanzi* is its exceptional stress on the One. The importance of *yi* (一)—alternatively translatable as "one," "unification," "uniformity," "unity," or "uniqueness"—reflects the drive towards political unification in the third century BCE and the veneration of Tai Yi. This drive can also be perceived in other books such as *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Shizi*, but none of them delivers it as forcefully as the *Heguanzi*.

The idea of One plays an important role in political unification because it relates to what humans fundamentally are, which is determined by what they desire:

> What they desire is the same! If you observe it from this point of view: If something shares the name 'man', it simply shares man's nature.
>
> 所欲同也. 由是觀之, 有人之名則同人之情耳. (9: 13/9–10)

Insight into what is authentic in people combined with a genuine concern for their benefit (what they desire) inevitably leads to successful rule because "in the one, they are not few, in the myriad, not many [...] Divided land and allotted people, they are still just one" 在一不少, 在萬不衆[...] 列地分民亦尚一也耳 (9: 13/10–11). Such a policy has universal application that is not threatened either by the number of people or the variety of cultures involved.

> A hundred fathers, mothers, and sons, how could they enlarge or diminish this? A different lord and other leaders, how could they make any difference? If you are able to align them with the One, the myriad states will share this pole, and your power will reach the four seas.
>
> 百父母子何能增減 ? 殊君異長又何出入 ? 若能正一, 萬國同極, 德至四海. (9: 13/11–12)

This interpretation of the One as a fixed unit in a larger administrative whole is typical for chapter 9, which describes the success of the Chengjiu lineage in ruling for 18,000 years. Here as well as in the rest of the book, the image of this One is a central pole around which the world revolves, whether in astronomical or political terms.

> That Heaven does not go the wrong way is because it does not leave the One. If it left the One, it would return to be a thing.
>
> 天之不違以不離一. 天若離一, 反還為物. (4: 2/24–25)

Therefore, in politics, one should never deviate from the centrality of this axis. “Heaven and earth do not lean: they are installed by relying on the capable” 天地不倚: 錯以待能 (12: 17/21). Likewise, the ruler should not “lean on (i.e., rely upon) nobles and deviate from the way” 倚貴離道 (7: 7/22). Truly understanding the model of Heaven means grasping this political message. If the ruler is able to firmly abide in this central position, he will profit from its powers of attraction and thus order the world.

> After One there is energy, then intentions, then plans, then names, then shapes, then work, and then covenants. Once covenants are decided upon, the right time is set[34]; once the right time is set, things come forth.
>
> 有一而有氣, 有氣而有意, 有意而有圖, 有圖而有名, 有名而有形, 有形而有事, 有事而有約. 約決而時生, 時立而物生. (5: 4/10–11)

The primal One manifests itself in a flow of unshaped energy, which the ruler—the person who “acts as Heaven”—gathers in his thoughts, which will then become plans or schemes. The next steps towards order and control are taken when these plans lead to names, which result into forms. On the basis of these forms jobs are imposed, and a system is installed complete with rewards and punishments, referred to as covenants. Thanks to this powerful and smoothly functioning system around the cosmic ruler, the right time can be set for every action so that the political realm becomes part of the whole cosmic order.

The latter part of this cosmo-political cosmology and similar *Heguanzi* passages are reminiscent of the *Hanfeizi*’s emphasis on the uniqueness of the ruler’s position, his independence and control over names and tasks, and the whole political mechanism that ensues.[35] Hence LU Dian’s comment that the *Heguanzi* “branches out to Forms-and-names” ideas seems quite justified. But Pheasant Cap Master differs in some major respects: First, the universe is filled with a flow of energy, which the ruler should ride, joining it at the center where the energy is most powerful: still amorphous but ready to be shaped. Second, the ruler’s cosmic task seems to presuppose some sort of meditational practice, although the text is not very

[34]Instead of 生 (generate), I follow the variant 立 (to set up) indicated in the commentary. Immediately below, the same line is repeated in the main text with the verb 立.

[35]E.g., in chapter 7 “Er bing” 二柄 (Two handles).

explicit about it. For instance, when the Supreme One (Tai Yi) explains that Heaven, earth and man all turn to the One, the extreme pole of the spiritual and luminous, he says:

> To be sparing with the quintessential, nurture the spirit, and inwardly align yourself, is how one strives to be of Heaven. Heaven is where the spiritual and luminous are rooted. It is what purifies the four seasons, molds the shapeless, carves the not-yet-sprouted, and designs the about-to-be-so.
>
> 愛精養神内端者所以希天. 天也者神明之所根也, 醇化四時, 陶埏無形, 刻鏤未萌, 離文將然者也. (10: 13/24–25)

By cultivating his most concentrated and refined spiritual forces, the sagely ruler is swift and subtle in his interventions, like the regulation of Spiritual Transformation described in chapter 8, and like the best doctor of no fame from chapter 16. He is able to “separate the formless, the about-to-be-so, and what-is-not-yet-there” 隔無形、將然、未有者 (7: 8/5).

Given the One’s high status in the *Heguanzi*, some scholars have argued that the One is identical to Dao here.[36] I believe that this is only partially true: since the One functions as its steering force and the central pole around which the Dao (or many *dao*) rotates, it could be identified with the Way in its most crucial and essential manifestation. However, the text tends not to stress their identity but the opposition in which they collaborate. “The vacuous is what we call One; nothing being incomplete is what we call Dao” 空之謂一, 無不備之謂道 (5: 5/3); and “It is the similar that we call One and the different that we call *dao*” 同之謂一, 異之謂道 (5: 4/30–5/1). The emptiness of the central position is the non-activity that allows others to generate a panoply of efficient ways to proceed. While issuing from one source or circling around the same pole, the ways ought to be preserved in their variety. Different people “in their aspiration to the good are one, but how they go for it cannot be made uniform. He knows that the One cannot be made uniform. Therefore, he values *dao*” 其冀善一也, 然則其所以為者不可一也. 知一之不可一也. 故貴道 (5: 5/2). Unity within variety is the message.

4.3 *The Model of Heaven and Human Responsibility*

More than once Heguanzi somewhat mysteriously states that the ruler is Heaven or even that he ‘Heavens’, acts as Heaven: “The roots start out from the One Man. Thus we call him Heaven” 本出一人. 故謂之天 (6: 5/20–21). Almost every early master had something to say about Heaven: while Mozi insists on its loving authority high above man, Mencius believes that all humans carry some Heavenly germs. But Heguanzi attributes Heavenly proportions to at least one human being: the sage-ruler, the one who is “able to Heaven” 能天 (title of chapter 18). Even for Pangzi

[36] See e.g., Ding 1996: 27, Xiong 2001: 98.

the claim that "this Chengjiu lineage was Heaven, hence, nobody was able make it higher or more divine" 彼成鳩氏天. 故莫能增其高尊其靈 (9: 10/5–6) must have sounded strange, since he asks: "What do you mean by Heaven?" 何謂天 (9: 10/6). How much more does it puzzle modern readers, for whom it is common sense to distinguish the order in nature from that in politics? Confronted with Pheasant Cap Master's claim that "no one is able to govern, who does not Heaven" 故莫能宰而不天 (4: 3/16), Angus Graham comments: "The sage does not follow the same path as Heaven, but like the stars on their course he 'Heavens' (*t'ien* used verbally), does as Heaven does" (Graham 1989: 512–13). Randy Peerenboom, however, translates *tian* in this passage as "to act in accordance with the natural order" (Peerenboom 1991: 178). In what sense can man be Heaven? Does he determine the order in nature or does he merely follow it? These very different translations can be placed in the context of the *Heguanzi*'s third central theme and the debates that it has inspired; they also show to what extent one's understanding of any particular statement in the text is embedded in one's general interpretation of it.

While searching for ideas of "natural law" and "laws of nature" in ancient Chinese texts, Needham's interest in the *Heguanzi* was aroused by such lines a as "The One acts as their *fa*" 一為之法 and "Once the *fa* of the One is set up, the myriad things all come as dependents" 一之法立而萬物皆來屬 (Needham 1956: 547; see fragment below). Without any doubt, Heaven is the source of order for Heguanzi, a model to be emulated. Pheasant Cap Master answers Pangzi's request for clarification on Heaven with the following description:

> Heaven is reliable. Its sun refers to potency; as the sun is reliable in rising and setting, in the south and north it has its extremes. Hence nobody fails to take it as the norm. Heaven is trustworthy. Its moon refers to punishment; the moon is trustworthy in waxing and waning, at every end there is a beginning. Hence nobody fails to take it as policy. Heaven is illumined. The stars refer to its tests: the stars, in a row and without getting confused, each proceeds according to its sequence. Hence small or big, none fails to take them as a clear sign. Heaven is adapting. The seasons refer to its norms; by fitting their names, the four seasons do not interrupt [each other] in their sequence. Hence nobody does not take them as necessarily so. Heaven is unified. The standard refers to equality; front, back, left and right, in the past as the present, it is as it is. That is why nobody fails to take it as constancy. Heaven is reliable, trustworthy, illumined, adapting, and unified. It does not even for the multitude's father[37] replace the One. Hence nobody is able to fight its priority. If you replace the One, it is not One. Hence it can not be made higher or more exalted. Because Chengjiu got the One, nobody failed to be respectfully regulated by him.
>
> 天者誠; 其日德也:日誠出誠入南北有極. 故莫弗以為法則. 天者信; 其月刑也:月信死信生終則有始. 故莫弗以為政. 天者明; 星其稽也:列星不亂各以序行. 故小大莫弗以章. 天者因; 時其則也:四時當名代而不干. 故莫弗以為必然. 天者一; 法其同也:前後左右古今自如. 故莫弗以為常. 天誠信明因一. 不為衆父易一. 故莫能與爭先. 易一非一. 故不可尊增. 成鳩得一, 故莫不仰制焉. (9: 10/4–11)

[37]Instead of 父 (father), the commentary indicates the existence of a variant reading 文 (pattern). I tentatively stick to the received version because the expression "father of the multitude" occurs in other (Daoist) texts, such as *Zhuangzi* 12 and *Laozi* 21 (Mawangdui). Perhaps it refers to the ruler, the most powerful man. Even for him, Heaven would not deviate from the One.

This description of Heaven can be related to the expressions that caught Needham's attention.

> Therefore, sun and moon are not sufficient for speaking of illumination, the four seasons are not sufficient for speaking of achievements: [it is] the One [that] acts as their standard, and thereby completes their enterprises. Hence, nothing fails to proceed on the Way; as soon as the standard of the One is set up, the myriad things all come as dependents.
>
> 故日月不足以言明, 四時不足以言功. 一為之法以成其業. 故莫不道; 一之法立而萬物皆來屬. (5: 4/18–19)

Like laws of nature, expressing a transcendent and abstract sense of order behind the visible reality of incessant change and variety, the One seems to be such a *fa*, something more valuable than the actual constellations and celestial bodies rotating in the sky. Heguanzi does not simply refer to Heaven as the visible dome above our heads, but rather to its source of order:

> As for what we call Heaven, it is not this blue air that we call Heaven. [. . .] What we call Heaven means that which makes things as they are and has nothing else prevailing over it.
>
> 所謂天者非是蒼蒼之氣之謂天也. [. . .] 所謂天者言其然物而無勝者也 (8: 8/17–18).

With revived interest in the *Heguanzi* in the post-Mawangdui era, many scholars have argued that the treatise does indeed contain the concept of a strictly transcendent order. But the debate has suffered from a lack of conceptual clarity in specifying what one means by the terms "natural law" and "laws of nature," and by the even more ambiguous Chinese expressions *ziran guilü* 自然規律 and *ziran zhi fa* 自然之法.[38] Should the Heavenly model be understood in terms of natural laws (in the juridical sense) or laws of nature (in the scientific sense)? The frequent occurrence of the vague word *fa*—stretching in different contexts from "model" and "standard" to "law"—does not help matters.

Randall Peerenboom has taken up Needham's challenge with a clear argument: while avoiding the expression "laws of nature," he argues that some *Heguanzi* chapters promote a specific type of natural law grounded in "the impersonal natural order," the eternal, immutable, and impersonal reality underlying the visible world. Nature's priority in relation to man "means not simply that human behavior and social institutions are to be modeled on the way of nature," but that the "natural order constitutes the foundation for the human social order in the more radical sense that the correct social order is held to be implicated in the cosmic order" (Peerenboom 1991: 170). This "more radical sense" makes natural law "foundational"; human influence is thus strictly limited to the realm of man. The "sage discovers the predetermined Way. He is not a creator of the way(s), but a mediator between the given natural order and the human social order"; he merely "reflects" the natural order in his legislation (Peerenboom 1991: 182).

One problem with this strong claim is that the *Heguanzi* not only promotes the model of Heaven (and earth) but also stresses human responsibility in the sustenance of this model. Peerenboom remarks that some of the text's statements are indeed

[38] See e.g., Tan 1986: 58.

"dramatically at odds" with his reading. For instance, when the text claims that Dao and its *fa* are generated by man, not nature: "Worthies bring about sages, sages bring about the way(s), the way brings about *fa*, *fa* brings about spirit, and spirit brings about the luminous" 賢生聖, 聖生道, 道生法, 法生神, 神生明 (15: 20/22–23). Peerenboom's hypothesis is therefore that only some *Heguanzi* chapters support his interpretation (chapters 3–6 and 8–11), while others defend a radically different view concerning the relation between man and Heaven. But even in those selected chapters, Pheasant Cap Master attributes a cosmic influence to the sage which is difficult to fathom and cannot be harmonized with an absolutely given natural order. Heguanzi not only claims that "the sage sets up Heaven as father, and establishes earth as mother" 聖人立天為父, 建地為母 (10: 14/25), and that "the inner sage is the source of the quintessential spirit" 內聖者精神之原也 (11: 15/23–24), but also that man should be given priority over Heaven, earth and the seasons because, "these three, if the sage is present, are ordered; if not, they fall into disorder" 三者聖人存則治, 亡則亂 (7: 6/29).[39]

I therefore believe that both elements were especially precious in the *Heguanzi*: on the one hand, the modeling force of Heaven's independent order and, on the other hand, man's remarkable influence on that order. Indeed, more than any other pre-Qin text, this treatise thinks its way through the concrete variety of reality to something more fundamental that is shared by all, something that can function as an abiding source of political order. However, this source is not envisioned as a realm behind reality but rather as reality's unique axis. It is the fountainhead of unformed energy, where order is potentially present but awaits the sage to give it form. Although these two intuitions may have alternated or sometimes even competed with each other, I believe they were not as irreconcilable as are the absolute order of nature on the one hand, and human cosmic impact, on the other hand. In a sense that was neither absolutely literal nor merely metaphorical—an opposition that did not exist—the ruler's actions were considered to be constitutive of order and crucial to Heaven's workings.[40]

To conclude, the *Heguanzi* is a textually complex and relatively corrupt treatise, which makes it differ in degree rather than in kind from other early Chinese sources. In content, it largely belongs among the late Warring States masters, especially those of Daoist lineage as it was described in the Former Han. Like many other texts, the *Heguanzi* provides political advice but also complains about the rulers and politics of its era. It venerates the One and values the Way, but also sets them opposed to each other. And the order in Heaven is respected without relegating man to a merely passive role. Inconsistencies in its content, if not explainable as

[39]This chapter is, admittedly, excluded by Peerenboom as a Huang-Lao chapter.

[40]Seligman et al. (2008) describe the "subjunctive space" within human existence as constructed by recurrent ritual action by humans. Similar to the ritual acts (in a broad sense) in our daily lives, Heguanzi's ideal ruler is responsible for the constant creation a perfect order in the world. His action does not literally do away with the actual fragmentation in the world, but it does have an important impact on it.

textual corruption, commentarial intrusions, or the conflation of different texts, have been interpreted in various ways—for example, as a result of its multiple authorship (as in Peerenboom) or biographical changes in one author's life (as in Graham). An additional hypothesis holds that the authors had different opinions on some matters and may have struggled with them while writing the treatise. Despite the textual corruptions, philosophical inconsistencies, and the likelihood of multiple authorship, there seems to be one voice speaking in the *Heguanzi*. It expresses a need for unification and stability, and a belief in the Heavenly power of the sage-ruler to bring this about.

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Chapter 13
The *Four Lost Classics*: An Essay in Readership

Griet Vankeerberghen

It is a common practice among intellectual historians of early China to trace ideas over time, drawing upon a variety of mostly transmitted texts, and placing these in a rough chronological order. While writing about passages in these texts, many tend to ascribe the passages (and hence the texts) to authors. For example, the conflicting views on human nature preserved in the transmitted texts *Mengzi* 孟子 and *Xunzi* 荀子 tend to be cast as the opinions of one Master Meng, supposed to have lived in the fourth century BCE, and a Master Xun, securely lodged in the third century BCE. Intellectual historians working on Western Han tend to establish intellectual affiliations and divergences between, on the one hand, texts such as *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and, on the other, figures such as JIA Yi 賈誼, LU Jia 陸賈, and DONG Zhongshu 董仲舒.

This essay wishes to problematize these practices, and demonstrate that the stable landscape that has authors, ideas, and texts firmly anchored on it in chronological fashion, is, in fact a landscape of shifting sands. Intellectual historians, this essay argues, should operate with more awareness of the complexity and shifting nature of authorial practices in the first few centuries BCE, ask more consistently why certain texts were transmitted at the expense of others, and be more willing to consider the historical embeddedness of the texts, figures, and ideas that they are dealing with.

To make these points, I will make use of a set of texts I will refer to as the *Four Lost Classics*, copied onto silk sometime between 194 and 168 BCE, and placed within a lacquered box in a tomb near Changsha in ca. 168 BCE. I will fasten upon

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some aspects of these texts to make broader points on how we might improve our readership practices of Warring States and Western Han texts. In this way I hope to show that the importance of archaeologically excavated texts such as the *Four Lost Classics* goes way beyond their value as novel additions to our existing repertoire of texts. The texts might also help us fashion new, more responsible strategies for understanding other early texts, whether transmitted or archaeologically excavated.

1 The Four Lost Classics

1973 marked one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century, as archaeologists unearthed three richly furnished Western Han 漢 dynasty tombs at Mawangdui 馬王堆, Hunan 湖南, and identified them as belonging to LI Cang 利 蒼 (d. 186 BCE), Li Cang's wife, and—presumably—their son (d. 168 BCE).[1] Li Cang, ennobled as Noble of Dai (*Dai hou* 軑侯) in 194 BCE, was Prime Minister to the King of Changsha 長沙.[2] In Tomb 3, the son's tomb, archaeologists found a black lacquered box that contained manuscripts written on silk, bamboo, and wood, whose texts dealt with philosophical, medical, historical, or divinatory/astrological subjects. The texts had been copied over a period of 30–40 years (Kalinowski 2005: 138–145). One of these texts is a silk manuscript that measured 46 by 160 cm, contained 252 columns of texts, and is divided into six clearly delineated parts. The last two parts are easily recognizable as the second (*De* 德) and first part (*Dao* 道) of our received *Laozi* 老子, and is referred to by scholars as "*Laozi* B."[3] The first four parts of this manuscript are what I will refer to here as the *Four Lost Classics*; these four textual units have no counterpart in our corpus of received texts.[4] The six parts precisely fit the piece of silk on which they are written; with its neatly drawn columns and upper and lower margins, the manuscript is not just a textual record but an exquisite artifact as well. Since it is inscribed in the Han clerical style (*Hanli* 漢隸), epigraphers have identified it as belonging to the latest stratum of texts in the tomb, texts inscribed sometime between 194 and 168 BCE (Kalinowski 2005: 145–52).

[1]For the excavation report of Tombs 2 and 3, see He Jiejun 2004.

[2]*Shiji* 19.978.

[3]To distinguish it from the *Laozi* A, another—earlier—silk manuscript found in the same Mawangdui tomb, where the *De* and *Dao*-parts of the *Laozi* are followed, not preceded by a series of other texts.

[4]In 1997, Robin D.S. Yates published a translation of these four texts with one other text under the title *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Huanglao, and Yin-yang in Han China*. The title is appropriate, not only because the texts were lost at some point in time, and therefore do not form part of our corpus of received texts, but also because some of them are, on the actual silk scroll given the title of "Classic" *jing* 經. The fifth text translated by Yates is the *Yi yin jiu zhu* 伊尹九主; since it does not belong to the manuscript under discussion I do not treat it here.

Discovery of the *Four Lost Classics* generated major excitement, not just among scholars. Believing that these texts served as foundational texts for the First Emperor of Qin 秦, with whom MAO Zedong 毛澤東 liked to compare himself, politicians pressed for a swift transcription (Mansvelt-Beck 1995: 62). The leaders of the religion of the Yellow Emperor, a Taiwanese new religious group, adopted the texts as the group's official scriptures (Yates 1997: 5). Excited scholars linked the newfound texts with an entry in a catalogue of the imperial library contained in *Hanshu* 漢書 for "The Yellow Lord's Four Classics, in four sections" (*Huangdi sijing sipian* 黃帝四經四篇).[5] Numerous editions, translations, and studies of the texts have subsequently appeared, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.

The manuscript is clearly subdivided in textual units, at various hierarchical levels, by the codicological practice of indicating, for each textual unit, a title and the number of characters that it contains. The title and character count for each of the four parts of the *Four Lost Classics* and of the two texts that constitute *Laozi* B creates a first hierarchical level: they are *Jingfa* 經法 "Canon and Law" (5,000 characters), *Shiliu jing*/*Shi dajing* 十六/大經 "Canons" (4??6 characters), *Cheng* 稱 "Precepts" (1,600 characters), and *Dao yuan* 道原 "The Origins of the Dao" (464 characters), *De* "Virtue" (3,041 characters) and the *Dao* "The Way" (2,426 characters.) Only *Jingfa* and *Shi dajing* are further subdivided into a second hierarchical level of nine and 15 texts respectively, for which the manuscript lists a title and a number of characters.[6]

In terms of their rhetorical structure, the four *Lost Classics* are very different from one another. Classic IV *Dao yuan* ("The Origins of the Dao") is a rhymed poem[7] on the Way (*dao* 道) and the Sage (*shengren* 聖人). Classic III, *Cheng* "Precepts," is a concatenation of more than 50 sayings, separated on the silk scroll by black dots. They contain bits of wisdom that invite further elaboration.[8] Nine of the fifteen texts in Classic II "Canons" are narratives that feature sustained dialogue between the Yellow Lord (*huangdi* 黃帝) and one of his four advisers. The remaining six texts of Classic II are short essays, containing no dialogue or narrative; they define terms or briefly discuss stated truths. Classic I *Jing fa* "Canon and Law" is entirely

[5]*Hanshu* 30.1730. This claim was first made by TANG Lan 唐蘭, and, though many scholars agreed, others sought to refute this thesis. See LIU Guozhong 劉國忠 2004: 143–8, and Yates 1997: 193–4.

[6]Except for the last of the *Shi dajing*. The scroll indicates no title or number of characters, and there is debate as to whether this is indeed a separate chapter.

[7]There is rhyme in each of the four books, but in none so consistent as in Classic IV. For an identification of the rhymes, see Yang Liu's 楊柳 "Boshu *Huangdi shu* yun du" 帛書《黃帝書》韻讀 in Wei Qipeng 魏啓鵬 2004: 354–87.

[8]According to the introduction of Sarah Queen and John Major to their translation of the title of the 10th chapter of the *Huainanzi*, cheng 稱 refers to "a type of gnomic wisdom encapsulated in brief precepts. These could be cited in various oral contexts to argue against false opinions." (Major et al. 2010: 342). I believe this fits the Cheng part of the Four Lost Classics well. Robin Yates translates the term as "designations," and sees it as a typical HuangLao term (Yates 1997: 34–6).

made up of such essays. Classic I's nine essays contain many definitions of terms in addition to more expository passages (often in the form of *sorites*) and formulaic statements predicting failure and success.[9]

2 Authorship: The Patron, the Collector, the Editor, and the Copyist

We are predisposed to assume that behind every philosophical text stands an individual thinker, who, having engaged with ideas transmitted to him via the work of others, has carefully committed his ideas to writing, in the process becoming an author. Our modern method of grappling with a philosophical text typically consists of trying to examine the text in ways that reveal the author's thought processes. The presence of such an authorial voice is then thought to lend unity and coherence to the text. If we were to apply such assumptions to our reading of the *Four Lost Classics*, we would, immediately, be faced with a number of inconsistencies or apparent contradictions. I will begin by exploring two such inconsistencies—one concerning different visions of the way, the other divergent formulations and understandings of the male-female dyad—before suggesting a strategy to deal with them.

Example 1: Visions of the Way

Classic I.1 (*Dao fa* 道法, "The Way and the Method") opens, famously, with the statement that "The Way gives birth to the Method 道生法" (Chen 1995: 48; Yates 1997: 51).[10] Surprisingly, after this grand opening, *Classic* I offers little in terms of defining the Way or determining its characteristics. The Way is something that is there to be grasped (*zhi* 執) or lost (*shi* 失), but it is not isolated or identified as a metaphysical entity awaiting our perusal. Only once in *Classic* I do we encounter anything resembling a definition of the Way. In I.9. "Names and Principles" (*ming li* 名理), the Way is explained as "the source of the numinous and luminous" (*shenming zhi yuan* 神明之原) (Chen 1995: 232; Yates 1997: 99). "Numinous and luminous" appear, in this passage, to be qualities that can inhabit our words and actions, making them trustworthy and immune to manipulation. Whereas these are qualities that are said to accrue from grasping the *Dao*, whether or not one possesses them, only becomes evident when others put their unconditional trust

[9]For a rhetorical analysis, see also Ryden 1997.

[10]The translations are mine. However, since I drew heavily upon the interpretations and translations of Chen and Yates, I include, after each quote, a reference to the text as it occurs in Chen, and to Yates' rendering into English. This will allow both readers familiar with Chinese and those who do not read the language to situate each quote within the larger textual unit within which it occurs. I have not systematically indicated where my translations borrow or deviate from Yates 1997.

in one and follow one’s command, without attempting to deceive or manipulate. I suggest, therefore, to read the opening phrase of *Classic* I (“The Way gives birth to the Method”), not as an attempt to establish the ontological priority of Way over Method (Peerenboom 1993), but as a means to divert the reader’s attention from the term “Way” to the term “Method.” Indeed, as this opening passage leads to a definition of the person who grasps the Way, that definition is made entirely in terms of Method.

> The one who grasps the Way, is the one who gives birth to Method, and does not dare to go counter to it; he is the one who, once Method is established, does not dare to abandon it 故執道者，生法而弗敢犯殹(也)，法立而弗敢廢〔也〕。(Chen 1995: 48; Yates 1997: 51)

Method itself is defined in eminently practical terms; it is “that which demarcates gain and loss and makes clear what is crooked and straight. 法者，引得失以繩，而明曲直者殹(也)” (Chen 1995: 48; Yates 1997: 51). *Classic* I, apparently, does not allow for the possibility that one might grasp the Way and still be unsuccessful in one’s actions. What is crooked and what is straight, what will lead to gain and what to loss is not something that can be spelled out a priori: the right Way/Method will only reveal itself as one pursues it, and assurance that one has grasped the right Way/Method is found in one’s pursuits being crowned with success. In Classic I we are, in other words, dealing with a kind of situational ethics in which success in one’s present and future actions is inextricably linked with having found the Way: not only will possession of the Way translate in visible, worldly benefits, the presence of these worldly benefits is the only way of knowing whether someone has or has not grasped the Way.[11]

Contrast this to *Classic* IV “The Origins of the Dao.” The Way stands central in the first part of this poem as an object of mystical contemplation, omnipresent and unknowable at the same time: “All men used it,/but no one knows its name./All men employed it,/But no one saw its form. 人皆以之，莫知其名。人皆用之，莫見其刑 (形)” (Chen 1995: 470; Yates 1997: 175). The Way connects one human subject with everyone and everything: “Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang,/The [four] seasons, the sun and moon/The planets and constellations and cloudy vapors/The wrigglers that walk and the crawlers that move,/And the plants that grow roots/All take their life from the Dao/But they do not decrease it./They all return to the Dao/But they do not increase it. 天地陰陽，〔四〕時日月，星辰雲氣，規 (蚑) 行僥 (蟯) 重 (動)，戴根之徒，皆取生，道弗為益少；皆反焉，道弗為益多” (Chen 1995: 474; Yates 1997: 175). The Way links the mystic to a time before time when all was an undifferentiated void: “Misty and blurred,/It did not yet possess light and dark. 濕濕夢夢，未有明晦” (Chen 1995: 470; Yates 1997: 173). In *Classic* IV the Way is not something that reveals itself to people who, in the midst of things, discover that their success is based on a broad understanding of how things operate and a realization that their way of doing things is the same as Heaven’s,

[11] This kind of situational ethics occurs in parts of the *Huainanzi* as well, as detailed in Vankeerberghen 2001, 127–45.

instead it is something already acknowledged as important and present, but whose mysteries only the Sage person can penetrate and embody. Only when the world has such a Sage person as king will all-under-Heaven subject itself to the subtle manipulations of all that surrounds him and only then will everything find its own happiness.

Example 2: The Male-Female Dyad

II.2 "Observation" (Guan 觀) and II.7 "The Male and the Female Tally" (*Cixiong jie* 雌雄節) draw upon different male-female dyads (Yin 陰/Yang 陽 and *pin* 牝/*mu* 牡 in "Observation," versus *ci* 雌/*xiong* 雄 in the "Male and the Female Tally.") The dyads are also put to very different usage in both texts. In "Observation" we are told how the Yellow Lord, a creator as much as a ruler, initiated the cosmogonic separation of Yin 陰 and Yang 陽, thus ending a period of undifferentiated chaos in which there was neither light nor darkness (*wu hui wu ming* 無晦無明) (Chen 1995: 268; Yates 1997: 107),[12] and creating the four seasons and their constant rhythm (*chang* 常). The seasons, in schemes we are familiar with from other texts, were to guide the ruler in his management of the population, with Spring and Summer being associated with beneficence, and Autumn and Winter with punishment (春夏為德, 秋冬為刑。)[13] The seasons, or more precisely the forces of Yin and Yang that underlie them, are also crucial in helping the ruler with two tasks: promoting human procreation (so that he has enough people to defend his territory), and insuring adequate food production. For these two tasks, a brief mingling of the forces of Yin and Yang is in order, acts of copulation between humans or deep in the belly of the earth; interestingly, as "Observation" describes the mingling it shifts to the *pin/mu* dyad:

> To enact the Method, to follow the Way, this makes the male and the female. The male and the female lust for one another, and, as they meet, hard and soft mingle. Hard and soft complete one another, the male and the female thus take shape. 行法循牝牡。牝牡相求,會剛與柔。柔剛相成, 牝牡若刑 (形)。 (Chen 1995: 268; Yates 1997: 107)

Yin and Yang, *pin* an *mu* are all constitutive elements of the natural order, and there is no clear preference for one member of the dyad over the other.

II.7 "The Male and Female Tally" "*Cixiong jie* 雌雄節," in contrast, comes down, without any hesitation, on the side of the female tally. In its opening paragraph, the female tally is linked with good fortune, rewards, multiple achievements; whereas its opposite is linked with misfortune, disaster, death and destruction. In the closing paragraph, it is stated how using the female tally will lead to such goods

[12] The cosmogony in "Guan" adheres neatly to a four-phase cosmogonic scheme that has been outlined by Marc Kalinowski (2004) for texts as diverse as *Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水, "Yao Dian" 堯典, and the Chu 楚 almanac.

[13] Later in "Observation," there is talk about the "three lucky ones," (*san le* 三樂) presumably the seasons of Spring, Summer, and Autumn, during which a ruler should take care not to disturb the activities of the population.

as material well-being, success in times of peace and conquest in times of war, long life, and many children and grandchildren; using the male tally, on the other hand, will deprive one of all of these goods. The canon provides a summary definition of the two tallies:

> Brazen pride and haughty arrogance: this is what is meant by the "male tally." ….and reverent moderation: this is what is meant by the "female tally." Now the male tally is the companion of fullness; the female tally is the companion of moderation. 憲敖 (傲) 驕居 (倨), 是謂雄節; 〔夗濕〕共 (恭) 驗 (儉), 是謂雌節。夫雄節者，涅 (盈) 之徒也。雌節者，兼 (謙) 之徒也。 (Chen 1995: 332; Yates 1997: 129)

In essence, "The Male and Female Tally" is about the undesirability, and the ultimate self-defeating nature of cocky behavior. Thus, compared to "Observation," the text not only privileges one member of its male-female dyad, it is also applicable on a completely different sphere, namely that of human behavior and self-representation.

It should be clear from these examples that the *Four Lost Classics* do not speak with one authorial voice, and that it is imperative, in working with the manuscript, to indicate as consistently as possible which part of the manuscript one is dealing with.[14] One should, on the other hand, not exaggerate the lack of unity of the *Four Lost Classics*. Some philosophically significant terms appear in quite a few of the constituent texts (for example, *ni/shun* 逆順; the triad Heaven/Earth/Man 天地人; female/male 牡牝), whereas others are exclusive to just a few (for example, *fa* 法; *du zhi nei/wai* 度之内/外). A systematic study of the patterns in which these and other terms appear throughout the manuscript would be revealing, but has, to my knowledge, not yet been undertaken.[15] Just as revealing would be a careful examination of the concrete terminological and conceptual links between the *Four Lost Classics* and other texts, whether received or archaeologically retrieved. This work started the moment scholars began to transcribe the manuscripts (during which they often relied on parallel passages in other texts), and continues unabated as scholars edit, annotate, and translate the text. Further, it is important not only to investigate the commonality in vocabulary and phrasing between the *Four Lost Classics* and other texts, but we should also note "absences," i.e., identify terms and concepts that are either not used at all (e.g., *xiao* 孝), or used only peripherally (*wuwei* 無為, *ren* 仁, *shu* 術, etc.).[16] But, even if we had mapped all those elements, how can we properly account for, on the one hand, the manuscript's unity, and, on the other, the striking inconsistencies highlighted above?

Some modern readers have sought solace for the absence of a unique authorial voice by postulating the text's affiliation with a particular school of thought, in the case of the *Four Lost Classics*, Huang Lao-Daoism 黃老 (Chen 1995; Yates 1997; Peerenboom 1993; etc.). The arguments for this identification are complex, especially since there is no consensus among contemporary scholars on a good

[14] I do this here by using a system of Roman and Arabic numerals.

[15] Except in Ryden 1997, where six binary pairs are studied.

[16] Some of these have been noted in Yates; an exemplary study in this regard is Gentz's study of the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳 2001.

working definition of Huang Lao-Daoism, and since there is no indication that the term Huang Lao, when used in historical sources such as *Shiji* 史記, was ever applied as a means for categorizing texts. The Yellow Lord does, however, play an important role in nine of the fifteen texts of Classic II "Canons," where he is seen interacting with advisors. It is also true that, apart from the fact that the *Four Lost Classics* are physically placed together with the two parts of the *Laozi* on the same piece of silk, there is a great deal of terminological and philosophical overlap with the *Laozi*. The *Four Lost Classics*, in this manner, indeed deal with "Huang" as well as with "Lao." The two contrasting visions of the Way, outlined above, might, to some, represent the Huang and Lao parts of Daoism respectively. But, what value is there in postulating for our manuscript membership in a sociological entity (a 'school') for which we have no historical evidence? What does this represent but some unproven intuition on the part of modern scholars about the similarities and differences between the *Four Lost Classics* and other known texts?

In the case of the *Four Lost Classics* we are, however, fortunate to know a great deal about the socio-economic context of production: that the manuscript was put together sometime between 194 and 168 BCE; that we should think of the *Four Lost Classics* as forming one whole with the *De* and *Dao*-parts of the *Laozi*; that, given the manuscript's neat codicological presentation, its production must have involved certain editorial interventions in the textual units selected for inclusion; that the copyist occasionally made errors; and that the manuscript was inherently valued since it was copied, not onto ordinary writing materials such as bamboo or wood, but onto silk, and then incorporated in the tomb library of a member of the noble Li family.[17] I propose that we locate the manuscript's unity and disunity in the interplay of four roles essential to the production of the manuscript: that of patron, collector, editor, and copyist. (Distinguishing these four roles does not imply that we have to assign different individuals to each role, or that each role can be occupied by only one individual.) A *patron* was necessary to sponsor and initiate the project, and also ties the project to a specific location, most often a court—the patron's presence alerts us to the fact that, given ancient technology, texts, and particularly silk texts, were prized possessions, meant for luxurious consumption and display, and also perhaps containing an inherent magical efficacy (Yates 1997: 16). The idea of a *collector* draws attention to the historical and geographical connections between the manuscript produced and pre-existing texts: it seems, however, that the textual units collected were preserved, not for their own sake, but by being integrated into a newly created text. The *editor*'s task consists in selecting from the collected pre-existing textual units, deciding where to place the selected textual units vizà-viz one another into the newly created manuscript, as well as the modification of the pre-existing textual units through deletions, additions, and terminological modifications. Lastly, the *copyist* would apply his artisanal and artistic abilities, and his orthographic habits to the material production of the manuscript. Such an

[17]We tend to assume that the manuscript was also produced at or for the household of the noble Li family; but, of course, it may well have been a gift (perhaps of the Changsha royal court?).

approach would account for the particular flavor that each newly produced text had (a product of the sums of the tastes brought to the project by the individuals who assume one or more of the roles), for the impression the text creates of being a finished, inclusive whole, and for the absence of a single authorial voice. To apply this to our examples, the patron, collector, editor, and copyist behind the project that yielded the silk manuscript containing the *Four Lost Classics*, might have found it imperative to include, and, in a certain sense, balance out against each other, the different visions of the Way found in "Canon and Law" and the "Origin of the Way." They would have liked to include the warnings of "The Male and the Female Tally" against cockiness as a guide for behavior, while also appreciating being able to showcase their possession of knowledge about the female and male principles underlying the seasonal rhythms, and of their cosmogonic creation through the Yellow Lord's agency.

The Mawangdui silk manuscript with the *Four Lost Classics* and *Laozi* B might well be classified with what I have named elsewhere the "inclusive (*bei* 備) texts of the early empire," of which the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Huainanzi*—both transmitted texts—are the most prominent examples.[18] All these texts share an impulse to create a new whole through the selection, interpretation and organization of pre-existing textual units; they are all the result of a collaborative effort, and tend to be composed at a court of sorts, sponsored by a patron. Whereas in the case of *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Huainanzi* we have postfaces, and in the case of the *Lüshi chunqiu* a strong story attesting to the text's patron's desire to be inclusive, in the case of the Mawangdui manuscript, we have the neat codicological presentation, the precise archaeological context, as well as significant parallels in terms of constituent parts and overall structure (e.g., the inclusion of "Precepts" in both the *Huainanzi* and the *Four Lost Classics*, or the inclusion in all of the texts of meditations on the Way, of guides to behavior, and of cosmogonic myths.)[19] As inclusive texts, the transmitted texts and the archaeologically retrieved manuscripts, would benefit from being read in the light of the other.

3 Historical Context

If the manuscript with the *Four Lost Classics* and *Laozi B* was put together sometime between 194 and 168 BCE, it would place the text in close historical proximity to both the unification of Qin, traditionally dated to 221 BCE, the downfall of Qin shortly after, the subsequent civil war, and the establishment of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–8 CE). The Li family, in whose family cemetery the manuscript was found, owed its prominence and its nobility to the appointment of one of its

[18] Vankeerberghen 2010: 477–78; that and the other categories outlined in the article are based on the way *Shiji* classifies and describes texts and authors.

[19] On structural features of the *Huainanzi*, see Major et al. 2010: 14–20.

members, Li Cang, to the position of prime minister to the King of Changsha. This appointment was made in the Han capital of Chang'an early in Huidi's 惠帝 reign (r. 195–188), whereas the royal family Li Cang served were descendants of Wu Rui 吳芮 (d. 201 BCE), a Qin official turned rebel, and a steadfast presence in the south during the years of turmoil leading up to the establishment of Han. The most interesting passages, where it comes to linking the *Four Lost Classics* with the historical context are found in I.2 "The Priorities of a State" (*Guo ci* 國次) and I.3, "A Lord's Government" (*jun zheng* 君正). As I will demonstrate, the two pieces offer justification not only for the violent annexation of other states, but also for the ultimate annihilation of all existing states, and the establishment of a new super-regime.

"The Priorities of a State," is the only essay of the *Four Lost Classics* that, amidst statements of various general larger principles, offers the ruler concrete advice. The advice, striking in its brutality, comes in two parts, first as a negative, then as a positive.

> When one annexes the state of another,[20] one might repair his city's walls, occupy his galleries and temples, enjoy his bells and drums, profit from his wealth, and seize his sons and daughters in marriage. This, however, is what is called "[serious] Opposition that leads to Desolation." The state will be in danger, and will be ruined. 兼人之國，修其國郭，處其郎 (廊) 廟，聽其鐘鼓，利其齎 (資) 財，妻其子女，是胃 (謂)〔重〕逆以芒 (荒), 國危破亡。 (Chen 1995: 90; Yates 1997: 57)

> Now, here is how a Sage Person attacks. When he annexes the state of another, he tears down [city's] inner and outer walls, he burns his bells and drums, distributes his wealth, scatters his sons and daughters, and distributes his lands as fiefs to the worthy. This is what is called "Heavenly Merit." 故聖人之伐殹 (也), 兼人之國，隋 (墮) 其城郭，棼 (焚) 其鐘鼓，布其齎 (資) 財，散其子女，列 (裂) 其地土，以封賢者。是謂天功。 (Chen 1995: 95; Yates 1997: 57)

Judged according to modern sensibilities, neither strategy has much appeal.[21] The text, far from condemning the annexation of another state as a reprehensible moral action, merely states that if one does in fact annex one's neighbor, one should do it well. This entails, if not the complete annihilation of the state one annexes, then, at least, the destruction of all that symbolized the previous ruler's power: his capital, his ancestral temples, his ritual instruments, his descendants. The text opposes the "lazy" kind of annexation by which the successful conqueror would be content to enjoy the riches (its architecture, its wealth, its women) of the conquered state without seeking to supplant the deposed one's power with something of a higher order.

Employing a rhetorical technique common in the *Four Lost Classics*, the text uses the advice on how to treat a state one has conquered to define two opposing concepts: "[serious] Opposition that Leads to Desolation," on the negative side, and

[20]Yates 1997: 57 translates "In a state of annexers"; this makes it seem as if there is a justification for the sage to attack.

[21]Yates, in his translation, is the only one to try to take the aggressive edge of the passage, by translating as if the sage avenges wrongful annexation.

"Heavenly Merit," on the positive. "Desolation" may occur with some frequency throughout the *Four Lost Classics*, but "Opposition" (*ni* 逆), together with its antonym "Compliance" (*shun* 順), is without doubt, one of the central philosophical concepts in the *Four Lost Classics*. "Opposition" and "Compliance" are most often linked to Heaven: compliance with Heaven is urged; opposition to it is condemned. Thus, it appears that the Sage Person is acting in compliance with Heaven when, rather than enjoying his newly conquered territories, he destroys the symbols of power associated with the conquered state. Elsewhere in I.2., there is a definition of "Heavenly Merit" that is quite compatible with what we just described "To annex it without arrogating it, that is what we call 'Heavenly Merit.' 兼之而勿擅, 是胃 (謂) 天功。" (Chen 1995: 84; Yates 1997: 57). Instead of 'arrogating' the annexed state himself, the sage should continue his conquests while distributing his new lands as fiefs to the worthy. This definition of "Heavenly Merit" follows the statement[22]: "If one imprisons those who deserve to be punished, and attacks those who deserve to be annihilated, one will certainly ruin that state. 禁伐當罪當亡, 必虛 (墟) 其國"[23] (Chen 1995: 84; Yates 1997: 57). This seems to suggest that an annexer has to keep Heaven on his side, even as he decides whether or not to attack another state, as only states that "deserve to be annihilated" (*dang wang* 當亡) can be attacked.

"A Lord's Government" confirms that we are, indeed, dealing with the kind of logic that, with Heaven's blessing, spawns on-going conquests. The text outlines a 7 year schedule for turning the people (*min* 民) of a conquered state around so that they, in turn, will help you fight others:

> In year one, comply with their customs; in year two, employ the virtuous among them; in year three, the people's needs will be satisfied; in year four, issue orders and rules; [in year five, correct them with punishments; in year six], the people will fear and respect you; in year seven, you can use them for punitive attacks. 一年從其俗, 二年用其德, 三年而民有得。四年而發號令,〔五年而以刑正, 六年而〕民畏敬, 七年而可以正 (征)。 (Chen 1995: 104; Yates 1997: 61)

In the first three years, the new ruler needs to win the people's affections (the passage later explains that "satisfying the people's needs" means "exempting them from taxes"); in years 4–6 he needs to establish his authority; in year 7 the people are ready to be sent into battle on his behalf, enabling him "to conquer strong enemies" (*ze sheng qiang di* 則朕 (勝) 强適 (敵) (Chen 1995: 104; Yates 1997: 61).

In his search for new conquests, the ruler must not only prepare the population within his borders—old and new—for battle, he must also determine which states are ripe for conquest.

> When activity and inactivity take place at inappropriate times, when planting fails to take advantage of the opportunities earth provides, the Way of Heaven and Earth is in Opposition. If the ministers are not akin to their ruler, those below not akin to those above, and the various clans not akin to their tasks, then the inner order is in Opposition. When Opposition

[22]Most editors and translators take it to be part of the same sentence.

[23]Rhyme justifies breaking the sentence here as Yates does, but no editors/translators follow him in this.

> is present, this is what is called ‘a Moribund State.’ A Moribund State, attack it! 動靜不時，種樹失地之宜，〔則天〕地之道逆矣。臣不親其主，下不親其上，百族不親其事，則內理逆矣。逆之所在，胃 (謂) 之死國，〔死國〕伐之。 (Chen 1995: 196; Yates 1997: 85)

The wise conqueror must be able to refrain from violent conquest if the target state shows signs of being too resilient. The passage just quoted continues, “the opposite of this is called ‘Compliance.’” When Compliance is present, this is what one calls a “Viable State.’ A Viable State, nurture it! 反此之胃 (謂) 順，〔順〕之所在，胃 (謂) 之生國，生國養之” (Chen 1995: 196; Yates 1997: 85).

The second and third sections of *Classic* I are thus caught up in a rhetoric of “conquer” or “be conquered.” No meaningful distinction exists between warfare and politics: the ruler/general needs statecraft to defend and strengthen his own state; he needs to understand the way other states are ruled merely to determine whether or not they merit attack. This is a perilous situation for all states and all rulers; the only relief would lie in the rise of a ruler, so powerful that, with Heaven’s support, he can lord it over all-under-Heaven.

It is tempting to see the First Emperor as the embodiment of that new kind of ruler, and the ideology provided in “The Priorities of a State” and “A Lord’s Government” as a justification for the wars of conquest leading to the unification in 221 BCE. There are, indeed, some interesting congruencies between the two texts from the *Four Lost Classics* and the *Stele Inscriptions* through which the First Emperor advertised his successes.[24] First, both the inscriptions and the *Four Lost Classics* expound a theory of just violence: the states deserving conquest in the *Four Lost Classics*, are matched, in the *Stele Inscriptions* by the repeated assertion that the six kingdoms invited their own destruction because of their wanton behavior; both sets of texts characterize doomed states in similar terms: *bao* 暴 (“cruel”), *ni* 逆 (“Opposition”), unjust in their punishments, etc. Second, in both texts just conquests are thought to lead (or to have led) to universal domination of the entire known world: in the sections of the *Four Lost Classics* under discussion here it is Heaven (*tian* 天) that steers and guides the conquests of the Sage (*shengren* 聖人), in the inscription texts, the First Emperor—who is also assigned the label of Sage—succeeds by harnessing his ancestral gods for his universal cause. Perhaps most interesting of all, the inscription at Jieshi 碣石 Gate states that “He [the First Emperor] tore down and destroyed the inner and outer city-walls” (*duohuai chengguo* 墮壞城郭), (Kern 2000: 42) a statement that is nearly identical to the injunction in “Priorities of the State” that the Sage Person should “tear down the inner and out city-walls” (*duo qi chengguo* 隋 (墮) 其城郭) of the states he conquers.

One wonders why this ideology of conquest and rulership was still compelling to those who created the manuscript with the *Four Lost Classics* and *Laozi B* in the first decades of the second century BCE. The assumption, I believe, need not be that whoever was responsible for the manuscript believed that a new First Emperor-like figure was called for; at stake might well have been an almost antiquarian impulse to preserve the knowledge that was integrally linked to the chain of events,

[24]For a study and translation of the Stele Inscription texts, see Kern 2000.

spanning several decennia, that had profoundly affected the lives of everyone living through the Qin-Han transition (including, presumably, the text's patrons). The mere possession of texts that had proven their power over past events would have been desirable. Indeed, given that the manuscript dates from a time when texts and writing were precious commodities, possession of the texts would have lent the text's patron a certain power over past, present, and future, as the power he could muster from his station in life was commensurate with his ability to collect texts at his court, and preserve them by integrating them into new units.[25]

4 Transmission

Edward Slingerland has suggested that the archaeologically retrieved texts did not survive because they were so "boring," compared to transmitted texts (Slingerland 2006). This impression, surely, originates in part because excavated texts like the *Four Lost Classics* have not gone through the extended processes of editing, re-editing, and commentary that provide our received texts with their rhetorical brilliance. Indeed, reading the *Four Lost Classics* requires effort, and the willingness to accept that certain characters, phrases, or even entire passages surpass our ability to understand them, in some cases because of damage to the manuscript, in other cases because of ambiguities in the script.[26] In many cases we can only access a passage on the basis of parallels with passages in received texts,[27] opening ourselves to the risk of getting trapped in a hermeneutical circle, whereby we interpret the "new" text from the perspective of the received text and the multiple layers of understanding that have accrued to that received text over the centuries.

Whereas Slingerland's may have been an off-hand remark, it does raise the important question of why certain texts were transmitted whereas others, like the *Four Lost Classics*, were not. Whereas answering this question for specific texts can only be speculative, it is difficult to overestimate the role played in the transmission of manuscripts by the central court at Chang'an: the court not only sent

[25]David Pankenier 2014 is an illuminating comparison of the "Treatise on the Celestial Offices" (*Tianguan shu* 天官書) in *Shiji* and the "Heavenly Patterns" (*Tian wen* 天文) chapter of *Huainanzi*. In the essay, Pankenier exposes how, in comparison, the astronomical knowledge the *Huainanzi* presents is outdated and vague. In that sense the *Huainanzi*, put together at a peripheral court, must have seemed outdated to Wudi 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), at whose court superior astronomical records were kept; whereas from the perspective of the *Huainanzi* compilers, their text was a perfect summation of knowledge they had been able to gather from other texts. Here too we are dealing with a text of which certain portions were slightly out of sync with the times.

[26]Some translators, clearly, are more willing than others to acknowledge that, at times, the text is beyond their understanding: Robin D.S. Yates and Mansvelt-Beck, for example, are much more tolerant when it comes to allowing the text to be awkward or incomplete, whereas Chen Guying's translation into modern Chinese tends to smoothe out the difficulties.

[27]Texts that resonate particularly well with the *Four Lost Classics* include the *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子, the "Yue xia" 越下 chapter of *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, the *Laozi,* the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and the *Wenzi* 文子.

out messengers from time to time to collect texts (most famously, Chao Cuo 朝/晁錯 (d. 154 BCE) who was sent to retrieve a copy of *Shangshu* 尚書 during Wendi's 文帝 reign, or Chen Nong 陳農 who was sent out on a text-gathering mission in 26 BCE)[28]; people of all walks of life brought texts to the court,[29] whereas opinion makers at or near the court preferred and used certain texts at the expense of others, and told stories about texts and authors. SIMA Qian (145?–86? BCE) certainly was, arguably, the most influential of those opinion makers, and I have written elsewhere, not only about the important role the biographies of authors created in *Shiji* played in the later process by which textual fragments gathered around authors (particularly recognized "Masters"), but also about the emergence in *Shiji*, of a much stronger authorial voice, which, over time, brought the era of 'inclusive' texts of the early imperial period to a close (Vankeerberghen 2010).

We cannot say for sure whether a copy of the *Four Lost Classics* (with or without the *Laozi*?) made it to Chang'an at some point during Western Han. Ever since the discovery of the manuscript near Changsha there has been speculation that the *Four Lost Classics* can be identified with "The Yellow Lord's Four Classics, in four sections" (*Huangdi sijing sipian* 黃帝四經四篇) listed in the "Bibliographical Treatise" ("Yi wen zhi" 藝文志) of *Hanshu.* If this identification is correct—but this, I believe, can never be positively verified—the assumption should be that one of the archives/libraries in the capital contained a copy of the text[30]; but even if the *Four Lost Classics* cannot be identified with the *Yellow Lord's Four Classics*, the whole or parts or the manuscript might have been known at the central court. That, in turn, would raise the possibility that SIMA Qian was familiar with its contents, either through reading or through hearsay. If this had been the case, I further speculate, he might not have particularly cared about the text and its message, and opinions such as his might have hampered the further transmission of the text. My discussion of this possibility will hinge on a group of texts in Classic II "Canons"—nine of its 15 sections—that are narratives that feature a sustained dialogue between the Yellow Lord and one of his four advisers.[31]

The Yellow Lord features prominently in the *Shiji*: not only is the very first chapter of *Shiji* is devoted to the Yellow Lord's reign; also the genealogical tables start with the Yellow Lord, making him, quite literally, the progenitor of all ruling lineages in the Chinese world.[32] Given that the authoritative *Documents* classic (*Shangshu* 尚書) starts its account with Yao only, the choice to start *Shiji* with

[28]*Shiji* 121.3124 and *Hanshu* 10.310.

[29]As Liu An 劉安 is said to have brought a copy of the *Huainanzi* during his 139 BCE court visit, see *Hanshu* 44.2145.

[30]It would not be far-fetched to think that copies of the manuscript would have been present at the Wu family's Changsha court, and might have been taken to Chang'an at the occasion of a court visit, or confiscated when the Kingdom of Changsha was (temporarily) abolished in 157 BCE.

[31]"Observation" analyzed above, is one of them.

[32]*Shiji* 1.1–11; *Shiji* 13.488. But not, as modern mythology has it, the progenitor of the Chinese people.

the Yellow Lord, must have been somewhat controversial, and SIMA Qian felt compelled to include a justification of his choice in the appraisal appended to *Shiji*'s first chapter. SIMA Qian is unwilling to accept the argument of some of his colleagues that the pre-Yao period should be shunned altogether; he refers to two texts that, in his opinion, reliably complement the narrative of the *Documents* classic, and therefore justify the inclusion of the Yellow Lord in his history.[33] At the same time, he is sharply critical of other texts that treat of the Yellow Lord. In SIMA Qian's words:

> Now, it is the case that the *Shangshu* only contains events starting from Yao; hence, when the One Hundred Specialists discuss the Yellow Lord, their discourse is not lofty, and the gentlemen with the red sashes (i.e. officials) are embarrassed to expound them. 然尚書獨載堯以來; 而百家言黃帝, 其文不雅馴, 薦紳先生難言之.[34]

Why would SIMA Qian have found the discussions of the Yellow Lord that circulated among the 100 Specialists so objectionable? If we suppose that the nine Yellow Lord texts within "Canons" are at all similar to the discussions of the Yellow Lord that SIMA Qian so roundly rejects, SIMA Qian's distaste is not difficult to explain.

The nine texts in "Canons" can very well be read as texts that seek to rival the *Documents* classic, i.e., as attempts to establish authoritative texts (Canons!) around the figure of the Yellow Lord, just as our received *Documents* contains lore around the figures of later rulers, ranging from Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 to the early Zhou 周 kings. Marc Kalinowski's reading of "Yao Dian," the *Documents* classic's first chapter, based on a comparison with two other cosmogonic texts datable to the fourth century BCE, has clearly demonstrated that the Yao of "Yao Dian" is not merely a legendary sage ruler, as he is presented in *Shiji*, but also a cosmogonic creator (Kalinowski 2004). In "Canons," the Yellow Lord too is presented, in several passages, not just as an historic ruler from a distant past, but as a cosmogonic hero who set in motion the processes that led to the establishment of the world as we now know it, the one who created the natural world, defeated villains such as Chiyou 蚩尤 and Gong Gong 共工 in war, and one who sought, with the aid of his famous four assistants, to develop a model of just rulership that modeled its policies on the rhythms of Heaven and Earth. The Yao of "Yaodian" and the Yellow Lord, indeed, might be the stakes in an ideological battle for political supremacy that was raging in the late pre-imperial and early imperial period.[35]

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[33]Two chapters of the *Da Dai liji* 大戴禮記 in our received corpus of texts.

[34]*Shiji* 1.46–7; a passage that resonates well with this one is found at the beginning of *Shiji* 61, a chapter that functions as an introduction to the 69 biographical chapters (*liezhuan* 列傳) that follow; in that sense, the appraisal to Chapter One to might be regarded as an exposition of SIMA Qian's methodology in the "Annals" (*ben ji* 本紀) section.

[35]Of course, the dating of both these texts is highly uncertain. I am assuming the Yellow Lord to be the more recently created figure, based on the fact that he is projected further back in time than Yao.

SIMA Qian, from his vantage point at the imperial center, has little interest in furthering this kind of rivalry. He had already declared his allegiance to the *Documents* classic as the most reliable source of information; when he admits the historicity of the Yellow Lord it is not because he sees him as superior to Yao, but because he believes he can integrate both figures within the linear chronological framework *Shiji* creates, in which the Yellow Lord is a predecessor of Yao. Needless to say that, in the process of creating this chronology, the Yellow Lord as well as Yao are historicized, and, to a considerable extent, stripped of their mythological associations. SIMA Qian is interested in creating a unified history for the world he knew, and had little tolerance for texts that complicated that view, including the 100 Specialists' discussions on the Yellow Lord. It is my belief that, somehow, his opinions and preferences, like those of his peers at the central court, mattered in the complicated and messy historical processes that determined textual transmission.[36]

The above is, by no means, a systematic exposition of the ideas contained in the *Four Lost Classics*. Instead, I have focused only on some of the textual units in the manuscript, mostly those that allowed me to explore the place of the *Four Lost Classics* in the textual, historical and intellectual landscape of the early empire. Indeed, the *Four Lost Classics* present us with a unique opportunity to fathom what texts were like in early Western Han, before entering the lengthy and complicated processes of repeated editing and interpretation that befell other texts of its kind—transmitted texts we tend to feel familiar with, and before, in part through SIMA Qian's interventions, conceptions and practices of authorship drastically changed. The outpouring of publications on the *Four Lost Classics* of 1990s has now mostly stopped, perhaps because there are so many other, newly discovered texts that claim our attention. I revisit the texts here because I believe that a lot of work can be done with them yet, and to encourage others to plow through the various editions and translations of the texts to acquaint themselves with this intriguing artifact, and with its unique ability to de-familiarize the familiar.

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[36]The best work I know that charts the influence of *Shiji* in the centuries following its release, is Lü 2009.

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Chapter 14
The Philosophy of the Proto-*Wenzi*

Paul van Els

1 Introduction

The *Wenzi* (文子) is a lengthy Daoist text that mostly consists of sayings by Laozi (老子), as recorded by his disciple Wenzi. Held in high regard for centuries, the *Wenzi* was read by rulers, ministers, and priests, stored in imperial libraries, quoted in anthologies of literature, and honored with several commentaries. In the Tang dynasty, the text was even granted the title *True Scripture of Communion with the Mysteries* (通玄真經) and added to the curriculum for the official exams, along with other Daoist writings such as the *Zhuangzi* (莊子) and the *Liezi* (列子). Following the rise of Neo-Confucianism and the maturation of textual criticism, however, scholars started questioning the text's authenticity. They eventually came to see it as a forgery (僞書) that was created between the Han and Tang dynasties, a judgment that effectively consigned the *Wenzi* to oblivion. For centuries, scholars rarely referred to the *Wenzi*.

Then, unexpectedly, in 1973 a bamboo manuscript titled *Wenzi* was discovered in a Former Han dynasty tomb.[1] The tomb was probably closed in 55 BCE and, judging by the handwriting on the bamboo strips, the manuscript must have been

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[1]See *Cultural Relics* (文物) 1976 no. 7 for a description of the tomb and its discovery, *Cultural Relics* 1981 no. 8 for a brief report of the excavation, and *Cultural Relics* 1995 no. 12 for a description and transcription of the *Wenzi* manuscript.

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copied around that time. The spectacular discovery greatly enthused scholars, for it revealed the existence of a *Wenzi* long before the supposed forging of the text. Yet, the discovery also exposed fundamental differences between the text on the bamboo strips and the transmitted text. These differences suggest that the *Wenzi* had indeed undergone major revision between the Han and Tang dynasties, as scholars had long suspected. Notably, the unearthed bamboo strips correspond to only a few sections in the transmitted *Wenzi*, which are obviously based on an earlier version of the *Wenzi*. Most other sections in the transmitted *Wenzi*, however, are demonstrably drawn from the *Huainanzi* (淮南子), a voluminous treatise of the Former Han dynasty (cf. Li 1996; Le Blanc 2000; van Els 2006; van Els forthcoming). It thus appears that after the Han dynasty someone, or a group of people (hereafter "the editor(s)"), took up the earlier *Wenzi*, or whatever was left of it at the time, copied and modified numerous passages from the *Huainanzi*, and edited all this material into a stylistically homogeneous treatise in which most sections start with the phrase "Laozi says" (老子曰). This new *Wenzi*, which effectively replaced the earlier one, was probably created to meet the growing demand for Daoist writings following the collapse of the Han dynasty. The creation of the transmitted *Wenzi* is remarkable from historical, philological, and philosophical perspectives. Of equal if not greater interest, the disentombed bamboo strips offer fascinating insights into the philosophy of the proto-*Wenzi*, that is, the *Wenzi* that circulated in the Former Han dynasty, prior to the text's radical makeover.

This article analyzes the philosophy of the proto-*Wenzi* as revealed by its only surviving copy: the excavated bamboo manuscript. Regrettably, this approach is hampered by the poor state of the manuscript at the time of its discovery. According to the archaeologists, soon after the tomb was closed, it was violated by robbers, who incidentally caused a fire. Due to the robbery and the fire, an unknown number of bamboo strips vanished, and the surviving strips were charred, broken, and in disorder when they were discovered in 1973. Worse still, the Tangshan earthquake of 1976 overturned the chest in which the strips were stored, causing further damage and delaying work on the manuscript for years. As a result, a transcription of the 277 surviving bamboo fragments was not published until 1995. Notably, those fragments contain only bits and pieces of the original arguments, which renders tentative any study of the text's philosophy. Hence, for a fuller understanding of the proto-*Wenzi*'s philosophy, I refer not only to the transcribed bamboo strips, but also to the few corresponding passages in the transmitted *Wenzi*. Even though they may have been modified by the post-Han dynasty editor(s), these passages, clearly based on the proto-*Wenzi*, may throw additional light on the philosophy of that text.

Clues in the bamboo manuscript suggest that the proto-*Wenzi* is likely to have been created in the early Former Han dynasty (Wang 1996; Ho 1998; Zhang 1998; van Els 2006). The text appears to have been conceived as a record of conversations between its two protagonists: King Ping (平王), presumably the first ruler of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, and his advisor Wenzi (文子). The surviving bamboo strips mention no utterances by other persons. Neither do they contain references to other

thinkers or texts, with one notable exception: the *Laozi*. Numerous distinct parallels between proto-*Wenzi* and *Laozi* can be observed. Take, for instance, strips 2262, 0564, 0870, 0593, 0908, and 0775, respectively[2]:

> [王曰: “吾聞古聖立天下, 以道立天下,]
> King [Ping] asked: “I have heard that the sages of the past founded the empire. They founded the empire in accordance with the Dao
>
> [□何?” 文子曰: “執一無為。” 平王曰:]
> How [did they do that]?” Wenzi answered: “They held on to the One and were non-active.” King Ping asked:
>
> 地大器也, 不可執, 不可為, 為者販(敗), 執者失
> [Heaven and] Earth are a large vessel that cannot be held on to and cannot be acted on. Those who act on it, ruin it. Those who hold on to it, lose [it]
>
> 是以聖王執一者, 見小也; 無為者,
> Therefore, when sage kings hold on to the One, they see the small; when they are non-active,
>
> 也, 見小故能成其大功, 守靜□
> By seeing the small, they could succeed in their great achievement. By preserving quietude
>
> 下正。”平王曰: “見小守靜奈何?” 文子曰:
> paragon for the empire.” King Ping asked: “To see the small and preserve quietude, what does that mean?” Wenzi answered:

Whether or not these bamboo strips originally belonged together in one passage, they all correspond to one section in the transmitted text, *Wenzi* 5.7, where the original protagonists, King Ping and Wenzi, are replaced by Laozi and Wenzi. In other words, the editor(s) changed the discussion from a ruler-advisor context to a master-disciple context. Here is the beginning of *Wenzi* 5.7, with text corresponding to the bamboo strips underlined and the number of each bamboo strip added between square brackets:

> 文子問曰: 古之王者, 以道莅天下[2262], 為之奈何?老子曰: 執一無為[0564], 因天地與之變化, 天下大器也, 不可執也, 不可為也, 為者敗之, 執者失[0870]之。執一者, 見小也[0593], 小故能成其大也, 無為者, 守靜[0908]也, 守靜能為天下正[0775]。

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[2]The four-digit numbers, such as 2262, refer to the transcription of the *Wenzi* manuscript in *Cultural Relics*. The bamboo strips of Dingzhou were found in disorder and the research team assigned a sequential number to each strip before arranging them into texts, which explains why *Wenzi* strips are not numbered consecutively. Square brackets enclosing Chinese graphs indicate that these graphs were present on the bamboo strips, but are no longer legible after the Tangshan earthquake caused further damage to them. These graphs are now available in transcription only, on note cards made prior to the quake. Graphs between round brackets are readings suggested by the editors of the transcription. For example, 販(敗) means that the graph 販 on the bamboo strip should be read as 敗 *bai* ‘to ruin.’ Modern punctuation in the Chinese text has been added by the editors of the transcription. The □ mark in the transcription represents an illegible graph. Occasionally, when the meaning of illegible graphs, or graphs that do not appear on the bamboo strip, can be inferred from the context or from the parallel in the transmitted text, I have inserted such inferences in my translation, between square brackets. Finally, the ‖ symbol represents traces of silk thread that were used to bundle the text.

> Wenzi asked: "The kings of the past founded the empire in accordance with the Dao. How did they do that?" Laozi answered: "They held on to the One and were non-active. They followed Heaven and Earth and transformed with them. The empire is a large vessel that cannot be held on to and cannot be acted on. Those who act on it, ruin it. Those who hold on to it, lose it. Holding on to the One is to see the small. Seeing the small they could succeed in their greatness. Being non-active is to preserve quietude. By preserving quietude they could be paragons for the empire."

Differences between the two *Wenzi*'s (bamboo manuscript and transmitted text) notwithstanding, influence from the *Laozi* is obvious. The concept of "seeing the small" (見小) is explained in what is now *Laozi* 52 as "perspicacity" (明), or the ability to meaningfully interpret minute changes in society as the possible portents of misfortune. The concept of "holding on to the One" (執一) resembles the *Laozi* concepts of "embracing the One" (抱一) or "getting hold of the One" (得一), which are generally interpreted to be a form of meditative practice aimed at achieving union with the Dao (道). The concept of "being non-active" (無爲) plays a vital role in the philosophy of *Laozi*. The phrase "to found the empire in accordance with the Dao" (以道立天下) occurs verbatim in *Laozi* 60. The idea of "becoming a paragon for the empire" (為天下正) through "preserving quietude" (守靜) derives from *Laozi* 45. And the idea of the world as a large vessel that "cannot be held on to" (不可執) is a reference to *Laozi* 29.

The numerous references to the *Laozi* throughout the bamboo manuscript (cf. Ding 2000: 31–37, 70–72) suggest that the proto-*Wenzi* was profoundly inspired by that text. Like the *Laozi*, the proto-*Wenzi* advocates a philosophy of quietude, in which the ruler should not try to actively control the empire, but simply follow the natural course of things. He must be perceptive and observe small but possibly disruptive changes in his realm, and respond to them in an unassertive, tranquil manner.

That *Laozi* is the principal source of inspiration for the proto-*Wenzi* does not preclude differences between the two texts. Notably, the proto-*Wenzi*'s treatment of the *Laozi* is neither exhaustive nor systematic. Distinctive *Laozi* notions such as "simplicity" (朴), "spontaneity" (自然) and "knowing contentment" (知足), are not mentioned on the surviving *Wenzi* bamboo strips. Conversely, the unearthed bamboo strips approvingly speak of terms that the *Laozi* rejects, such as "humaneness" (仁), "righteousness" (義) and "wisdom" (智). Indebtedness to the *Laozi* clearly did not stop the author(s) of the proto-*Wenzi* from promoting ideas that, at least on a first reading, run counter to its main source.

The following sections present the main aspects of the proto-*Wenzi*'s philosophy, with a focus on its intricate relationship with the *Laozi*. They show that the proto-*Wenzi* advocates a philosophy of quietude, not only in terms of its content, but also through the rhetoric it uses to create a harmonious synthesis of diverse, and at times even incompatible, ideas.

2 The Dao

Utterances by the King Ping character in the excavated *Wenzi* manuscript are normally brief and formal, but occasionally they are animated and emphatic, as on bamboo strip 0976:

> □者。”平王曰: “[善。好乎道, 吾未嘗聞道也。]
> the one who . . . .” King Ping exclaimed: “Excellent! I am fond of the Dao, though I have never been properly informed of the Dao.”

This euphoric statement emphasizes the importance of the Dao (道) in the proto-*Wenzi*. In fact, the Dao appears to constitute the basis of the text’s worldview. Two aspects of the Dao can be discerned from the bamboo fragments: (1) its cosmogonical dimensions, and (2) its political applications.

(1) The proto-*Wenzi* describes the Dao as the source of all things, for instance on bamboo strips 2466 and 0722:

> 生者道也, 養□
> That which engenders, is the Dao. [That which] nourishes

> [子曰: “道產之, 德畜之, 道有博]
> [Wen]zi answered: “The Dao produces them; Virtue nurtures them. In the Dao, there is profundity

Alluding to *Laozi* 51, these two fragments suggest that the Dao and Virtue engender and nurture all things, respectively. The Dao, in other words, is the cosmogonical source of all things, and all things depend on it for their birth and growth, as also expressed on bamboo strips 1181, 0792 and 2469:

> 元也, 百事之根
> the origin [. . .], the root of all tasks

> 生, 侍之而成, 侍
> life, they depend on it for completion, and they depend

> 而生, 侍之而成,
> and life, they depend on it for completion,

The Dao, while not mentioned on these broken bamboo strips, is almost certainly meant here, as the corresponding lines in section 5.1 of the transmitted *Wenzi* show:

> 夫道者, 德之元, 天之根[1181], 福之門。萬物待之而生, 待之而成, 待[0792/2469]之而寧。
> Now, the Dao is the origin of Virtue, the root of heaven and the gate to good fortune. All things depend on it for their birth, they depend on it for their completion and they depend on it for their well-being.

The underlying cosmogonical principle here, as in *Laozi* 34, is that the Dao creates all things and that all things are therefore dependent on it for their existence.

(2) The political dimensions of the Dao receive even more attention in the proto-*Wenzi*, as King Ping’s interest in the Dao is mostly pragmatic. For instance, he

worries about "the mistake of lacking the Dao" (無道之過) (on bamboo strip 0780). Wenzi warns him that "those who occupy the throne while lacking the Dao are thieves of the world" (毋道立者天下之賊也) (2442) and that if he "does not steer the people by means of the Dao, they will abandon him and disperse" (不御以道則民離散) (0876). Conversely, Wenzi asserts that "rulers who posses the Dao are raised by Heaven, supported by Earth, and assisted by the spirits" (有道之君, 天擧之, 地勉之, 鬼神輔) (0569) and that if the ruler is careful not to lose the Dao, he will lead the realm away from disorder, so that "the whole world will submit itself to him" (天下皆服) (0590). Such statements, however fragmentary, demonstrate the text's concern for the Dao as the guiding principle in the political realm.

If the ruler wants to rule in accordance with the Dao, he must emulate "the Dao of Heaven" (天之道), or the Dao as it appears in the natural world around us. The Dao of Heaven represents a process of natural growth that must be taken as a model for moral conduct. Consider these bamboo fragments (0581, 2331, 1178, 0871, and 0912):

> 産于有, 始于弱而成于强, 始于柔而
> was produced in "being." It began as weak and reached completion as strong. It began as soft and
>
> 于短而成于長, 始寡而成于衆, 始
> as short and reached completion as long. It began as few and reached completion as many. It began
>
> 之高始于足下, 千[方之群始于寓强],
> a height of [...] begins from under the feet, a crowd of a thousand sides begins with sheltering the strong
>
> 聖人法于天道, [民者以自下],
> Sages emulate the Dao of Heaven, those who belong to the common people take this to lower themselves
>
> 卑、退、斂、損, 所以法天也。"平王曰:
> humility, retreat, restraint and reduction is what they use to emulate Heaven." King Ping asked:

These thematically related bamboo fragments appear to belong together, for they occur, slightly modified, in one section, *Wenzi* 5.1, of the transmitted text:

> 夫道者, 原産有始, 始於柔弱, 成於剛强[0581], 始於短寡, 成於衆長[2331], 十圍之木始於把, 百仞之臺始於下[1178], 此天之道也。聖人法之, 卑者所以自下[0871], 退者所以自後, 儉者所以自小, 損之所以自少, 卑則尊, 退則先, 儉則廣, 損[0912]則大, 此天道所成也。
>
> Now, the Dao in its original production has a beginning. It begins as soft and weak and reaches completion as hard and strong. It begins as short and few and reaches completion as many and long. A tree of ten armlengths in circumference begins as the size of a fist, a tower of one hundred feet in height begins at the base. This is the Dao of Heaven. Sages emulate this: through humility they lower themselves, through retreat they position themselves behind, through restraint they make themselves small and through reduction they make themselves few. By being humble they are honored, by retreating they advance, by restraining themselves they expand and by reducing they grow large. This is brought about by the Dao of Heaven.

With references to the idea of growth in *Laozi* 64, this passage describes the natural patterns of growth from small to large, short to long, weak to strong, and so on. Rulers should emulate this as a model for good conduct. If they want to aim high, they should lower themselves, position themselves behind, and make themselves small. If they sincerely practice becoming humble and small, they may eventually become mighty and exalted.

This idea of natural growth through the Dao is also expressed on bamboo strip 0916, which, again, borrows imagery from the *Laozi*:

江海以此道為百谷王, 故能久長功。
The rivers and seas are kings of the hundred valleys because of this Dao. Therefore they can extend their achievements for a long time.

This statement praises rivers and seas for their low position, as does *Laozi* 66. Rivers aimlessly flow downhill and tributaries spontaneously flow into them. Seas are naturally positioned below and all the streams eventually discharge into them. The rivers and seas serve as a metaphor for the ruler, who should strive to go with the natural flow of things and position himself below, and thereby naturally and aimlessly gain the support of the masses.

3 The Four Guidelines

In the proto-*Wenzi*, the Dao is closely connected with Virtue (德). These two concepts often occur together, as when the text states, "the Dao produces them; Virtue nurtures them." Once the Dao has given birth to the things, Virtue takes care of their growth. In this manner, the Dao and Virtue are complementary forces in the existence of all beings. The two concepts also occur as a binominal compound, for example on strips 2255 and 2252[3]:

[平]王曰:"子以道德治天下, 夫上世之王
King Ping asked: "You may rule over the empire in accordance with the Dao and Virtue, but among the kings of the previous generations

□使桀紂脩道德, 湯[武唯(雖)賢, 毋所建]
. . . if Jie and Zhou had cultivated Dao and Virtue, then Tang and Wu, no matter how worthy they were, would have had no occasion to establish

The compound "the Dao and Virtue" is probably to be understood as broadly meaning "morality," since the text suggests that if the tyrants Jie and Zhou had not been immoral, they could have avoided their miserable fates. Notably, the surviving bamboo fragments appear to mention the concept of Virtue and the compound, the

[3]Liu Xiaogan (1994: 4–16) demonstrates that the Dao and Virtue first began to circulate in mutual conjunction in late Warring States texts. The combined mention of the two terms as a binominal compound on the bamboo strips is one of the indications of the proto-*Wenzi*'s late provenance.

Dao and Virtue, interchangeably in similar contexts. Hence, the distinction between Virtue used as a individual concept or in combination with Dao is probably just a matter of degree.

The proto-*Wenzi* associates Virtue not only with the Dao, but also with humaneness, righteousness and propriety. Consider these bamboo fragments (2466, 0600, 2259, 0591, 0895/0960, and 0811):

生者道也, 養☐
That which engenders, is the Dao. [That which] nourishes

[不慈不愛], 不能成遂, 不正
If you do not show kindness and care, they cannot be successful. If you do not make them upright

之所畏也, 禮者民之所☐也。此四
is what they hold in awe, and propriety is what the people [X]. These four

踰節謂之無禮。毋德者則下怨, 無
exceeding the regular intervals is called "lacking propriety." Without Virtue, those below will feel resentment. Without

則下諍, 無義則下暴, 無禮則下亂。四
those below will forward criticism. If he lacks righteousness, those below will be violent. If he lacks propriety, those below will rebel. If these four

☐立, 謂之無道, 而國不
. . . are not established, this is called "lacking the Dao" and when the realm does not

These fragments, in particular the latter ones, may have originally belonged together, for they all correspond to a coherent argument in one section of the transmitted text, *Wenzi* 5.3. This section collectively refers to Virtue, humaneness, righteousness and propriety as "the four guidelines" (四經):

故脩其德則下從令, 脩其仁則下不爭, 脩其義則下平正, 脩其禮則下尊敬, 四者既, 國家安寧。故物生者道也[2466], 長者德也, 愛者仁也, 正者義也, 敬者禮也。不畜不養, 不能遂長, 不慈不愛, 不能成遂, 不正[0600]不匡, 不能久長, 不敬不寵, 不能貴重。故德者民之所貴也, 仁者民之所懷也, 義者民之所畏也, 禮者民之所敬也, 此四[2259]者, 文之順也, 聖人之所以御萬物也。君子無德則下怨, 無[0591]仁則下爭, 無義則下暴, 無禮則下亂, 四[0895/0960]經不立, 謂之無道[0811], 無道不亡者, 未之有也。

Therefore, if you cultivate Virtue, those below will follow orders. If you cultivate humaneness, those below will not contend. If you cultivate righteousness, those below will be fair and upright. If you cultivate propriety, those below will be honorable and respectful. Once all four are cultivated, the realm will be secure and calm.

Therefore, what engenders things is the Dao, what makes them grow is Virtue, what makes them caring is humaneness, what makes them upright is righteousness, and what makes them respectful is propriety. If you do not nurture or rear them, they cannot be brought up. If you do not show kindness and care, they cannot be successful. If you do not make them upright and irreproachable, they cannot live long. If you do not make them respectful and honorable, they cannot be valued highly.

Therefore, Virtue is what the people value, humaneness is what the people cherish, righteousness is what the people hold in awe, and propriety is what the people respect. These four are the sequence of cultivation and the means whereby the sage steers all things. If the ruler lacks Virtue, those below will feel resentment. If he lacks humaneness, those below will contend. If he lacks righteousness, those below will be violent. If he lacks propriety, those below will rebel. If these four guidelines are not established, this is called lacking the Dao. It has never occurred that someone who lacked the Dao did not perish.

The text puts the ultimate responsibility of implementing the four core values with the ruler. He should, for example, nurture those below him and show kindness and care, because otherwise the predicted negative consequences will materialize.

Each of the four guidelines has its own function: Virtue is valued because it makes the people grow; if it is properly applied, they will follow orders; otherwise, they will feel resentment. Humaneness is cherished because it helps the people care for others; if humaneness is properly applied, they will not contend; otherwise, they will engage in disputes. Righteousness is held in awe and if it is properly applied, the people will be fair and honest; otherwise, they will be violent. Finally, propriety is revered because it generates respect; when properly applied, people will be honorable and reverent; otherwise, they will rebel.

The four guidelines constitute a major difference between the proto-*Wenzi* and the *Laozi*. In the proto-*Wenzi*, each quality is indispensable in the process of bringing order to the realm. In the *Laozi* this is much less the case. For example, *Laozi* 38 states that the ruler should turn to Virtue only when he has lost the Dao, to humaneness only when he no longer has Virtue, and so on. The *Wenzi* sets the same hierarchy for the four qualities, but it only agrees with the *Laozi* on their succession, not on their regression. In the *Wenzi*, one quality is not worth more or less than another. The ruler needs all four. Indeed, when taken together, they are of equal importance to the Dao since failing to establish them equals lacking the Dao.

Notably, the *Laozi* in its various manifestations is not consistent in its views on humaneness, righteousness, and propriety. The Guodian (郭店) tomb (closed before 278 BCE) yielded three bamboo manuscripts, the precursors of what was later to become the *Laozi*, that hardly mention humaneness, righteousness and propriety at all. For instance, the passage that is now *Laozi* 38, on the regression of humaneness, righteousness and propriety, does not appear in the Guodian texts. Criticism of these three values appears to have been introduced into the *Laozi* after the Guodian tomb was closed, most likely in response to growing importance attached to these notions by other thinkers, especially those in the Confucian line of thought (Qiu 2000: 61; Henricks 2000: 12–14). In the early Former Han dynasty, the tentative time of the proto-*Wenzi*'s creation, the *Laozi* already included this anti-Confucian polemic. Indeed, the two *Laozi* silk manuscripts discovered at Mawangdui (馬王堆) (closed in 168 BCE), open with what is now *Laozi* 38. The proto-*Wenzi* adopts the conceptual framework offered by the new polemical *Laozi*, that is, it mentions the four guidelines in the same succession, but distances itself from the *Laozi*'s harsh rhetoric. Instead, it appears to subscribe to contemporaneous positive appraisals of humaneness, righteousness, and propriety, so as not to affront fellow-thinkers who advocated these notions, while adapting their conceptual meaning according to its own persuasions. In so doing, the proto-*Wenzi* promotes ideas that run counter to the *Laozi*, its primary source. The most striking example in this respect is propriety. The *Laozi* rejects propriety as the lowest of all qualities, claiming that it "stands at the head of rebellions" (亂之首), but the proto-*Wenzi* asserts the very opposite: if the ruler "lacks propriety, those below him will rebel" (無禮則下亂) (0895/0960).

4 Sageliness and Wisdom

Perspicacity is another crucial element in the quietist philosophy of the proto-*Wenzi*. If the ruler does not want to have his reign disturbed by invasions, uprisings, or other calamities, he must perceive their very roots, so as to manage them at an early stage and in a deftly imperceptible manner. To describe this perspicacity, the proto-*Wenzi* uses, as we have seen, the *Laozi* concept of "seeing the small" (見小). In this connection, it also uses the two concepts of "sageliness" (聖) and "wisdom" (智), as on these bamboo strips (0896/1193, 0803, 1200, 0765, 0834, 0711):

> 知。"平王曰: "何謂聖知?" 文子曰: "聞而知之聖也
> wisdom." King Ping asked: "What is meant by sageliness and wisdom?" Wenzi answered: "To hear something and recognize it is sageliness.
>
> 知也。故聖者聞//
> is wisdom. Therefore, the sagely man hears
>
> 而知擇道。知者見禍福
> and knows how to adjust the way. The wise man sees fortune and misfortune
>
> [刑], 而知擇行, 故聞而知之, 聖也。
> shape and knows how to adjust conduct. Therefore, to hear something and recognize it is sageness.
>
> 知也成刑(形)者, 可見而
> is knowledge. That which takes shape can be seen and
>
> 未生, 知者見成
> has not yet appeared. The wise man sees [things] taking

The text on these bamboo strips can be found, in modified form, in this section of the transmitted text, *Wenzi* 5.5:

> 文子問聖智。老子曰: 聞而知之, 聖也[0896/1193], 見而知之, 智也。聖人嘗聞[0803]禍福所生而擇其道, 智者嘗見禍福[1200]成形而擇其行[0765], 聖人知天道吉凶, 故知禍福所生, 智者先見成形[0834], 故知禍福之門。聞未生聖也, 先見成[0711]形智也, 無聞見者, 愚迷。
>
> Wenzi asked about sageliness and wisdom. Laozi answered: "To hear something and recognize it is sageliness. To see something and recognize it is wisdom. The sagely man constantly hears of where fortune and misfortune appear and adjusts his way accordingly. The wise man constantly sees fortune and misfortune taking shape and adjusts his conduct accordingly. The sagely man recognizes the good and ill portents of the Dao of Heaven and therefore knows where fortune and misfortune appear. The wise man foresees their taking shape and therefore knows the gate to fortune or misfortune. To hear what has not yet appeared is sageliness. To foresee something taking shape is wisdom. Those who lack both hearing and sight are stupid and confused."

The concepts of sageliness and wisdom also feature prominently in the *Analects* (論語), *Mencius* (孟子), *Xunzi* (荀子), *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸), *Essay on the Five Forms of Moral Conduct* (五行篇) (the *Essay* for short), and other texts. The proto-*Wenzi*'s explanation of sageliness and wisdom is most similar to that in the

Essay, a long-lost text for which manuscript copies were found in the Guodian and Mawangdui tombs. The proto-*Wenzi* and the *Essay* both juxtapose sageliness and wisdom, relate them to hearing and sight, regard them as extra sensitive forms of sensory perception, and use the phrases “to hear something and recognize it is sageness” (聞而知之, 聖也) and “to see something and recognize it is wisdom” (見而知之, 智也) to express this idea. In both texts, sageliness is no ordinary form of hearing, but full awareness of what one hears, and wisdom no ordinary seeing, but full awareness of what one sees.

Despite these similarities between the two texts, there are notable differences. The *Essay* is essentially a text on improving moral conduct (Csikszentmihalyi 2004). It advocates the development of human character through the cultivation of five forms of proper conduct, with sageliness and wisdom as the highest forms. The proto-*Wenzi* is a politico-philosophical text in which these concepts are explained to a ruler (King Ping) and related to fortune and misfortune (two crucial terms that do not occur in the *Essay*). Fortunate and unfortunate events can be perceived through ordinary hearing or sight, but those who perceive them through sageliness and wisdom reach a deeper awareness. Ordinary people, using plain hearing and sight, perceive instances of fortune and misfortune only after they have appeared, and when it is too late to take action. They notice a rebellion only after it is well under way. Wisdom foresees fortune and misfortune; sageliness recognizes their earliest whisper. The ruler who masters these two is able to manage problems well before a crisis takes shape. As a result, the realm remains calm with only the perspicacious ruler knowing what had been brewing.

The proto-*Wenzi* may have borrowed the notions of sageliness and wisdom from earlier expositions on this topic, but it changed their conceptual meaning. Ignoring their original connotation of the highest forms of moral conduct, it sees them instead as modes of acute awareness that allows the ruler to foresee and prevent misfortune. In espousing these concepts in its worldview, the proto-*Wenzi* challenges the *Laozi*’s evaluation of them. While the earliest surviving versions of the *Laozi*, the three Guodian manuscripts, make little mention of sageliness and wisdom, later versions, like the two Mawangdui silk manuscripts of the early Former Han dynasty, denounce these ideas. For example, *Laozi* 19, the same chapter that condemns humaneness and righteousness, also urges the reader to “exterminate sageliness and discard wisdom” (絶聖棄智); and *Laozi* 65 criticizes those who “use wisdom to govern the realm” (以智治國) as being “thieves of the realm” (國之賊). The proto-*Wenzi*, conversely, argues that those who lack these qualities are ignorant. Once the *Laozi* had reached a standardized form, full of anti-Confucian polemic, the proto-*Wenzi* seems to respond by softening the *Laozi*’s harsh rhetoric and ascribing positive functions to the qualities it attacks. Interestingly, the proto-*Wenzi* uses these supposedly Confucian notions to promote its Daoist philosophy of quietude.

5 The Five Ways of Warfare

One topic that features prominently in the proto-*Wenzi* is war. Bamboo strip 1198, for instance, contains the question "May I ask about the way of troops and soldiers?" (請問師徒之道). Regrettably, the reply to this query does not survive. Bamboo strip 0619, furthermore, claims that "if you possess the Dao, you do not wage wars" (有道則不戰). But there may be occasions when even rulers who possess the Dao cannot steer clear of warfare. A brief discussion survives on several bamboo strips (2419, 0829, 0850, 2210, 1035, 0572, 2217, 2385, 2278, and 0914):

平[王曰:"王者]幾道乎?" 文子曰:"王者[一道]。
King Ping asked: "How many ways are there to be king?" Wenzi answered: "There is only one way to be king."

王曰:"古者有
The king asked: "In ancient times, there were

以道王者, 有以兵
those who reigned on the basis of the Dao, and there were [those who reigned] on the basis of warfare

以一道也?" 文子曰:"古之以道王者‖,
How could there be only one way?" Wenzi answered: "Those who in the past reigned on the basis of the Dao

以兵王者
those who reigned on the basis of warfare

[者], 謂之貪[兵]。[恃]其國家之大, 矜其人民]
is called 'greedy warfare.' To presume on the sheer size of one's realm and take pride in one's people

衆。欲見賢于適(敵)者, 謂之驕[兵]。義[兵]
sheer number, while desiring to appear more worthy than one's enemies, is called 'arrogant warfare.' Righteous warfare

道也。然議兵誅[□□□, 不足禁會]
the Dao. In that case, righteous warfare punishes ... ..., is not enough to forbid meetings

[故王道唯德乎!臣故曰一道。"平王]
Therefore, the only royal way is that of Virtue! Therefore I say that there is only one way." King Ping

The text on most of these bamboo strips appears, in modified form, in one section of the transmitted text, *Wenzi* 5.9:

文子問曰: 王道有幾?老子曰: 一[2419]而已矣。文子曰: 古有[0829]以道王者, 有以兵[0850]王者, 何其一也?曰: 以道王者[2210]德也,以兵王者[1035]亦德也。用兵有五: 有義兵, 有應兵, 有忿兵, 有貪兵, 有驕兵。誅暴救弱謂之義, 敵來加己不得已而用之謂之應, 爭小故不勝其心謂之忿, 利人土地, 欲人財貨謂之貪, 恃其國家之大, 矜其人民[0572]之衆, 欲見賢於敵國者謂之驕。義兵[2217]王, 應兵勝, 忿兵敗, 貪兵死, 驕兵滅, 此天道也。

Wenzi asked: "How many ways of a king are there?" Laozi answered: "Only one." Wenzi asked: "Formerly, there were those who reigned on the basis of the Dao and those who

reigned on the basis of warfare. In what way are they one?" Laozi answered: "To reign on the basis of the Dao equals Virtue and to reign on the basis of warfare also equals Virtue. There are five ways of using the army: there is righteous warfare, reactive warfare, aggressive warfare, greedy warfare and arrogant warfare. To punish tyranny and rescue the suppressed is called 'righteous.' To have no choice but to rise in arms when the enemy has invaded is called 'reactive.' Not being able to hold back when quarrelling over a small matter is called 'aggressive.' To profit from other people's land and desire other people's goods is called 'greedy.' To presume on the sheer size of one's realm and take pride in the sheer number of one's people, while desiring to appear more worthy than one's enemies, is called 'arrogant.' Righteous warfare leads to kingship, reactive warfare to victory, aggressive warfare to defeat, greedy warfare to death and arrogant warfare to annihilation. Such is the Dao of Heaven."

This passage distinguishes five types of warfare and offers a name (based on its motive), a description and an assured outcome for each. Not all types of warfare are permissible and each leads to a different result. The respective outcomes of these wars tell us how the text evaluates them, that is, whether it approves (↑) or disapproves (↓) of them:

#	Motive	Description	Outcome	↕
1.	Righteousness	To liberate suppressed peoples	Coronation	↑
2.	Reaction	To resist invaders	Victory	↑
3.	Aggression	To rage about trivia	Defeat	↓
4.	Greed	To desire others' land or goods	Death	↓
5.	Arrogance	To overpower a weaker enemy	Annihilation	↓

This taxonomy of warfare exhibits a regression, with righteousness being the best motive and arrogance the worst. When the text states that "to reign on the basis of warfare also equals Virtue," it probably refers only to righteous and reactive warfare.

The taxonomy of warfare in the proto-*Wenzi* probably derives from military-strategic contexts. Military writings, such as Sunzi's *Art of War* (孫子兵法) or the *Wuzi* (吳子), are larded with numbered lists, which, as Van Creveld (2002: 29) notes, serve as mnemonic devices for students of military thought and allow them to keep the essentials of warfare in mind. The *Wuzi*, for instance, speaks of the six circumstances in which to avoid conflict, the five affairs to which the general must pay careful attention, and the four vital points of warfare, to name but a few examples. Notably, one passage in *Wuzi* discusses five reasons for raising troops (Sawyer 1993: 208), a discussion that bears a remarkable resemblance to the proto-*Wenzi*. While taxonomies of various aspects of war rarely occur outside military-strategic contexts, one passage in *Four Canons of the Yellow Emperor* (黃帝四經) distinguishes between three ways of warfare (Yates 1997: 141). The *Four Canons* are silk manuscripts discovered in the Mawangdui tomb. They are variously dated from the end of the Warring States period to the beginning of the Han dynasty, and contain a large number of passages on warfare. It appears that in the late Warring States and early Former Han periods, warfare had become an important topic in politico-philosophical writings such as *Four Canons* and the proto-*Wenzi*, which

then started borrowing taxonomies of warfare from military-strategic contexts (van Els 2013).

In their approaches to warfare, the proto-*Wenzi* and *Laozi* again differ. The *Laozi* emphatically rejects warfare. For example, *Laozi* 30 criticizes those who "intimidate the empire by a show of arms" (以兵强天下), and *Laozi* 31 labels weapons as "instruments of ill omen" (不祥之器), whereas *Laozi* 68 praises "the virtue of non-contention" (不爭之德). The proto-*Wenzi*, on the other hand, speaks approvingly of certain kinds of warfare. If this text indeed dates from the Former Han, as scholars now increasingly maintain, the difference between the two texts may lie in the fact that the Han dynasty was founded "on horseback," and that a strong critique of military campaigns would instantly lose a new text, such as the proto-*Wenzi*, readership. The founding of the Han dynasty can be explained as a campaign to liberate the people from suppression under Qin-rule, which may qualify as "righteous warfare" in the proto-*Wenzi*'s terminology. Moreover, raids by Xiongnu (匈奴) forces constituted an acknowledged and growing problem in the early Han. The proto-*Wenzi* keeps the possibility of countering these raids open with its category of "reactive warfare." With this fivefold classification, the proto-*Wenzi* merely asks the ruler to carefully assess the war that he is about to wage and to continue only when he is absolutely sure that his campaign falls within the two permissible categories. The predicted outcomes for unpermitted wars are so serious that, rather than promoting warfare, the proto-*Wenzi*'s taxonomy is actually a mild form of persuasion against waging war. Hence, while it takes a different approach, its goals are the same as those of the *Laozi*. And that approach was demonstrably appealing in Former Han times. The *Book of the Han* (漢書) (74.3136) contains a memorial by Chancellor WEI Xiang (魏相), who used a taxonomy of warfare that looks remarkably similar to the one in the proto-*Wenzi*, to dissuade Emperor Xuan (漢宣帝) from sending an expeditionary force to attack the Xiongnu. The Emperor followed his advice and halted the campaign.

6 Conclusion

The proto-*Wenzi* was profoundly influenced by the *Laozi*, as the numerous examples here show, but it readily deviates from its principal source, espousing concepts and promoting ideas that the *Laozi* rejects. Remarkably, even with its distinct approach, the proto-*Wenzi* arrives at a philosophy not unlike that of the *Laozi*. This is because the two texts mainly differ in rhetoric, not content. The *Laozi* contains a philosophy of quietude, but, at least in its received form, militantly opposes notions such as humaneness, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. The proto-*Wenzi* thoughtfully promotes these notions, thereby appeasing thinkers who likewise advocated them, while adjusting their conceptual meaning to its own worldview. The concept of wisdom, for example, is stripped of its original moral connotations and becomes a form of perspicacity that enables the ruler to predict and prevent misfortune. And whereas the proto-*Wenzi* approves of certain kinds of warfare, it describes

the conditions for warfare such that it may have actually become more difficult for rulers to justify war. Hence, taking a tone much milder than that of *Laozi*, the proto-*Wenzi* itself epitomizes a philosophy of quietude. Even the names of the two protagonists possibly reflect that quietist worldview: Is *wen* "civility," as in Wenzi, not an antonym of *wu* "martiality," and does *ping*, as in King Ping, not mean "peaceful, calm"?

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Chapter 15
Huainanzi: The Pinnacle of Classical Daoist Syncretism

Harold D. Roth

1 Introduction

The *Huainanzi* 淮南子 is a collection of 21 philosophical essays on a wide variety of topics ranging from cosmology, cosmogony, and astronomy, to history, government, and the arts of war that are grounded in an intellectual perspective that is arguably described as "Daoist." Because it draws extensively upon earlier philosophical literature, in particular the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* as well as such works as the *Guanzi* and *Lushi chunqiu* collections, the major historical writings such as the *Chunqiu* and *Zuozhuan*, Confucian classics such as the *Changes* (*Yi*) and the *Odes* (*Shi*), and narrative collections such as the *Zhanguoce*, the *Huainanzi* has been a challenge to categorize and has engendered a great deal of scholarly debate about its filiation. Despite its initial classification as a *Zajia* 雜家 ("eclectic traditions") work in the *Bibliographical Monograph* to the *History of the Former Han* (*Hanshu yiwenzhi* 漢書藝文志) and despite its presentation of a broad range of ideas, careful analysis of its philosophical positions demonstrates the priority it gives to a cosmology and method of self-cultivation found in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* and argues for its not merely being part of a classical Daoist tradition, but the most complex and sophisticated philosophical expression of that tradition.

The *Huainanzi* is the product of a group of thinkers that assembled at the court of LIU An (?180–122 BC), the second king of Huainan (in modern day Anhui

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Province) and the grandson of the founder of the Han dynasty (LIU Bang). An's father, LIU Chang, angered that he had been passed over as successor to LIU Bang, was eventually sent into exile in 174 BC for sedition against his half brother, the Emperor Wen, and died *en route*. LIU An was subsequently enfeoffed with a part of his father's territory; in 164 BC the kingdom of Huainan was re-established but commanded about one-third the territory once ruled by An's father. Within a decade An had begun to establish an intellectual center at his court, modeled after the Jixia intellectual center in Qi, which had produced the *Guanzi* collection, and—to a lesser extent—the Qin court assembly of scholars that had produced the *Lüshi chunqiu*. In the Introduction to his redaction of the *Huainanzi* the late Han commentator GAO You (d. 212 CE) states that Liu An summoned scholars from a wide variety of earlier intellectual traditions to his court, as well as practitioners of the various "esoteric arts" (*fangshu*) that included astrology, pharmacology, demonology, alchemy, and medicine, many of which embraced the cosmology of the Yin and Yang and the Five Phases of Qi (Roth 1992: 20–21).

History records a rather extensive list of works created at the Huainan court, including collections of rhyme prose (*fu*), works of astrology and alchemy, and works of philosophy. The only work to have survived intact is the *Huainanzi*, initially referred to as the "inner book" (*neishu* 内書) in a trilogy that included "middle" (*zhong* 中) and "outer" (*wai* 外) books. Qing dynasty scholars assembled surviving fragments of the "middle book" into several similar "reconstituted redactions" that show the original work contained various sayings, stories, and formulae that appear to be part of the alchemical traditions of the esoteric arts. The "outer book" has not survived and little is known of it other than the cryptic comment by a Tang dynasty scholar Yan Shigu 顏師古 that it contained "eclectic theories" (*zashuo* 雜說), an interesting comment in light of the early classification of the "inner book" (i.e., the *Huainanzi*) as "eclectic" (Roth 1992: 359). It makes little sense for both inner and outer books to be so classified since these categories are defined by one another: if one is eclectic the other must be something else. This is but a small indication of the fluid use of such bibliographic categories by historians and bibliographers. A number of scholars have cautioned against taking them at face value (Queen 2001; Csíkszentmihályi and Nylan 2003).

Nonetheless *Huainanzi* scholars have, because of the very nature of the text, tended to label its use of ideas taken from many earlier philosophical traditions. Some regard it as "eclectic," which refers to "the practice of selecting doctrines from different systems of thought without adopting the whole parent system for each doctrine" (*Britannica* 9031915). This results in a work that contains a variety of philosophical positions with no one dominant. By contrast, syncretism is "the attempt to reconcile or combine systems." This results in a work that contains a variety of philosophical positions with one position providing the dominant and subsuming intellectual orientation (See Vankeerbergen 2001: 171; Leblanc 1985: 3 for contrasting definitions). According to this definition, the *Huainanzi* is syncretic, with a "Daoist" cosmology elaborated from the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* providing this foundational intellectual orientation (Kanaya 1959; Hsiao 1979: 570–82; Roth 1992: 19; Chen 2004: 170).

This author sees the *Huainanzi* as the most fully developed expression of the final phase of foundational or classical Daoism, which I divide into three categories: Individualistic, Primitivistic, and Syncretic (Roth 1991a, b, 1999). All share a common cosmology of the Way (*Dao*) and its Potency (*De*) and common practices of self-cultivation, but they diverge in whether or not—and how—they apply these former ideas to government. The Individualistic works do not follow this tack at all; these include the "Inward Training" (*Neiye* 内業) text from the *Guanzi* and the "Inner Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi*; the Primitivistic works advocate return to a primitive agrarian society with minimal or no governing structures: This category includes the *Laozi* and the "Primitivist" or "Anarchist" chapters of the *Zhuangzi*; the Syncretic works include the four "Silk Manuscripts" from Mawangdui, the remaining "Techniques of the Mind" (*xinshu* 心術) from the *Guanzi* and others. This final category is also sometimes referred to as "Huang-Lao" (黃老) (Liu 1993), but Csíkszentmihályi and Nylan, and others as well, argue that this label is vexed and so it will not be used in this article (Csíkszentmihályi and Nylan 2003: 80–87).

This framework and classification of the *Huainanzi* are by no means universally accepted. A number of recent studies argue that the *Huainanzi* is a work that deliberately set out to free itself of any intellectual affiliations. Indeed, argue Sarah Queen and Judson Murray in separate articles, the *Huainanzi* specifically eschews any association with the Daoist tradition, if there even was such an intellectual lineage in the early Han (Queen 2001, 2008; Murray 2004). They buttress their arguments by an internal analysis of the text from the perspective of its final summary chapter and from the many examples of ideas taken from a great variety of prior philosophical lineages, particularly those of the Confucians, the Mohists, and the works later classified as "Legalist" (*fajia*), "Naturalist,"(*yinyangjia*) and "Nominalist" (*mingjia*). The philosophical analysis of the *Huainanzi* to follow will point to a different conclusion.

Two events stand out in the historical context of the *Huainanzi*. In 139 BC LIU An journeyed to the imperial court in Chang'an to visit his young nephew, the eventually powerful Emperor Wu, who had succeed to the throne in 141, and who was still mulling over whether his government should be based on Confucian or Daoist ideas. The emperor is said to have loved the work and secreted it away to his private collection for detailed perusal. In the end Wudi did not adapt the innovative Daoist syncretism of the *Huainanzi* and instead chose to ally his government with the Confucian bureaucrats and their own textual traditions.

With his philosophical positions rejected by his nephew the Emperor, and with the increasing centralization of power in the hands of the imperial government and out of the hands of the local enfeoffed kings of the Liu clan, LIU An saw his opportunity to have a persuasive influence on the government of the empire slipping away. According to extant historical writings, he followed in his father's footsteps, plotting rebellion against the empire, and a contingent of imperial troops was sent to the Huainan capital of Shouchun in 122 BC in response. During the ensuing events, LIU An and his entire family perished and his vibrant intellectual center was destroyed; its thinkers and its ideas were scattered throughout the empire. This event can be seen as the final chapter in the development of the foundational or classical

Daoist tradition and the beginning of almost three centuries of "underground" existence where it developed outside the purview of imperial historians, only to re-emerge transformed into the two great millenarian rebellions of the latter half of the second century CE, that of the Yellow Turbans in the north and the Five Pecks of Grain in the west.

2 The Structure and Purpose of the *Huainanzi*

Although it is difficult to ascertain individual authorship, each of the 21 chapters of the *Huainanzi* is a distinct essay with a principal theme or themes. Taken together, they are intended to provide a *summa* of all the ideas needed to govern effectively, according to its authors. We can no longer attribute the entire work to the hand of LIU An himself, but since he did present the work to the Emperor in person we can assume that he took a major hand in its planning and editing (Wallacker 1962: 2; 1972: 39–40; Roth 1992: 18–23). GAO You lists eight men who participated in the project of writing the *Huainanzi,* and we have no way to question the specific attributions. However, the variations in literary style and personal writing style, as well as the specialized knowledge contained in at least some of the essays, do indicate that multiple hands were involved in its authorship. Moreover, the great number of passages quoted or taken from earlier works supports the historical record that LIU An possessed an extensive library, perhaps the rival of that in Chang'an.

This being said, if we can attribute the authorship of any of these chapters to one specific person, it is most likely the authorship of the final chapter, "An Overview of the Essentials" (*Yaolüe*), which seems to belong to LIU An. This essay provides an explanation of the grand plan and overarching purpose of the entire book. The chapter opens with the following claims:

> We have created and composed these writings and discourses as a means to
>
> > knot the net of the Way and its Potency,
> > And weave the web of humankind and its affairs.
> > Above investigating them in Heaven,
> > Below examining them on Earth,
> > And in the middle comprehending them through Natures' Patterns (*li* 理).
>
> Although they are not yet able to fully draw out the core of the Profound Mystery, they are abundantly sufficient to observe its ends and beginnings. If we [only] summarized the essentials or provided an overview and our words did not discriminate the Pure, Uncarved Block and differentiate the Great Ancestor, then it would cause people in their confusion to fail to understand them. Thus,
>
> > numerous are the words we have composed,
> > and extensive are the illustrations we have provided,
>
> yet we still fear that people will depart from the root and follow the branches.
> Thus,
>
> > if we speak of the Way but do not speak of affairs, there would be no means to shift with the times.

[Conversely],

> if we speak of affairs but do not speak of the Way, there would be no means to move with (the processes of) transformation.

Therefore we composed the following 20 essays . . . . (Major et al. 2010: 848–49)

The author then provides an analysis of the preceding essays in the book from a number of different perspectives: detailed and poetic summaries of the 20 individual chapters; explanations of how the chapters are linked together in an organizational chain, much in the style of the *Yijing* Appendix "Discussion of the Trigrams" (*Shuo gua* 說卦), which explains the specific order of the hexagrams in the received text. The chapter then concludes with a review of previous writings on related subjects, explaining how each is a product of its historical time, declaring the *Huainanzi* to have surpassed them all. This review includes the writings of Confucius, MOZI, GUAN Zhong (i.e. the *Guanzi*), and SHANG Yang. The emphasis in this chapter is on the necessity of understanding both the profound nature and manifested activity of the Way and the Potency, but also the great variety and detail of how these two foundational principles underlie both the natural and human worlds. While this chapter comes at the end of the entire work and thus constitutes a summary, it can, in effect, also be read as an introduction providing an overview of its grand plan and a detailed précis of each of its constituent essays. Even a cursory glance at the titles of the chapters gives an indication of the *Huainanzi*'s comprehensive scope:

Chapter 1: Originating in the Way *Yuandao* 原道
Chapter 2: Activating the Genuine *Chuzhen* 俶真
Chapter 3: Celestial Patterns *Tianwen* 天文
Chapter 4: Terrestrial Forms *Dixing* 地形
Chapter 5: Seasonal Rules *Shice* 時側
Chapter 6: Surveying Obscurities *Lanming* 覽冥
Chapter 7: The Quintessential Spirit *Jingshen* 精神
Chapter 8: The Basic Warp *Benjing* 本經
Chapter 9: The Ruler's Techniques *Zhushu* 主術
Chapter 10: Profound Precepts *Moucheng* 繆稱.
Chapter 11: Integrating Customs *Qisu* 齊俗
Chapter 12: Responses of the Way *Daoying* 道應
Chapter 13: Discourses on the Boundless *Fan Lun* 氾論
Chapter 14: Explaining Sayings *Quanyan* 詮言
Chapter 15: An Overview of the Military *Binglüe* 兵略
Chapter 16: A Mountain of Persuasions *Shuishan* 說山
Chapter 17: A Forest of Persuasions *Shuilin* 說林
Chapter 18: Among Others *Renjian* 人閒
Chapter 19: Cultivating Effort *Xiuwu* 修務
Chapter 20: The Exalted Lineage *Taizu* 太族
Chapter 21: An Overview of the Essentials *Yaolüe* 要略

(Title translations by Major et al. 2010: vii–viii)

While the *Huainanzi* does not traditionally contain any further internal divisions (like, for example, the *Zhuangzi* with its "inner-outer-mixed" structure), recent scholarship has proposed that it contains a coherent internal structure. Leblanc has suggested that the first eight chapters constitute the "Basic Principles" of the entire work and the remainder are concerned with "Applications and Illustrations" (Leblanc 1993: 189). More recently, Major, Queen, Meyer agree with this position (Major et al. 2010: 14). Roth concurs with Mark Edward Lewis in qualifying it slightly by asserting that the ninth essay, "The Ruler's Techniques" should be included in the foundational section of the book (Lewis 1999: 307). All, however, agree that this division is in keeping with the "roots-branches" framework, a structure that undergirds the entire book on at least two levels, in its overall organization and within many of its individual essays.

In this analysis, the first nine chapters provide the basic philosophy of the whole text and the remaining chapters contain a variety of detailed illustrations of how these philosophical principles work in the phenomenal world. In the "root chapters" we find all the basic cosmology, epistemology, self-cultivation theory, and theories of history and politics the authors regard as foundational; in the "branch chapters," illustration of these foundations is presented in a variety of literary styles: "precepts" (*cheng* 稱), "responses" (*ying* 應), "overviews" (*lüe* 略), "discourses" (*lun* 論), "sayings" (*yan* 言), and "persuasions" (*shui*). This is completely consistent with the grand plan of the work presented in chapter 21, which involves attaining a comprehensive balance between the cosmology of the Way and its Potency and the variety of its manifestations in the human world.

Within the "root chapters" themselves, the first two essays are themselves "roots" in that they provide the cosmological, cosmogonic, and self-cultivational foundations for the entire book. It is no accident that these essays, "Originating in the Way" and "Activating the Genuine" each borrow heavily from the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, respectively. To understand the unique and creative form of Daoist philosophical synthesis in the *Huainanzi*, one must comprehend the philosophy in these two chapters first and foremost.

3 *Huainanzi* 1: Cosmology and Government in "Originating in the Way"

"Originating in the Way" opens with a poetic rhapsody on the cosmology of the Way and its Potency in the tradition of the *Laozi* 老子, undoubtedly one of the canonical sources for this particular essay and for the book as a whole. It is also reminiscent of the similarly entitled "wisdom poem," (Roth 1999: 190–93) "Source that is the Way" (*Daoyüan* 道原) that was discovered among the four "silk manuscripts" found at Mawangdui (Yates 1997: 171–77).

As for the Way:

It covers Heaven and upholds Earth.

It extends the four directions
And divides the eight endpoints.
So high, it cannot be reached.
So deep, it cannot be fathomed.
It embraces and enfolds Heaven and Earth
It endows and bestows the Formless.
Flowing along like a wellspring, bubbling up like a fount,
It is empty but gradually becomes full.
Roiling and boiling
It is murky but gradually becomes clear.

Therefore,

Pile it up vertically: it fills all within Heaven and Earth.
Stretch it out horizontally: it encompasses all within the Four Seas.
Unwind it limitlessly: it is without distinction between dawn and dusk.
Roll it out: it expands to the Six Coordinates [i.e., the three dimensions: up-down, front-back, left-right]
Roll it up: it doesn't make a handful.
It is constrained but able to extend.
It is dark but able to brighten.
It is supple but able to strengthen.
It is pliant but able to become firm.
It stretches out the Four Binding-cords [i.e. the "corners" of the compass- circle] and restrains yin and yang.
It suspends the cosmic rafters and displays the Three Luminaries.
Intensely saturating and soaking,
Intensely subtle and minute.
Mountains are high because of it.
Abysses are deep because of it.
Beasts can run because of it.
Birds can fly because of it.
The sun and moon are bright because of it.
The stars and time keepers move because of it.
Unicorns wander freely because of it.
Phoenixes soar because of it.

(Major et al. 2010: 48–49)

Within the remainder of this essay we see a detailed examination of how the Way as the foundation of the cosmos is manifested within the phenomenal world and a detailed description of how sages are able to use their unique, penetrating vision of these foundations, attained through a process of self-cultivation, to bring peace and harmony to the realm. The deliberate placing of this essay, whose cosmological, psychological, and political philosophy is so indebted to the *Laozi* and other important early Daoist sources on the relationship of cosmology and self-cultivation to rulership, at the beginning of the book directly situates not only this

particular essay but the *Huainanzi* as a whole, squarely within a classical Daoist tradition (Roth 1991a, b, 1994, 1999). It is only through the methods of self-cultivation advocated in the classical Daoist tradition that the *Huainanzi*'s ideal ruler may comprehend the inner workings of the cosmos and apply that wisdom to governing in harmony with them. Thus the *Huainanzi* states from the very beginning that it is not just a book about the Way nor is it a tract on how to govern: it is a deliberate combination of these two perspectives. Further, as the opening chapter of the collection, "Originating in the Way" sets out general themes, such as cosmology, human psychology and self-cultivation, and political philosophy, that will be pursued in more detail in much of the remainder of the work. Its importance for understanding the Daoist perspective throughout the book and seeing it in a clearer light cannot be overemphasized.

For the authors of "Originating in the Way," because everything within Heaven and Earth is both natural and supernatural, secular and sacred, the natures and patterns that underlie and guide all these phenomena attain a normative prominence that is mostly unfamiliar to the Abrahamic traditions of the West. That is, these patterns, sequences, propensities, and natures are themselves holy or divine. They are the basis through which all the multitudinous phenomena in the world adhere and function in harmony and as such serve as the models and standards for communities of human beings who are an integral part of this order. Thus Nature is holy in and of itself—to be respected, adhered to, even worshiped. According to the authors of this essay, human beings can either ignore this normative natural order and fail in their endeavors or they can follow it and succeed.

In this worldview, to govern effectively the ruler must model himself on such ancient mythical sage-kings as FENG YI 馮夷 and DA BING 大丙 and must develop the wisdom to discern natures, propensities, and patterns of all things in the universe, and then not interfere with how the myriad things accord with them. The authors of the *Huainanzi* maintain that despite having attained a harmonious society in keeping with these principles in the ancient past, human beings tend to fall away from this normative natural order. Their senses' desire for sense-objects generates preferences and enticements, and people become so obsessed with these that they lose touch with their innate nature and natural spontaneity. Humans must learn to recover this natural and spontaneous side; it is this part of us that is directly connected to the normative patterns through which the Way subtly guides the spontaneous self-generation of all things. Self-cultivation, particularly the unique form that some call "inner cultivation," is the primary way human beings can realize the deepest aspects of their intrinsic nature, that part of our being that is directly in touch with the Way and, through it, with the inherent patterns and structures of the universe (Roth 1999: 109–23).

The universe is thus described as a "spirit-like vessel" (*shenqi* 神器) made up of the various innate natures (*xing* 性) of things that determine their course of development and their actions and of the great patterns (*li* 理) inherent in the cosmos that govern the characteristic ways that things interact. These natures and patterns are thoroughly infused with the empty Way, which mysteriously guides their spontaneous processes of development and of daily activity. This entire complex

world functions completely spontaneously and harmoniously and needs nothing additional from human beings. All sages need to do is to recognize these natures and patterns and adapt to them. It is because of this normative order that sages can accomplish everything without exerting the will to control things. In other words, they practice "Non-Action" (*wuwei* 無爲), which is effective because of the existence of this normative natural order. Sages cultivate themselves through the "Techniques of the Mind" (*xin shu* 心術) to fully realize the basis of this order within (Roth 1999: 15–30).[1] By this realization, they can simultaneously realize the intrinsic natures of all phenomena.

These interlocking ideas of order and structure in the universe are the foundation for those of Non-Action and sagely government, as is well summarized in the following passage:

Sages internally cultivate the root [of the Way within them]
And do not externally adorn themselves with its branches.
They protect their Quintessential Spirit (*jingshen* 精神)
And dispense with wisdom and precedent.
In stillness they take No Action (*wuwei* 無為) yet nothing is left undone.
In tranquility they do not govern but nothing is left ungoverned.
What we call "taking No Action" is to not anticipate the activity of things.
What we call "nothing left undone" means to adapt to what things have [already] done.
What we call "to not govern" means to not change how things are naturally so.
What we call "nothing left ungoverned" means to adapt to how things are mutually so.

(Major et al. 2010: 59 [modified])

In a concise characterization of government by Non-Action, the text states:

The affairs of the world cannot be deliberately controlled.
You must draw them out by following their natural direction.
The alterations of the myriad things cannot be fathomed.
You must grasp their essential tendencies and guide them to their homes.

(Major et al. 2010: 53)

The inner cultivation through which Sages are able to realize the Way and practice Non-Action entails the systematic elimination of the emotions, distractions, desires, preferences, thoughts, deliberations, and attachments to sense-objects that usually flood the conscious mind. Through this one may break through to the level of "Spirit-like Illumination" (*shenming* 神明) and realize what lies deep within the innermost core of one's being, the one Way. Realizing this yields a profound and lasting contentment much greater than the fleeting pleasures of the senses. It is also conceived of as preserving the inherent balance between the functioning of the four basic aspects of human beings: the physical body (*xing* 形), vital energy or breath (*qi* 氣), spirit (*shen* 神), and will or attention (*zhi* 志), which are part of

[1]The "Techniques of the Mind" is the title of two short texts in the 26-text *Guanzi* compendium. Together with "Inward Training" and "The Purified Mind," they constitute a group that in modern scholarship is referred to as the four "Techniques of Mind" works. By the time of the *Huainanzi*, this phrase was probably used as a general term for what I have called "inner cultivation" practice.

the normative natural order that exists in human beings. Clogging up consciousness with lusts and desires disrupts this balance. The antidote for this is inner cultivation practice, which cleanses the mind and thus gradually restores balance between these activities. Thus the sage's inner cultivation yields a deep state of tranquility that enables the four basic aspects to function spontaneously and harmoniously in accord with their inherent natural patterns. This then allows the sage to align with the "Heavenly Dynamism" (*tianji* 天機), the normative natural order of which humans are an integral part and thus act completely in accord with the Way. This form of self-cultivation practice originated in the Daoist "Techniques of the Mind" texts contained in the *Guanzi* collection (See above article on Daoist texts in the *Guanzi*).

Another benefit of realizing the Way within one's mind is that those who do so can avoid disasters associated with acting in advance of the correct moment in time. When they detect that moment they act spontaneously in response to it and are said to follow it and not anticipate it. "Originating in the Way" outlines an intricate matrix of interacting temporal sequences and natural patterns that guide the spontaneous responses arising from the natures of all phenomena. All these elements constitute the normative natural order and failure to act in accord with it will result in personal failure and at times natural disasters.

4 Potency and Human Perfection in *Huainanzi* 2 "Activating the Genuine"

The principal themes of this chapter of 14 sections explore various aspects of Potency and its attainment. As such they complement the principal themes in chapter 1, which explore the nature of the Way and how it operates in the world. Themes in chapter 2 include the nature of human perfection, its different categories, the methods to attain it, its role in rulership, especially in an ideal Utopian past, and how implementing sage rulership relates to fate.

After an opening cosmogonic section that will be detailed below, the chapter moves on to musings on the relativity and brevity of human existence that are variations on themes in the Inner Chapters of *Zhuangzi*, especially chapters 2 and 6. This passage's debt to the *Zhuangzi* extends to using the image of the Great Clod as a metaphor for the Earth and reflecting on the strange quasi-reality of dreams, substituting a man's transforming into a tiger for the *Zhuangzi*'s butterfly dream. The point of the section is that life is precarious and perspectives constantly change. Therefore, our most profound attachment, self-identity, is far from fixed and secure. The only way to adapt to this is through inner cultivation practice, which gives one the perspective to see the individual self as being grounded in the ever-present Way.

This essay introduces a major theme that runs through the entire book: that of human cultural history as the inevitable devolution from an idyllic utopian condition in which all people spontaneously manifested their deepest natures and lived in

harmony into an age of disorder and chaos in which only the most motivated and gifted of human beings can return to their foundation. This vision of an ideal Utopian past is reminiscent of the ideal primitive society envisioned in chapters 8 through 11 of the *Zhuangzi*, with, however, one significant difference: the ancient sage rulers are not reluctant minimalists as in the *Zhuangzi*, but rather mystically adept sages who are engaged in government. Human devolution is both natural and inexorable; it occurs on parallel levels in the social macrocosm across history and the individual human microcosm as we develop from infancy to adulthood. It is inevitable that an individual human being will fall away from the grounding in the One that they experience as infants as they mature into an individuated person endowed with subject-object consciousness; and it is inevitable that human society will become increasingly more complex and technologically sophisticated over time. The assertion of the *Huainanzi* is, paradoxically, that although both of these processes are inevitable, they entail perils and vulnerabilities that will prove self-destructive if unredressed. Given the intrinsic defects of the human condition, the key to human flourishing is a "return to the Way" through the apophatic inner cultivation practices detailed in the first two chapters of the *Huainanzi* and later in chapter 7. Furthermore, "devolution" is natural and inevitable in cosmic terms—the universe is spontaneously differentiated in the manner described in the opening cosmogonic passage of "Activating the Genuine." In this sense, the cosmos provides a model for human beings—it continues to operate harmoniously because no matter how complex it becomes, it is pervaded and controlled by the One (i.e., the Way). The same kind of harmony is achievable by human beings individually and collectively, if they "return to the One."

Because of the author's interest in how to counter the natural devolution of consciousness, notions of human perfection loom large in "Activating the Genuine." First we have a group of adepts simply referred to as "the Perfected" (*zhiren*). These are rare human beings who have directly experienced the Way and who carry it with them in their daily activities. Whether in comfortable or in difficult straits, they never lose their awareness of the Way, which is a constant within them. They remain indifferent to beauty of form and music, riches and high station, because the Way is present in them despite all these temptations and transformations. Because they maintain a profound awareness of the Way, they remain unhindered by physical or geographical limitations.

Because of the centrality of the Way in the phenomenal world, a second group of adepts called "Sages" (*shengren*) seek the Way that lies within them by practicing inner cultivation and thereby entrusting their Spirits to a deep inner realm called the "Numinous Storehouse" (*lingfu* 靈府) and by peering into "Dark Obscurity" (*mingming* 冥冥). Thus experiencing the Way, they use it without using it, they know of it without objectifying it. By doing this, they "activate the Genuine" within themselves. When Sages depart from the world they retreat into an introvertive mystical experience that derives from turning consciousness completely inward and withdrawing to "wander outside the dust and dirt and freely roam in the activity of the effortless."

> For this reason, sages inwardly cultivate the "Techniques of the Way" and do not adorn themselves externally with Humaneness and Rightness. They are unaware of the demands of the ears and eyes, and wander in the harmony of quintessential spirit. (Major et al. 2010: 97)

This is to experience what is called "Potency." People who never attain this and who have thus fallen away from their inherent and natural grounding in the Way that lies within them are said to "lack the utmost Vital Essence (*zhijing* 至精) internally." When they perceive and interact with the phenomenal world they cannot avoid becoming enslaved to material things.

As we have seen, this devolution of individual consciousness is paralleled in the historical devolution of human society. When the Way and its Potency are abandoned, Humaneness and Rightness are established, and human society is set on the path of losing the unitary consciousness of the sage, and thus headed for ruin. The authors of chapter 2 trace this decline from an "age of Utmost Potency, when sages governed in accord with the Way" and all people existed together in a harmonious union and all things flourished, through the times of Fuxi, Shen Nong, and the Houses of Xia and Zhou, down to the decadent present (the Eastern Han).

The remedy for this disorder is the "learning of the Sages," by which human nature may return to its origins and the mind to its inherent emptiness, to counteract "the vulgar learning of the age" that destroys Potency and intrinsic nature, "vexes the Five Orbs, and belabors perception with external things." The Confucians are singled out as especially apt examples of this vulgar learning, since they seek nothing but fame for themselves and obsess over the minutiae of morally hollow values. In contrast to this inferior learning, the authors of "Activating the Genuine" assert that true contentment does not lie in these external things but rather in the internal satisfaction of roaming carefree at the boundaries of Something and Nothing, of life and death.

To the authors of chapter 2, all humans share innate natures that contain the tendencies of the senses to clearly perceive their sense-objects; only sages use their nature to cultivate their innermost potential. How do they do this? They work with the Spirit, the basis of consciousness, which in turn is the storehouse of the mind. Its tendency to be still and calm is disrupted by desires caused by the senses' engagement with the many and various objects of the world. Sages are those who discipline their senses and thoughts through a process of meditation in which they empty out the contents of consciousness until they can reconnect with the clear, bright, and tranquil Spirit. With the Spirit now present in their consciousness, they are able to mirror all external things with perfect clarity and not be enticed by sensory pleasures and self-aggrandizing goals. In so doing they are united with the Way; thus even if they were offered possession of the entire world and were widely praised they would have no desire for such things.

The authors of "Activating the Genuine" further criticize the disciples of Confucius and of MOZI, both of whom taught the values of Humaneness and Rightness yet did not personally put their teachings into practice. In contrast, when you to break through to your own basic nature through the practice of apophatic inner cultivation, Humaneness and Rightness will spontaneously arise. This is the

Way of the Genuine: they cannot be lured by profit, beauty, wisdom or courage. Such rare human beings are conjoined with the Way even as they interact in the human realm. Thus, only through inner cultivation is one truly able to govern.

In the chapter's concluding section, the authors admit that the ability to govern sagaciously depends not only on how you cultivate your nature but also on the times in which you live. In ancient times of great Potency, even hermits were able to attain their sagely Way. In the evil times of the Xia dynasty when royal cruelty was rampant and the natural world was in disarray, history records no sages, not because there were none but because conditions did not allow them to achieve their Way. Thus even though great sages of the past were able to nourish and realize the deepest aspects of their natures, the fact that they were able to govern was contingent upon destiny. Only when nature meets destiny can the Way be effective.

To summarize then, the first two essays of the *Huainanzi* provide the foundations for the rest of the work. They enunciate a cosmology of the Way that underlies Heaven and Earth and is the essential mysterious force that animates the natures and propensities of things and the patterns of their interactions. The Potency is the manifestation of the Way within each phenomenon and worldly activity and within the minds and bodies of perfected human beings. Such people arrive at this mode of consciousness and behavior through systematic self-cultivation, or "inner cultivation" practices that involve the regulation of the breath by which everyday thoughts, feelings, and perceptions are removed from the mind until one attains a state of complete emptiness and merges with the Way. After this merging and upon return to the differentiated world, these perfected human beings experience the world in a transformed fashion, no longer dominated by the desires of their individual egos, but much more in touch with the Way that infuses and interpenetrates both their consciousness and all phenomena with which they interact (Roth 2000). Ideal rulers are such human beings, who apply their perfected states to governing. They are thus able to overcome the natural devolution of human society and of individuals and enable their own and their states' deepest flourishing. Yet while such people are grounded in the Way and thus have a direct relationship to all phenomena that are also so grounded, the world of things and people is much too complex for any one person to grasp. The remainder of the *Huainanzi* is hence designed to provide information about all the details and complexities that the "Sage King" must engage in order to govern.

5 Cosmogony

Cosmogony is another of the principal concerns of the *Huainanzi,* but it is not the subject of an entire essay. Instead, because it is so much a "root" concern, it is presented in several different but non-contradictory forms in different chapters.

The best-known example is found in *Huainanzi* 2, which presents an extended analysis of the stages of cosmogony that has become famous for its misinterpretation

of its source. The opening passage of the essay, in essence, lays out a detailed commentary on the famous infinite regress of cosmogonic stages from the *Zhuangzi*'s "Qiwulun" chapter (Leblanc 1995; Puett 2000). The crucial difference is that while the author of the *Zhuangzi* satirizes the very *attempt* to ascertain a cosmogony ("there is not yet having begun to have not yet beginning . . . ." etc.), the authors of *Huainanzi* 2 take these mock stages as *real* stages of a cosmogonic process and attempt to specify the conditions of each stage. For example:

> . . . [What is called] "There was not yet beginning to have 'There was not yet beginning to have 'There was nothing.'"
>
> Heaven and Earth had not yet split apart;
> Yin and Yang had not yet been carved out;
> The Four Seasons had not yet differentiated;
> The myriad things had not yet been generated.
> Enormously peaceful and tranquil,
> Silently clear and limpid,
> None saw its form . . . . (Major et al. 2010: 85–86)

It is quite rare in the history of Chinese philosophy for the first commentary on a set of ideas to have been so diametrically opposed to the intended meaning of the original. That being said, this passage is interesting for a number of other reasons. First, it provides the oldest extant attempt by classical Chinese thinkers to detail a cosmogony in philosophical rather than mythical terms, like the cosmogony of the Guodian work "The Grand One Generates Water" (*Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水) (Allan 2003). Indeed, when looked at from this perspective, this passage assumes the intimate interaction between the world of phenomena (as Something) and the Way (as Nothing) and details the stages of cosmogony leading to both from a state of complete and utter non-differentiation. As such, it provides the context for the remainder of this essay's elaboration of the how the Potency of the Way is manifest in the world of things and how it is realized by perfected human beings. As a complement to the cosmological foundations of chapter 1, this passage can also be seen as the root of the ideas of Potency and human perfection throughout the entire book.

Several other cosmogonies may be found in the *Huainanzi*, as will be detailed below. Two of them also occur in the "root chapters," and each begins and sets off a sub-unit within this foundational part of the book.

6 The Cosmological Chapters: 3–6

The first section of chapter 3, "Celestial Patterns," opens with a cosmogonic passage that uses theories of *qi* and *yin* and *yang* to expound on the origins of Heaven and Earth as the basis for this essay's presentation of the various astronomical formations and their movements throughout the year. Before Heaven and Earth came the Grand Beginning (*taishi* 太始), which generated Nebulous Void, which generated space and time, which in turn generated Primal Qi, which then

differentiated into yin and yang and from these, eventually, the myriad things. Thus all phenomena are constituted by various forms of *qi.* Because of this common origin, the principal argument of this essay holds that everything in the cosmos is interconnected, that human plans and intentions are subject to the influence of various cosmic cycles and correlations, and that such cycles and correlations must be understood and taken into account in the formulation of governmental policy. This discussion is followed by the two most technical chapters, "The Earthly Forms" (ch. 4), which presents the geography of the known and imagined worlds and the creatures contained within it, much in the manner of the *Classics of Mountains and Oceans* (*Shanhaijing* 山海經) and "The Seasonal Rules" (ch. 5), which contains prescriptions and proscriptions for proper ritual clothing, behavior, and governmental actions in each of the five seasons ("Midsummer," the third month of the summer, is designated its own season). Chapters 3, 4, and 5 form a distinctive sub-unit within the *Huainanzi*, a trilogy describing the cosmos, the earth, living creatures and other concrete phenomena (the "myriad things"), and the correlative influences of seasonal and monthly time. Deeply grounded in the "correlative" cosmology of yin and yang and the potency of each of the Five Phases (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water), these essays are all grounded in the cosmogony established at the beginning of chapter 3.

While different in a number of ways from the preceding three chapters, chapter 6, "Surveying Obscurities," shares the same correlative cosmology. It envisions a universe in which everything is intimately interconnected through being embedded in what might be called a "matrix of *qi*." This *qi* has an infinite variety of densities and textures and constitutes the basic substance of all things. It can be divided into two basic dimensions, yin and yang, and five major categories: earth, fire, metal, wood, and fire. All worldly and other-worldly phenomena, all events that occur in spacetime, the many different aspects of all creatures including the Five Orbs of vital energy and psychological states in human beings, are constituted by various combinations of these dimensions and categories of *qi*. Because of this they interact and resonate with one another in ways determined by their particular types of *qi*. Perfected human beings who are grounded in the Way have developed a particularly rarefied type of *qi* called *jing* ("vital essence") and through this can influence events, persons, and phenomena across categories. In addition, individuals can also exert striking temporary influence upon the cosmic fabric in moments of extraordinary emotional intensity and energetic focus. This essay is filled with narratives that provide examples of how such people have influenced their environments.

A point implied in chapters 3–5 but stated explicitly in chapter 6, is that the correlative cosmology in no way conflicts with the cosmology of the Way and its Potency but, in reality, complements it. These four chapters detail the phenomenal structures that spontaneously arose from the differentiation of the proto-cosmogonic Grand Beginning (an aspect of the "Grand One" [*Taiyi*]), but which do not in any way impair the Way's ultimate unity or continuing presence within the cosmos. While the first two chapters of the *Huainanzi* provide an overarching universal cosmological framework, the next four explain the details of how this framework

is manifested in the world of phenomena. In the succeeding chapters the *Huainanzi* goes on to lay out in detail how these complementary cosmologies influence the world of human beings.

7 The Anthropological Chapters: 7–9

The third cosmogonic passage is found at the beginning of chapter 7 and leads off a distinctive group of chapters concerned with human origins and development, with human history, and with the arts of governing. This passage presents the creation of the physical and spiritual properties of the universe as the basis for exploration of the origins and development of various aspects of human beings, from body through mind and spirit. These properties are presented both in terms of various types and densities of *qi,* but also in terms of the intricate relationship between body and mind. The chapter also introduces the concept of the Quintessential Spirit as the force that animates the physical body and consciousness itself, and it also discusses the paragons of human perfection, The Genuine (*zhenren* 真人), Sages, and the Perfected (*zhiren* 至人), who are characterized by, among other qualities, their ability to ignore external stimuli, to draw Potency from their source in the Way, and by their indifference to the exigencies of life and death. The qualities of human perfection are not cultivated through self-mortification, but through an inner cultivation practice by which the adept empties the mind and body of passions, prejudices, and thoughts until realizing the unification of innate nature and the Way. These practices are referred to as "Techniques of the Way" (*Daoshu* 道術) The resultant indifference to ordinary desires and ability to respond spontaneously and harmoniously to whatever situation arises takes on political coloration in a discussion of the attitude of the sage toward government: he is able to serve unerringly as ruler when the time is right, but is not covetous of power, not greedy for wealth, not concerned with self-aggrandizement. Thus this chapter remains squarely within the parameters of Daoist inner-cultivation theory, as is well characterized by the following passage:

> Those whom we call the Perfected are people whose inborn nature is merged with the Way. Therefore,
>
> They possess it but appear to have nothing,
> They are filled by it but appear to be empty.
> They are settled in this unity [of inborn nature and the Way]
> And do not know of any duality [i.e., of anything outside it].
> They cultivate what is inside
> And pay no attention to what is outside.
> They illuminate Grand Simplicity (*Taisu* 太素),
> And, by taking No-action, revert to the Unhewn (*Pu* 樸).
>
> They embody the foundation and embrace the Spirit and so roam freely within the confines of Heaven and Earth. Untrammeled, they ramble outside this dusty world and wander aimlessly in their taskless calling. Unfettered and unhindered, they harbor no clever devices or cunning knowledge in their minds. (Major et al. 2010: 248)

The government of sage rulers, first from a historical perspective, then from a practical perspective, is the main topic of the last two of the "root chapters." The first of them, chapter 8, begins not with a cosmogony of the universe, but what might be called a kind of "cosmogony" of government; it shows how governance began in the ideal rulership of an imagined past similar to that envisioned in the "Primitivist" chapters of the *Zhuangzi* and how this gradually degenerated until we reach the dissolute present. This is the first of several similar degeneration narratives in the essay, all of which hearken back to an archaic time of agrarian primitivism when perfected human beings, embodying the Way and its Potency, could govern almost invisibly by means of non-action. Both the human and the natural worlds responded resonantly to these ideal rulers' superior qualities. But inevitably the world began to devolve from this archaic ideal. People became filled with desires, competition increased, disharmony arose and gradually the institutions of social control took over, as the situation degenerated from primordial simplicity and unity. Echoing the *Laozi*, the text states: "Then it was that the Unhewn Block was shattered and made into implements" (Major et al. 2010: 274). In the current era, when the human polity teeters on the brink of chaos, only the ruler who knows how to embody the undifferentiated unity of the Grand One, align himself with the Way and its Potency, match his actions to the rhythms of the cosmos, and become imbued with spirit-illumination through the processes of inner cultivation elaborated in the earlier chapters, especially 1, 2, and 7, has the ability to govern the world and save it from chaos.

Huainanzi 9 lays out in considerable detail the philosophy of government by which the enlightened Daoist rules and is the single longest chapter in the entire book, an indication of its significance. As the last of the "root chapters" it can be seen as their pinnacle; if there is any one essay that was intended by Liu An for his nephew, Emperor Wu, it is this one.

The advice begins with self-cultivation: the ruler must master himself through the apophatic inner cultivation techniques well known in the Daoist tradition: reducing thoughts, desires, and emotions and gradually enlarging the capacity for emptiness and tranquility. The ruler able to accomplish this may realize his Potency and perfect his Vital Essence (*zhijing* 至精), and through this be able to penetrate and directly apprehend the essences of Heaven and the Grand Unity (*Taiyi* 太一); in other words, he masters the "Techniques of the Way" identified in chapter 7. This connects the ruler directly to the invisible cosmic web based in the correlative cosmology of *qi* and its various types (yin and yang) and phases (*wuxing*)and refinements *jing*. With this connection the Daoist ruler can invisibly influence the course of events in the world and affairs among his subjects through the types of resonance (*ganying*) detailed in chapter 6. This profound level of inner cultivation also enables the ruler to reduce desires to a minimum, to designate responsibilities within the government hierarchy in an impartial fashion, to be devoid of emotions, and to spontaneously and unhesitatingly adapt to whatever situations arise. The essay is filled with narratives of exemplary past rulers who attained this level of cultivation and also with various ideas on governing taken from earlier Confucian

and Mohist traditions and other works (Ames 1983). This has led some to conclude that it privileges no one intellectual position. While it is certainly the case that many earlier ideas are synthesized in this essay's philosophy of rulership, it is clear that they are all trumped by the cosmology of the Way and the practice of inner cultivation taken directly from the Daoist tradition. These provide the "root" in the "root-branch" structure of this essay. Apophatic inner cultivation is now and has always been the root of good rule. The layered values and techniques drawn from other textual traditions (humaneness, rightness, ritual, music, standards, measures, rewards, punishments, etc.) are all products of the spontaneous devolution from high antiquity described earlier in the text. Each technique became indispensable to human order in the age in which it arose, just as cosmic phenomena like Heaven and Earth became intrinsic to cosmic order at the point in the cosmogonic process in which they emerged. But to function as a harmonious and organic whole, their priority must be correctly grasped, in the order of their historical development and thus in the order of their normative distance from the undifferentiated "root" of good order (the Way). Chapter 9 argues that a ruler in the current age cannot rule without the techniques of thinkers like Confucius, MOZI, HAN Fei, etc., because human society has of its own evolved into a complex form that necessitates their employment. The basic perspective of the text remains Daoist, however, because it insists that only a ruler and ministers perfected through the Daoist program of self-cultivation will be able to employ these instruments of rule in a manner conducive to social and cosmic harmony.

8 The "Branch Chapters": 10–20

Much of the remainder of the *Huainanzi* is devoted to elaborating upon the philosophical ideas contained in the first nine chapters. It is filled with numerous examples of how the universal cosmology of the Way and its Potency, the correlative cosmology of yin and yang and the Five Phases, and apophatic inner-cultivation practices applied to the task of rulership are manifested in the world of phenomena and the affairs of human beings. These chapters illustrate these themes through numerous permutations of the written art—various forms of persuasion, narrative, and exegetical prose—that were generic to Han intellectual culture.

Chapter 10 explores what might be called the inner emotional life of the sage-ruler and speaks highly of the traditional Confucian virtues of Benevolence (*ren*) and Rightness (*yi*). Yet what marks sage-rulers as perfected beyond the Confucian "Morally Superior Men" (*junzi*) is that they have followed the apophatic inner cultivation practices outlined in the "root chapters" and attained a direct apprehension of the Way. Concomitant with this they have been able to move their emotional lives beyond those of ordinary people though their cultivation of a highly refined inner vital essence (*jing*). This vital essence allows them to influence the people, by a resonance that works through the principles of correlative cosmology

presented in the "root chapters," particularly in chapters 6 and 9. This enables them to be completely and purely sincere and hence more efficacious in their emotional expressions.

Chapter 11, "Integrating Customs" (*Qisu* 齊俗), relates to the previous chapter in its concern with the emotional lives of human beings, but this time the focus is the emotions of various societies and groups of people who inhabit the empire. Ritual and customs were constructed by sages to give full expression to the inner feelings of human beings, which, like all things in the universe, operate according to the correlative cosmology of *qi* and thus resonate within a greater context than just the individual. These constructions or patterns of human emotionality are to be assessed according to the extent to which they allow or inhibit the free and spontaneous expression of human emotions, which directly arise from human nature and experience. Echoing the title and spirit of chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* (Qiwulun 齊物論), this is the one par on which all are to be placed. Ultimately, both human nature and its emotional expression are grounded in the Way and the suitable expression of emotion through the rites actually results in a manifestation of the Way in human experience. Thus only sages who are perfected through inner-cultivation techniques are best able to create the proper rituals and customs that will enable deep emotional expression. These rituals are not fixed in the past or associated with one region of the country, as they had been for the Confucians. All this is captured in the following passage:

> The three-year mourning period forces a person to what he cannot reach; thus he supplements his feelings with pretense. The three-month observance breaks off grief, coercing and hacking at nature. The Confucians and the Mohists do not [find the] origin [of their doctrines] in the beginnings and ends of [human]nature, and are committed to practicing mutually opposed systems . . . . (Major et al. 2010: 408)

To realize the Way is to realize "the beginnings and ends of human nature."

Chapter 12, "The Responses of the Way," contains over 50 narratives dedicated to illustrating various quotations from the *Laozi*, which the authors of the *Huainanzi* clearly regard as a major canonical source. These narratives are drawn from a wide variety of Daoist and non-Daoist sources, but they always conclude with a quotation from the *Laozi*, much as do the two Daoist-inspired chapters of the *Hanfeizi*, "Jie Lao" (20) and "Yu Lao" (21). These narratives do not introduce any new philosophical ideas into the text, but reinforce ones previously enunciated.

This is somewhat the case as well for chapter 13, "Far-Reaching Assessments," which discusses the historical evolution of sagely government and gives copious examples of how perfected human beings, because of their being grounded in the Way, have been able to respond to constantly shifting situations that arise because of the primacy of change in the cosmos. Because they are attuned to the Way, sages enjoy a unique capacity to *assess* (*lun*) the world around them in the context of the times in which they live, the circumstances arising in the moment, the actions of other men, and their own strengths and weaknesses. Thus they can discard obsolete policies, discover the worthy, and respond to changing circumstances with timeliness and expediency.

They institute Rites and Music in accord with the times and follow the contours of Humaneness and Rightness; throughout the chapter, the Way is conceived of as the constant foundation from which sages continuously adjust their activities. When they do so, the people naturally respond, in accordance with the "matrix of *qi*" and sympathetic resonance outlined in the text's discussion of correlative cosmology. It is thus that states attain Potency. Sages are able to do this by practicing the "Techniques of the Way," referred to throughout the book but particularly in chapters 2 and 7.

Chapter 14, "Explaining Sayings," begins with a comparatively abbreviated and general cosmogony—the fourth and last in the book—that emphasizes the origins of all things from Taiyi (太一), an idea that serves in some passages as an alternate name for the Way and in others as a principle of undifferentiated unity that is beyond even the Way itself. This cosmogony provides the basis for elaboration of the sayings this chapter contains on the nature of human perfection as the realization and embodiment of the Way and on governance by sages. The chapter is filled with "gnomic sayings" that would have been familiar to most of the Huainan circle. It includes explications of these sayings that brings out their expression of some of the important themes and ideas from prior chapters—in particular 2 and 7, the essays in the collection most influenced by the *Zhuangzi*—that the authors wish to emphasize. This chapter differentiates among conceptions of human perfection: the Perfected (*zhiren* 至人), sages, and the Morally Superior Persons (*junzi*) in particular. Using the "Techniques of the Way," the Perfected are adepts who are able to return to that primeval state of Taiyi from which both they as individuals and the universe itself were born. Sages likewise cultivate themselves through these techniques but become rulers and apply their principles to governing. The Morally Superior also cultivate inner concentration and emptiness as the basis of acting ethically in the world. For sages, as they grasp the Way within themselves and experience its empty and formless, they shed their egotistical desires and their strivings and they practice Non-action and non-assertiveness and thereby can respond spontaneously and harmoniously to all situations.

Chapter 15, "An Overview of the Military," although greatly indebted to prior military works like the *Sunzi bingfa,* discusses military principles and affairs in a fashion generally in accordance with the overarching philosophy of the *Huainanzi*. As such, this essay considers military tactics and strategies in the context of their universal cosmological expressions and their being embedded in the correlative grand "matrix of *qi*." Moreover there are morally correct uses of an army: to attack only that state in which the Way is ignored or abandoned, and to defend one's state from attack by other states. Other uses are sanctioned as violations of the cosmic harmony of the Way. Furthermore, generals of successful armies only succeed because they themselves have followed the inner-cultivation practices that are commended to sage rulers throughout the book. Such generals are empty and formless and move in harmony with the Way. This gives them the extraordinary vision to see the overarching patterns of terrain and timely moment and to take positional advantage from them. Thus the text reads:

> That by which the excellent commander is assured victory is his constant possession of a knowledge without origin, a Way that is not a Way. It is difficult to share with the multitude. (Major et al. 2010: 588)

With such a leader the army itself takes on the characteristics of the Way:

> . . . Within, empty and spirit-like;
> Without, barren of will;
> It moves in the formless;
> It emerges where it is not expected;
> It leaves tumultuously;
> It returns unexpectedly.
> None knows its destination.
>
> > Sudden as thunder and lightning;
> > Swift as wind and rain;
> > As if bursting from the earth;
> > As if falling from the sky;
>
> None can respond to or defend against it.
>
> > Fast as bolts and arrows, how can it be matched?
> > Now dark, now bright, who can know its beginning and end?
>
> Before one has seen its launching it has invariably already arrived. (Major et al. 2010: 594).

Thus the Daoist character of this material provides the greater context into which ideas from the prior military texts are situated.

Chapters 16 and 17, "A Mountain of Persuasions" and "A Forest of Persuasions," are similar and parallel collections of sayings and aphorisms to be used in persuasive arguments and in disputations. These quotations were probably intended to serve as talking points for use in discussions or to drive home conclusions in debate. Although these chapters do not contain many statements in common with earlier Daoist works, the former begins with a wonderful narrative in the style of a *Zhuangzian* dialogue between the two souls believed to inhabit the body, Po 魄 (the substantive soul associated with yin) and Hun 魂 (the ethereal soul associated with yang). These two discuss the problem of how the Way could take on physical form since it itself is formless. Chapter 16 contains 151 of these sayings and chapter 17 contains 243 of them.

Chapter 18, "Among Others," is a masterpiece of a lost and highly structured prose form that incorporates narratives from a wide variety of sources, including the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Zhuangzi*, to illustrate various observations about the vagaries of fate and the necessity of inner cultivation to successfully respond to them (Meyer in Major et al. 2010: 18, Introduction). The ultimate point made by this chapter is that one must become a realized spirit or a sage through the inner cultivation practices enunciated in chapter 7 and throughout the text, in order to distinguish the true motives of other people and be able to assume a leadership role "among others." The orientation of this chapter is thus mildly Daoist, although it draws from a wide variety of non-Daoist sources.

Chapter 19, "Cultivating Effort," like chapters 14 and 18, assumes a sophisticated literary form. Herein we find seven distinct examples of two basic types of oral

philosophical debate, one in which an initial philosophical claim is logically supported, one in which such a claim is logically refuted. Within this structure, the overriding concern of the chapter is the necessity of putting effort into self-cultivation and sagely rulership. This is manifest, for example, in the initial section's challenge to the notion that Non-Action as practiced by the great sage-rulers was grounded in emptiness and complete stillness; if this was the case, how do we account for their great achievements? But sagely government does not rest on taking deliberate action (*youwei* 有為) either, especially when it contradicts the propensities of things (*shi* 勢). Key to the practice of Non-Action is the absence of selfish desires and personal ambitions, as well as the ability to comply with the natures, patterns, and propensities of things. Such a position has been identified as a central tenet of "early Daoist syncretism" (Roth 1991a, b). Later sections argue against the notion that the natures of things are set in stone and incapable of being altered. The natures of people contain strengths and weaknesses, and effort is needed at this level as well to transform what we are born with. The role of this chapter in the work as a whole seems to be to remind the young emperor to whom it was presented, that government by Non-Action does not mean that the ruler need make no effort (Major et al. 2010: 765).

Finally, chapter 20, "The Exalted Lineage," can be seen as a summation of what the compilers thought were the main philosophical tenets of the entire work, and these are here exemplified in historical narratives. This chapter, like many others, is concerned with sagely rulership and it again grounds this in the personal realization of the empty and tranquil Way through inner cultivation. Following these practices leads to the development of qualities needed for governing that are subsumed under the general category of "developing Potency." It also leads the sage to possess a "Heavenly heart" (*tianxin* 天心) Humaneness, Wisdom, and a sense of Rightness. These inner qualities must be supplemented by the external study of the accumulated wisdom of the past sages and their examples as conveyed in historical narratives and poetry. Thus sage rulership depends on a combination of external study grounded in a profound inner cultivation. Once again in this chapter, philosophical tenets from a wide variety of earlier traditions are synthesized within a framework that contains a universal cosmology of the Way and its Potency, a correlative cosmology of the "grand matrix of *qi*," a recognition of the natures, propensities, and patterns of all universal phenomena, and apophatic inner cultivation theory. The overall scheme of this chapter may fairly be said to also represent an accurate summation of the entire book of Huainan.

Thus the *Huainanzi* represents a grand synthesis of the best ideas of earlier intellectual traditions within a philosophical and phenomenological framework enunciated in the series of works that constitute our surviving evidence of the classical Daoist tradition, in particular "Inward Training" and the other "Techniques of the Mind" essays from the *Guanzi*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and others. It must be counted syncretic rather than eclectic for the fact that its varied ideas are presented within a systematic and coherent philosophical framework.

There are several major reasons that many scholars are uneasy about classifying the *Huainanzi* as a "Daoist" work, despite the fulsome evidence of its Daoist

philosophical framework. The first is that historical evidence of a Daoist movement in early Han social and political history is scanty and scattered throughout the dynastic histories; as such it requires further investigation. Second, scholars have come to question the accuracy of the labels SIMA Tan created for the philosophical traditions, perhaps the most important of which was "Daoism" (*Daojia*) (Queen 2001; Csíkszentmihályi and Nylan 2003; Smith 2003). Third, the *Huainanzi* never explicitly states that it is a "Daoist" or a "Huang-Lao" text: in fact it explicitly states that it is quite beyond any other work ever written:

> We have not followed a path made by a solitary footprint, nor adhered to instructions from a single perspective, nor allowed ourselves to be entrapped or fettered by things so that we would not advance or shift according to the age. Thus, situate [this book] in the narrowest of circumstances and nothing will obstruct it; extend it to the whole world and it will leave no empty spaces. (Major et al. 2010: 867)

Given the text's ample and sustained use of a cosmology of the Way and its Potency and the inner cultivation theory drawn from earlier Daoist sources, given its identification with the "root" philosophical foundations and the prominence of these ideas in the first two chapters, it is clear that however much the authors of the *Huainanzi* wished to present their book as beyond any other in the comprehensiveness and grandness of its synthesis, it is deeply embedded in an intellectual and practice tradition directly descended from those classical Daoist works, the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. Its comprehensiveness in incorporating other intellectual traditions into the grand sweep of its synthesis sets it apart from both its classical foundations and later works, and as such it constitutes a definitive synthesis of the classical Daoist tradition and an elegant attempt to apply its inner-cultivation practices to rulership. Its ultimate failure owes as much to the vagaries of its time and the political struggles thereof as it does to the fact that as an ideological guide to governance it gives license to anyone to pursue the pinnacle of sagehood and hence the ability and the legitimacy to rule.

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Part IV
Daoism in the Wei-Jin Periods

Chapter 16
WANG Bi and *Xuanxue*

Richard John Lynn

1 Historical and Family Background

WANG Bi 王弼 (226–249) lived in the state of Wei, which had to share what had been the Han empire with the later Han state in Sichuan, which occupied the southwest, and the state of Wu, which controlled the southeast. The Wei ruling house, marked by a quick rise to power and an equally swift fall from it, made the state internally far from secure. Though WANG Bi lived in the midst of much political and military strife, he also found himself at the center of major intellectual trends that had been developing for more than a 100 years, much of which involved his own earlier family.

The WANGS comprised a prominent gentry clan in Gao Ping 高平, Shanyang commandery 山陽郡, Shandong, just south of present-day Ji'ning city 濟寧, and a detailed account of the clan has been written by WANG Xiaoyi 王曉毅 (WANG 1996: 166–192). Although accounts of the clan go back further, we shall begin with WANG Qian 王謙, known in the sources only as chief secretary to HE Jin 何進 (died 189), Defender-in-chief and staunch opponent of the palace eunuchs and grandfather of HE Yan 何晏 (190–249), with whom WANG Bi became closely associated later. WANG Qian had one son, WANG Can 王粲 (177–217), perhaps the best poet among the "Seven Masters of the Jian'an Era" 建安七子, the prominent group of officials and literary figures who enjoyed the patronage of CAO Cao 曹操 (155–220), usurper of Han rule and father of CAO Pi 曹丕 (187–226), first emperor of the Wei 魏 dynasty (Miao 1982; Diény 1982). WANG Can was born and grew up in Luoyang, the Later Han capital, and his childhood was spent largely in the company of an

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older cousin, WANG Kai 王凱, the grandfather of WANG Bi. When Luoyang was sacked and burned in 190, young Emperor Xian 獻帝 and the court were removed to Chang'an, and the WANGS moved with them. However, 2 years later, when civil order broke down in Chang'an, WANG Can and WANG Kai fled to Xiangyang 襄陽 (present-day Xiangfan 襄樊, Hubei) and the protection of LIU Biao 劉表 (142–208), de facto ruler of Jingzhou 州. LIU at first intended to give his daughter in marriage to WANG Can but, thinking Can too short, physically weak, and ugly, and put off by his casual and familiar manner, he gave her to WANG Kai instead, supposedly because of his handsome appearance. This woman was the mother of WANG Ye 王業, WANG Bi's father, and thus his paternal grandmother.

1.1 Jingzhou Learning

The main features of Jingzhou learning are summarized here, together with WANG Bi's affiliations with it:

(1) The later Han shift in classics scholarship (*jingxue* 經學) away from emphasis on new text versions of the five classics (*jinwen jing* 今文經) to old script versions (*guwen jing* 古文經) reached a high point in Jingzhou academic circles, where old script texts were declared orthodox and became for the first time the official versions used in government schools and academies. Accompanying this shift was the rejection of prognostic commentary approaches, associated with earlier Han apocrypha, which often referred to correlative cosmology based on numerology or "image and number" (*xiangshu* 象數), yin-yang 陰陽 thought and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行). Even the immensely influential commentaries by ZHENG Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200), which often stressed a "meaning and principle" exegesis, were found deficient because they were also loaded with abstruse correlative cosmological interpretations. This prevailing trend toward creation of straightforward and succinct philosophical commentaries on old script classics was led by SONG Zhong 宋忠, whose own commentaries, including those to the *Classic of Changes* 易經 and to YANG Xiong's 揚雄 (53 B.C.E.–C.E. 18) *Canon of the Supreme Arcane* 太玄經, a divination manual that draws and expands on the *Classic of Changes*, served as models that eschewed the "image and number" approach. SONG's commentaries on even these divination works—so rife with correlative categorical thinking and numerology—now concentrated on the "meaning and principle" inherent in passages.

The text of the *Classic of Changes* used by the later WANG Bi, whose *Commentary On the Changes of the Zhou* (*Zhouyi zhu* 周易注) is the earliest extant complete commentary edition, belongs to this old script tradition (Shaughnessy 1993: 222–24), and his exegesis based on "meaning and principle" is clearly affiliated with Jingzhou learning. Although Wang often borrows from ZHENG Xuan's commentary where it focuses on "meaning and principle," he utterly rejects ZHENG'S correlative categorical approach, especially his analysis of hexagrams in terms of "heavenly

stems inhere in the trigrams" (*najia* 納甲) and "time of day inheres in hexagram lines" (*yaochen* 爻辰) (SHU 2001), and this too clearly places him in the Jingzhou tradition.

(2) A significant component of Jingzhou learning was the strong resurgence of Huang-Lao thought 黃老思想, supposedly a combination of the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Master Lao (Laozi), but actually an amalgam of Confucianism (*Rujia* 儒家), classical Daoism represented by the *Laozi* 老子 or *Daode jing* 道德經 and parts of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, School of Names or Terminologists (*Mingjia* 名家), Mohism (*Mojia* 墨家), and Legalism (*Fajia* 法家). Huang-Lao thought originated in the middle Warring States era 戰國時代 (fourth century B.C.E.), dominated much of Western Han thought, and waned in influence during the Eastern or Later Han (Yates 2008: 508–10). Yin-yang cosmology and techniques to achieve longevity and physical immortality were also important components of earlier Huang-Lao thought, but these were downplayed in Jingzhou learning. Huang-Lao thought, especially aspects of it associated with Legalism, largely focuses on statecraft, an approach to government in which ramifications of sagely rule are delegated to officialdom. The sage ruler stays free of conscious action (*wuwei* 無爲) and is concerned only with overall policy and the fundamentals of governance, never involving himself in their conscious application (*youwei* 有爲), which is the responsibility of subordinate officials whose decisions are informed and inspired by a sage ruler's example of resonance with the Dao. Without trying to do so, the paradigm of the sage ruler thus shapes and guides officialdom so that its decisions are always "right" in the sense that they produce perfect accord between the Dao of humanity (*rendao* 人道), the political and social order, and the Dao of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道), the cosmic order. WANG Bi's syncretistic hermeneutics draws on a combination of Confucian political and social thought, Daoist naturalism, and Huang-Lao concepts of the sage ruler, and his great interest in the function of language obviously owes much to the School of Names (Harbsmeier 1998: 355–58; Ashmore 2004). All these dimensions of WANG'S thought clearly echo essentials of Jingzhou learning.

(3) An intermittent tendency from the late Warring States era to integrate Huang-Lao thought and the School of Names was revived and strongly reinforced in Jingzhou learning; an important implication of this was the wide-spread practice of appraising personal character (*renwu pinping* 人物品評). Jinzhou interest in Huang-Lao thought concentrated on the creation of an ideal officialdom, and its involvement with the School of Names focused on the relationship between "form and name" or "performance and title" (*xingming* 形名), which constituted a two-pronged effort to define and apply criteria for the selection of officials. The late Han and Wei-Jin eras seem to have been obsessed with the appraisal of personal character, for many prominent figures are known for their involvement in it—both for isolated pithy sayings and for whole works or substantial portions thereof devoted to the subject, such as LIU Shao's 劉邵 (174–242)[1] *On Human Character*

[1]Liu Shao's dates have been worked out by LUN Chibiao [Luen Chih-Biao] 倫熾標 in LUN 1990.

and Ability (*Renwu zhi* 人物志) and LIU Yi's 劉廙 (180–221) *On Governance* (*Zhenglun* 政論). As for pithy remarks, WANG Can, harboring resentment from LIU Biao's low opinion of him based largely on his looks,[2] said in a toast to CAO Cao after LIU died and CAO had taken Jingzhou:

> When LIU Biao was living in ease and majesty in Jing Chu 荊楚 [Jingzhou], observing from the sideline how greatly unsettled then the world was, he thought he could model himself on Xibo 西伯 [King Wen's 文王 title before he rose against the Shang to found the Zhou dynasty]. Literati who had fled from disorder to Jingzhou were all outstanding talents from all over the empire, but Biao did not know how to employ them, with the result that when his state was falling into danger no one was there to help alleviate the situation. (CHEN 1975: 21.599)

Judging the inner reality that underlies appearance was thus a major problem, with serious implications not only for the selection of officials but also, in those precarious times, even in the choice of personal friends and colleagues, since the wrong kind of associates could easily lead to one's own downfall and destruction. I suggest that such preoccupations were responsible for much of the contemporary resurgence of interest in the School of Names and that this interest carried over for some, including WANG Bi, to reassessment of the relationship between "form and name" as a philosophical problem. WANG Bi's focus on the nature and function of language seems intimately connected with such concerns.

2 WANG Can

When Cao Cao returned north to Chang'an, after conquering Jingzhou, WANG Can and WANG Kai, accompanied by their families, followed him. Although WANG Kai does not appear to have held office after the return to Chang'an, WANG Can became a close personal advisor to CAO Cao, especially on literary and ritual matters. An odd twist to WANG family history took place in 219, about 2 years after WANG Can's death, when his two sons were implicated in WEI Feng's 魏諷 abortive revolt and executed. CAO Cao was then absent on campaign and so charged CAO Pi, his son and heir, with investigating the revolt with full authority to judge the ringleaders and accomplices. However, when CAO Cao heard that WANG Can's sons had been executed, he said: "If I had been there, I would not have cut off Zhongxuan's 仲宣 [WANG Can's] line" (CHEN 1975: 21.599 note 2). Later, after CAO Pi had become Emperor Wen 文帝, he decreed that WANG Ye, son of WANG Kai, was to become WANG Can's legitimate heir, which allowed WANG Can, whose service to the Caos had far surpassed those of his cousin, to "recover" his posterity.

The fact that WANG Ye became WANG Can's heir had important implications for his son, WANG Bi. During 190–192, when the WANGS were living in Chang'an

[2] WANG Xiulin 王岫林 has made a thorough study of the relationship between physical appearance and the appraisal of personal character during the Wei-Jin era (WANG 1996).

and before the flight to Xiangyang, the young WANG Can had become a disciple of the leading classical scholar of the day, CAI Yong 蔡邕 (132–192), who was so impressed by WANG that during his last years he gave him his library of a "myriad books." Later, after WANG Can's sons were executed, the books that CAI Yong had given to WANG Can all went to WANG Ye (CHEN 1975: 28.796n1). This enormous library must have been available to Wang Bi a generation later.

Neither WANG Ye nor his older son WANG Hong 王宏 are known as thinkers or writers, but both pursued official careers. WANG Ye rose through the ranks to become a secretarial court gentleman, a subordinate position within the imperial secretariat concerned with drafting edicts and other court documents. However, his son achieved higher office, for WANG Hong was appointed Metropolitan Commandant, whose duty was to supervise the entire officialdom of the capital, with a rank equivalent to that of the Director of the Imperial Secretariat (CHEN 1975: 28:796n1). Enough is thus known of the high official status of the WANG family during WANG Bi's own time and earlier to provide context for the development of his exegetical and philosophical writings, both of which exhibit a strong political slant that surely derived from personal experience of his family's involvement in the government and politics of the late Han and early Wei eras.

Wang Bi was also similarly influenced by some of his great uncle WANG Can's essays, for example, Can's "Treatise On Keeping One's Person Safe" (*An shen lun* 安身論):

> To honor virtue, nothing makes more of a contribution than keeping one's person safe. To keep one's person safe, nothing is greater than making government secure; to make government secure, nothing is more important than freedom from self-interest; to achieve freedom from self-interest, nothing is more significant than minimizing desire. Thus it is that the noble man only makes a move after making his person safe, speaks only after calming his heart and mind, and takes action only after making his friendships firm.
>
> Therefore, one's actions determine whether good fortune or bad begins; one's speech controls whether honor or disgrace results; one's search for friends defines the starting point of either benefit or disaster; one's deeds decide the difference between security and danger. The noble man thus never acts recklessly by ensuring that he acts only in accordance with the Dao; he never speaks in vain by ensuring that he speaks only in terms of the true principles of things; he never seeks wrong friendships by ensuring that they develop out of righteousness; he never behaves inconsequentially by ensuring that his behavior springs from rectitude.
>
> In this way, one can avoid misfortune and instead be blessed with the aid of Heaven.
>
> Thus it is that when one's person is not safe, it is in peril; when one's speech is not compliant, it will result in conflict; when one's friendships are not examined carefully, one will be misled; when one's actions are not sincere, they will result in danger. If one harbors these four failings within, calamity and misery will meet him without. Such meeting with misery and calamity surely arises from selfishness and flourishes because of the desires that beset one. One caught up in selfishness can never fulfill his self-interest, and one who has desires can never be delivered from them. Such are the ultimate principles of existence (YAN 1995: *Hou Hanwen*, 91.4b–5a).

Both because of his own experience and the earlier history of his family, WANG Bi was acutely aware that he lived in dangerous times, and it is quite possible to read his commentaries, on one level at least, in terms of strategies for survival.

2.1 Biography of WANG *Bi*

The primary source for WANG Bi's life is a biographical notice written by HE Shao 何劭 (late third-early fourth centuries), a prolific essayist on the people and events of his own times, preserved in the commentary of PEI Songzhi 裴松之 (372–451) to the *History of the Wei* (*Weishu* 魏書) section of the *Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms* (CHEN 1975: 28.795–96). Most of the information provided in this biography is also found in LIU Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–444) *A New Account Of Tales Of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世説新語), divided among a number of entries, often in passages worded differently, and with a few other details concerning WANG'S life (Mather 1976: 95–97, 593, 722).

HE Shao's biography of WANG:

> WANG Bi revealed his intelligence and wisdom even while still a child. By the time he was only about ten years he had already developed a liking for the *Laozi*, which he understood thoroughly and could discuss with ease. His father was WANG Ye, a Secretarial Court Gentleman.
>
> At the time when PEI Hui 裴徽 was serving as Director of the Ministry of Personnel, WANG Bi, who then had not yet been "capped" [i.e. before the age of nineteen], went to pay him a visit. As soon as PEI saw him, he knew that he was an extraordinary person, so he asked him, "Nothingness (*wu* 無) in truth is the source on which the myriad things depend for existence, yet the Sage [Confucius] was unwilling to talk about it, while Master Lao expounded upon it endlessly. Why is that?" WANG Bi replied, "The Sage embodied nothingness so knew that it could not be explained in words, thus did not talk about it. Master Lao, by contrast, operated on the level of somethingness (*you* 有) [i.e., physical or phenomenal existence], which was why he constantly discussed nothingness; he had to, for what he said about it always fell short." Shortly afterwards WANG also came to the attention of Fu Gu 傅嘏 [209–255].

Fu Gu was a member of HE Yan's circle of friends dedicated to "pure conversation" (*qingtan* 清談), but he had broken with HE and joined the SIMA party in 249, thus avoiding execution when SIMA Yi 司馬懿 usurped power from the Wei and founded the Jin dynasty. He authored one of the essays in ZHONG Hui's 鍾會 (225–264) *Treatise on the Four Basic Relations* [*Between Talent and Human Nature*] (*Siben lun* 四本論). He Shao's biography of WANG continues:

> At this time, HE Yan 何晏 [190–249] was President of the Ministry of Personnel, and he too thought WANG Bi most remarkable. Sighing in admiration, he said, "As Zhongni 仲尼 [Confucius] said, "Those born after us shall be held in awe" (Analects 9.22). It is with such a person as this that one can discuss the relationship between Heaven and Mankind!"

Compare a passage from Liu Yiqing's *A New Account of Tales of the World*:

> When HE Yan was serving as president of the President of the Ministry of Personnel he enjoyed both status and acclaim. Debaters of the time thronged the seats of his home. WANG Bi then not yet twenty also went to visit him. Since Yan had heard of Bi's reputation, he culled some of his best arguments from past debates and said to Bi, "These arguments I consider unsurpassable. Do you wish to raise any objections?" Bi then proceeded to raise objections, and after he had finished the whole company thought that Yan

was defeated. Bi then went on, himself acting as both host and guest for several bouts. In every case he was unequaled by anyone else in the whole company. (Adapted from Mather 1976: 95; for original text, see LIU 1972: 151).

He Shao's biography of WANG continues:

During the Zhengshi era [240–249], the position of Director of the Chancellery became vacant a succession of times, but HE Yan had managed to fill it with JIA Chong 賈充 [217–282], PEI Xiu 裴秀 [224–271], and ZHU Zheng 朱整; now he also proposed WANG Bi for that office. However, it was then that DING Mi 丁謐 and HE Yan were vying for power [within the CAO Shuang 曹爽 clique], and, when Ding recommended WANG Li 王黎 of Gao District 高邑 to CAO Shuang, CAO appointed him to that position, in consequence of which he made WANG Bi a Secretarial Court Gentleman. When WANG Bi first took up his post and paid his ceremonial visit to CAO Shuang, he asked for a private interview. Cao dismissed his entourage, and when WANG Bi discussed the Dao with him for a time, never touching on anything else, this made CAO laugh at him [since he would not discuss government in any other terms except the Dao of the *Laozi*].

It was at this time that CAO Shuang monopolized political power at court and formed a clique whose members recommended each other for office, but WANG Bi, unconventional and brilliant, did not concern himself with high office and reputation. Shortly afterward, when WANG Li suddenly died of illness, CAO Shuang appointed WANG Chen 王沈 to take WANG Li's place, so WANG Bi never managed to gain a place among CAO'S inner circle. This made HE Yan sigh with regret. WANG Bi was now limited to superficial duties at court and never had a chance to accomplish anything of merit, so as time went on he paid ever less attention to duties.

LIU Tao 劉陶, a native of Huai'nan, was good at discussing political strategies and alliances, for which he had quite a reputation at the time, but on every occasion when he debated these matters with WANG Bi, he was always defeated by him. The talent with which he was endowed by Heaven made WANG Bi an outstanding figure, and no one was ever able to beat him at what he did best.

By nature gentle and reasonable, WANG enjoyed parties and feasts, was well versed in the technical aspects of music, and excelled at pitching arrows into the pot.[3] In discussing the Dao, he may not have been as good as HE Yan at forcing language to say what he meant, but in spontaneously coming up with unique insights he often beat HE Yan.

A similar statement occurs in SUN Sheng's 孫盛 (ca. 302–373) *Spring and Autumn Annals of the Wei* (*Weishi chunqiu* 魏氏春秋): "In discussing the Dao, WANG Bi's ability to use concise yet beautiful language was inferior to that of HE Yan, but WANG'S ability to come up with spontaneously with unique insights was superior to HE'S." SUN'S comment is quoted in LIU Jun's (462–521) 劉峻 commentary to *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Liu 1972: 152; Mather: 96). HE Shao's biography of WANG continues:

To some extent, he used the advantages with which he was blessed to make fun of other people, so he incurred the enmity of scholars and officials of his day. WANG Bi was good friends with ZHONG Hui, who was an established expert in disputation, thanks to his well trained mental discipline, but he was always vanquished by Wang's high-flying élan.

[3] "Pitch [arrows] into the pot" (*touhu* 投壺) was a game played at formal or ritual feasts.

3 The Sage and Emotions

HE Shao's biography of Wang continues:

> It was HE Yan's opinion that the sage is free of pleasure, anger, sadness, or happiness, and his discussion of this issue was meticulously argued. ZHONG Hui and others passed around what he had to say, but WANG Bi took a different position and thought that it was numinous intelligence (*shenming* 神明) that the sage was more richly endowed with that made him different from people in general, and what made him the same as people in general was that he too had the five emotions. Since the sage was so richly endowed with numinous intelligence, he could embody pneuma perfectly fused [with the unitary pneuma of everything else] and thereby integrate flawlessly with nothingness (*ti chonghe yi tongwu* 體沖和以通無).

WANG Bi says something similar in his commentary to a passage in the *Laozi*, Section 42: "The myriad things, bearing *yin* and embracing *yang*, form a unified harmony through the fusion of these pneuma" (*chongqi yi wei he* 沖氣以和):

> Therefore the myriad things are begotten, and I know the Master that controls this. Although they have a myriad forms, the fusion of pneuma makes One out of all of them (*sui you wanxing chongqi yi yan* 雖有萬形氣一焉) (LOU 1980: 117; Lynn 1999: 135).[4]

To "integrate flawlessly with nothingness" is thus to become One with the Dao. HE Shao continues:

> Since the sage was same as other people in having the five emotions, he could not fail to respond to things without feeling sadness or pleasure. Nevertheless, the emotions of the sage are such that he may respond to things without becoming attached to them. Nowadays, because the sage is considered free of such attachment, one immediately thinks it can be said that he no longer responds to things. How very wide of the mark this is!
>
> When WANG Bi wrote his commentary to the *Classic of Changes*, XUN Rong 荀融, a native of Yingchuan 潁川, found fault with WANG'S *Meaning of the Great Expansion* (*Dayan yi* 大衍義).

Though a work long lost, a fragment of WANG'S *Meaning of the Great Expansion* is included in HAN Kangbo's 韓康伯 (died ca. 385) commentary to the "Commentary on the Appended Phrases" (*Xici zhuan* 繫辭傳), Part One, of the *Changes of Zhou* (*Classic of Changes*)[5] (KONG 1997: 7.80a–80b):

> After expanding the numbers of Heaven and Earth, we find that the ones that are of benefit to us number fifty, and of these we actually use forty-nine, thus leaving one unused. Although this one is not used, yet through it the use of the other numbers becomes readily possible, and, although this one is not one of the numbers, yet through it the other numbers are formed. As this one represents the supreme ultimate of change (*yi zhi taiji* 易之太極), the

[4]Translations from WANG Bi cited from previously published works by Richard John Lynn (Lynn 1994, 1999, 2001) are often presented here in revised form.

[5]Han Kangbo commented on those parts of the *Changes* not included in WANG Bi's commentary: the "Commentary To the Appended Phrases," the "Providing the Sequence of the Hexagrams" (*Xugua* 序卦), the "Hexagrams In Irregular Order" (*Zagua* 雜卦), and the "Explaining the Trigrams" (*Shuo gua* 說卦).

> other forty-nine constitute the ultimate of numbers (*shu zhi ji* 數之極). Nothingness cannot be brought to light by means of nothingness but must take place through somethingness. Therefore, by applying ourselves constantly to this ultimate [number] for things that have somethingness, we shall surely bring to light the Primogenitor (*zong* 宗) from which all things derive. (Lynn 1994: 60–61).

The "Primogenitor" is "Nothingness," the "One," or the Dao. Manipulation of the 49 numbers yields the 64 hexagrams, which in total represents all phenomenal existence—the sum total of "somethingness." And it is through the constant exploration and pondering of the hexagrams that one can arrive at an understanding of the underlying unity of all things. This passage from WANG'S writings perhaps best illustrates his new "meaning and principle" (*yili* 義理) style of commentary, which rejects "image and number" thought and correlative cosmology—a complete contrast, for example, to ZHENG Xuan's commentary on this same passage—as pointed out by TANG Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964), who refers to Wang's approach as a search for the "arcane principles" (*xuanli* 玄理) inherent in the hexagrams and their associated texts. (TANG 2000a: 4. 53–61). HE Shao continues:

> So WANG replied to what he was getting at and drafted a letter which teased him: "Even though one may have intelligence sufficient to delve into the greatest profundity and subtlety (*youwei* 幽微), such a one still cannot escape the bounds of his natural endowment (*ziran zhi xing* 自然之性). Whatever capacity Master YAN had,[6] it was something already realized beforehand in Confucius, yet when Confucius met him, he could not but feel pleasure, and, when Confucius buried him, he could not but feel sadness. Moreover you are in the habit of belittling this Confucius, whom you regard as someone who found it impossible to pursue principle (*li* 理) via the path of the emotions (*qing* 情). But now you know that what one is by nature can never be changed. As for your capacity, sir, though it is already fixed within your breast, nevertheless here we are parted for only about half a month, and you feel the pain of separation as much as all this! Thus we know, comparing Confucius to Master YAN, he could not have surpassed him by very much!"

4 "Nothingness" and "Somethingness"

It appears that WANG is pointedly responding to what seems to have been XUN'S belief, like HE Yan's, that "the sage has no emotions," and that this might well have been the basis of XUN'S criticism of WANG'S work on the *Changes*. WANG, in referring to XUN'S disparagement of Confucius because he could not "pursue principle via the path of the emotions," pokes fun at XUN for being unable himself to avoid emotion, and in doing so he probably was punning on the double range of meaning of *qing*, the first meaning of which may have been "emotions" or "feelings," but an equal early range of meaning was "proper nature,"

[6]Master YAN 顏子, also called YAN Hui 顏回 or YAN Yuan 顏淵, was supposedly the most virtuous, learned, and diligent of Confucius's disciples.

"circumstances," "quality," "attribute," or "feature," among others (Schuessler 2007: 433). We can never know exactly what in WANG'S work prompted XUN'S remarks or even what those remarks were, but I suggest that XUN disagreed with WANG'S statement (or something similar to it) that "nothingness cannot be brought to light by means of nothingness but must take place through somethingness." This becomes apparent when we consider the relationships between "emotions" and "principle" and between "somethingness" and "nothingness." In other words, *qing* can refer to the innate character and predilection or innate properties or tendencies of physical things and their behavior—the sum total of phenomenal reality, the very "somethingness" of everything existent. To return to what seems to have been WANG'S pun on *qing* in his response to Xun: just as one must pursue principle via the emotions, one must also seek "nothingness"—the One, the Dao—via *qing* as phenomenal reality, the "somethingness" of everything that exists. HE Shao continues:

> WANG Bi wrote a commentary to the *Laozi*, for which he provided an *Outline Introduction* (*zhilue* 指略)[7] marked by clear reasoning and systematic organization. He also wrote a *General Discussion of the Dao* (*Dao luelun* 道略論), as well as a commentary to the *Changes*. All these works frequently exhibit lofty and beautiful language.[8] WANG Ji 王濟 [ca. 240–ca. 285] of Taiyuan 太原 liked to talk about and find fault with the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, but it was his habit to say "when I saw WANG Bi's commentary to the *Laozi*, there was much about which I was enlightened (*wu* 悟)."

Although HE Shao's biography of WANG Bi reads "there was much about which I was enlightened" (*suo wuzhe duo* 所悟者多), it is much more likely that the source HE quotes should have been "there was much about which he [WANG Bi] was wrong" (*suo wuzhe duo* 所誤者多), for this is the way WANG Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296) in his postface (*ba* 跋) to his edition of ZHENG Xuan's commentary to the *Changes* copies a portion of a letter from LU Cheng 陸澄 (425–94) to WANG Jian 王儉 in which WANG Ji's remark is cited (WANG 1983: 32b–33a). LU'S letter clearly identifies WANG Ji as a partisan of ZHENG Xuan's commentary to the *Changes* and an opponent of WANG Bi's, so it is likely that WANG Ji did not think WANG Bi's work "enlightening" but "wrong"; his main objection was probably that WANG Bi did not follow ZHENG'S "image and number" approach but instead used the thought of the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* to explain the *Changes*. Although another source also has LU'S letter read "enlightened" (*wu* 悟) instead of "wrong" (*wu* 誤) (XIAO 1972: 39.683–684), TANG Yongtong is convinced from his reading of the entire quoted portion of the letter that this too is in error and that the text should still read "wrong." TANG ends his analysis with the observation that reference here to the ZHENG Xuan versus the WANG Bi commentary to the *Changes* is another example of the long-standing conflict between the "old" image and number approach and the "new" philosophical reading (TANG 2000a: 53–54). HE Yan, of course, had the

[7]This is translated and annotated in its entirety in Lynn 1999: 30–47.

[8]*Zhilue* can also be translated as "Essential Purpose" or "Essential Meaning." See Lynn 1994.

highest opinion of WANG Bi, as these passages in the *A New Account of Tales of the Words* record:

> When HE Pingshu 平叔 [HE Yan] had just completed his commentary to the *Laozi*, he went to visit WANG Fusi 輔嗣 [WANG Bi], but after seeing how brilliant and marvelous WANG'S commentary was, he bowed in homage to him as if he were a god, saying, "With such a person one may discuss the frontier where Heaven and Man meet!" Therefore, he converted what he had commented on into two treatises, one on the *Dao* and one on the *Virtue* (*De* 德).
>
> HE Yan had been writing a commentary on the *Laozi* but had not yet finished when he went to visit WANG Bi, to whom he explained how he intended to comment on the *Laozi*, but WANG for the most part found HE'S approach so deficient that he could bring himself to say nothing other than "I see." As a consequence, HE did not continue with his commentary but instead used the opportunity to write separate treatises on the *Dao* and the *Virtue*. (LIU 1972: 152–53; Mather 1976: 95, 97)

4.1 Last Years

HE Yan's biographical notice concludes:

> However, Wang Bi was shallow in his personal relationships and obtuse concerning how others felt. At first, he was good friends with WANG Li and XUN Rong, yet when WANG Li stole his chance to be Director of the Chancellery, he came to hate him, and he did not manage to finish up with XUN Rong on good terms either.
>
> In the tenth year of the Zhengshi era [249] CAO Shuang was deposed, in consequence of which WANG Bi was dismissed from service at court. In the autumn of that year he fell prey to a pestilence and died at twenty-three years of age. He had no son, so his line stopped with him. Concerning his death, when Prince Jing of the Jin dynasty [the posthumous title of SIMA Shi 司馬師 (208–255)] heard the news, he sighed and moaned over it for days on end—regret at his passing was felt as keenly by the intelligentsia as this!

4.2 Advocates and Opponents

WANG Bi's reputation as a brilliant thinker, exegete, and writer continued throughout the time "arcane learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學) flourished, with, of course, a few notable exceptions, the most serious of which was probably the diatribe against him, HE Yan, and others associated with arcane learning by FAN Ning 范甯 (339–401), who, though a Buddhist in private life, was a strict Confucian advocate of ethical formalism (*mingjiao* 名教) in public life. FAN did all he could to restore Confucian ritual and ethical standards to political and social behavior, blaming their degeneration into rampant nihilism and pernicious libertinism on arcane learning advocates such as WANG Bi. FAN apparently only knew arcane learning in the notorious form advocated by some of its avowed but superficial followers who used it just as rationalization for licentious and libertine behavior. (FANG et al. 1974: 1984–85; Mather 1969).

A far more sympathetic view of WANG Bi can be found in LIU Xie's 劉勰 (ca. 465–522) great work of literary theory and criticism, the *Literary Mind: Dragon Carvings* [*Elaborations*] (*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍), which makes two references to WANG Bi that place him in the context of other writers and thinkers of the time:

When the Wei first became hegemon, as the art of government conjoined the teachings of the School of Names with that of the Legalists, FU Gu and WANG Can examined and assessed names (*ming* 名) and principles (*li* 理), but, by the Zhengshi era [240–48], an earnest wish had arisen to conserve the literary heritage, and, thanks to such figures as HE Yan, discourses on the arcane (*xuanlun* 玄論) began to flourish. It was then that Dan 聃 [Laozi] and Zhou 周 [Zhuangzi] so came to prevail that they even contended with Master Ni 尼 [Confucius] for supremacy! When we carefully read the "On Talent and Individual nature" (*Caixing* 才性) by Lanshi 蘭石 [FU Gu], the "On ridding oneself of boastfulness" (*Qu fa* 去伐) by Zhongxuan [WANG Can], the "Analysis of Music" (Biansheng 辨聲) ["On the Non-emotional Character of Music" (*Sheng wu aile lun* 聲無哀樂論)] by Shuye 叔夜 [JI Kang 嵇康 (223–62)], the "On Origin in the Arcane" (*Benxuan* 本玄) ["On Origin in Nothingness" (*Benwu lun* 本無論) by Taichu 太初 [XIAHOU Xuan 夏侯玄 (209–54)], the two "General Remarks" (兩例) by Fusi [WANG Bi] ["General Remarks on the Changes of the Zhou"(*Zhouyi lueli* 周易略例) and "General Remarks on the *Laozi*" (*Laozi zhilue* 老子指略)] and the two "Discourses" (*Lun* 論) ["On Non-purposeful Action" (*Wuwei lun* 無為論) and "On the Nameless" (*Wuming lun* 無名論)] by Pingshu [HE Yan], we discover that all express independent views based on original insight and argue with precision and tight organization. There is no doubt that these are outstanding examples of discourses. (LIU 1958: 327)

As for the commentary (*zhushi* 注釋), its composition is a discourse broken into fragments, and, although the odds and ends of text that result differ [from that of the integral discourse], when the commentary is considered as a whole, it turns out to be much the same . . . . As for such works as Master MAO'S [MAO Heng 毛亨] exegesis on the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), Anguo's [KONG Anguo 孔安國 second century B.C.E.] commentary to the *Classic of Documents*, Master ZHENG'S [ZHENG Xuan] exegeses on the [*Three*] *Rites*, and WANG Bi's commentary to the *Changes*, all these are concise but thoroughly lucid—worthy models indeed for exegetical writing! (LIU 1958: 328)

Wang was thus both praised and condemned during the Wei, Jin, and Six Dynasties era (third–sixth centuries). The following passage taken from the biography of Wang Yan 王衍 (256–311) in the *History of the Jin Era* (*Jinshu* 晉書) exemplifies the controversy surrounding him.

During the Zhengshi era of the Wei, people such as HE Yan and WANG Bi followed the teachings of Master Lao and Master Zhuang, honoring them as patriarchs. They founded a doctrine that taught that "Heaven, Earth, and the Myriad Things all had as their fundamental principle (*ben* 本) non-deliberate or non-purposeful action (*wuwei* 無為). As for this nothingness, from the start of things to the completion of affairs, no undertaking takes place in which it is not integrally present. The *yin* and *yang* rely on it to create things (*hua sheng* 化生); the myriad things rely on it to attain mature physical existence (*cheng xing* 成形); worthies rely on it to complete their virtue (*de* 德); and the antisocial rely on it to avoid harm (*mian shen* 免身). Thus it is that nothingness functions in such a way that though invaluable is never honored." WANG Yan thought very highly of this teaching, but PEI Wei 裴頠 [267–300] thought it all wrong and even wrote a treatise ridiculing it, but WANG Yan just went on believing in it as he had before. (FANG et al. 1974: 43.1236)

PEI Wei's treatise was called "Acknowledge the Primacy of Somethingness [Phenomenal Existence]" (*Chong you lun* 崇有論) (Fang et al. 1974: 35.1044–47),

and in it he argues that a genuine sense of social and moral responsibility can only grow if one takes the actual, physical world seriously; on the other hand, the exaltation of "nothingness" leads only to irresponsible behavior and licentiousness. WANG Yan, of course, rejected such assertions and remained firmly convinced that both the good society as well as individual self fulfillment can only emerge from naturalness in harmony with the Dao, which he, like WANG Bi before him, equated with "nothingness." For details of the feud between WANG Yan and PEI Wei see the critical study by Professor Mather (Mather 1969).

4.3 The "Substance" and "Function" of "Nothingness"

"Nothingness," sometimes a compound word, *wuwu* 無物 or *wuyou* 無有—that which has no physical or specific existence, no "somethingness"—is a key term in the thought of WANG Bi, where it becomes the chief attribute of the Dao. Nothingness as such designates two related aspects of the Dao, which can be discussed in terms of (1) what the Dao as "nothingness" *is* and (2) what it *does*. I believe that this polarity might best be discussed in terms of "substance" (*ti* 體) and "function" (*yong* 用), as WANG Bi suggests in his commentary to *Laozi* Section 38, which begins with:

> A person of superior virtue (*shangde* 上德) is not virtuous, and this is why he has virtue. A person of inferior virtue (*xiade* 下德) never loses virtue, and this is why he lacks virtue. A person of superior virtue takes no conscious action and so acts out of nothing (*wu yi wei* 無以爲). A person of inferior virtue takes conscious action (*wei zhi* 爲之) and so acts out of something (*you yi wei* 有以爲).

"Superior virtue" is thus one with the virtue of the Dao, and as such emerges from the nothingness of the Dao. "Inferior virtue" is a product of conscious effort, and as such signifies estrangement from the Dao. WANG Bi continues:

> The greatest thing possible, how can this be other than the Dao? How could any lesser expression adequately serve to honor It? Thus, although Its virtue is replete, Its enterprise great, and Its rich abundance embraces the myriad things, each thing still has access to Its virtue, but none in itself can encompass It all. Thus, Heaven cannot serve to uphold It, Earth serve to cover It; or Mankind show It all the reverence It deserves. Although the myriad things are noble, their functioning (*yong* 用) is based on nothingness, so one cannot reject nothingness as one's embodiment (*ti* 體), for if nothingness were rejected as one's embodiment, such a one would lose the power to be great. This is what is meant by "one resorts to virtue only after losing the Dao." (LOU 1980: 93–94; Lynn 1999: 121–22)

In addressing the interrelatedness among the Dao, nothingness, virtue, substance or embodiment, and function, WANG Bi concludes that those of "lesser virtue," whose powers are derived from and limited to conscious effort, cannot possibly be "great" since they have to "act out of something" and thus fail to tap into the greatness of the Dao. By contrast, the sage like the Dao "acts out of nothing" and thus has direct access to the limitless power inherent in the virtue of the Dao. The sage concretely manifests nothingness in the phenomenal world—this is what the

sage *is*—and always acts out of nothingness—this is what the sage *does*. One with the Dao, the sage shares in the same embodiment and the same function.

It might be easier to grasp what is meant by the "substance" of "nothingness" if we first explore what WANG Bi understood as the "function" of "nothingness": It is the perfect absence of conscious design, deliberate effort, prejudice, or predilection, opposed, on the other hand, to conscious design, deliberate effort, prejudice, or predilection, all of which belong to "somethingness" or "being"—the phenomenal existence of creatures, including humankind, everything in the plant world, as well as physical phenomena in general. The functioning (*yong* 用) of the Dao or the Natural (*ziran* 自然) always "acts out of nothing," never with conscious design; it never "acts out of something." Since the true sage embodies "nothingness" and is thus one with the Dao, such a one never makes a false or wrong move.

Since WANG Bi essentially reads the *Laozi* as advice to rulers, "virtue" here refers to the sage-ruler's power to accomplish things in such a way that while all benefit, none suffer harm. The sage rules just as the Dao operates in Nature, where the differentiation of the myriad things and all related phenomena occur spontaneously and without conscious design. "Being" is an appropriate word for *you* (有) in this context, but "being" or "somethingness" is also the principal attribute of all that is artificial—once spontaneity is lost or shunted aside. When one "acts out of something," thus violating the Dao, failure, danger, dissatisfaction, and misery inevitably result. WANG also observes that animals, too, are sometimes subject to the dangers of "acting out of something," that is, acting with conscious purpose, driven by desire to enhance life beyond the bounds of natural existence (*Laozi* Section 50):

> Bottom creatures deem the lowest depths as still too shallow so burrow into them. Eagles and ospreys deem mountains as still too low and so build their nests on top of them. Since harpoon arrows cannot reach them or nets get at them, it can be said that where they locate themselves are places free of death. But, after all, there are those that for the sake of some sweet bait enter places where there is no life for them. Is this not due to placing too much emphasis on life? (LOU 1980: 135; Lynn 1999: 148)

The "substance" (*ti* 體) of "nothingness," on the other hand is utterly without physical existence. Though entirely free of "somethingness," "nothingness" embodies the very power of the universe that creates and brings to fruition everything that does exist—Heaven and Earth, mankind, all creatures and plants, as well as all other things animate and inanimate—everything that has "somethingness." Since it has no physical existence, the Dao is in but not of things.

4.4 "Nothingness" and "Principle"

Besides "nothingness," WANG Bi also identifies the Dao with both the Natural (*ziran* 自然) and "Perfect Principle" (*zhili* 至理)—the great overarching sum of all principles (*li* 理) inherent in all things. Commenting on the *Laozi*, Section 42, WANG states:

> My [Master Lao's] teaching of others does not consist of forcing them to follow what I teach but to make use of the Natural and foster Perfect Principle, compliance with which means good fortune and opposition means misfortune. (LOU 1980: 118; Lynn 1999: 135–36)

Alan K. L. Chan succinctly analyses WANG Bi's identification of the Dao with principle and, following QIAN Mu 錢穆 and Wing-tsit Chan [CHEN Rongjie 陳榮捷], observes that WANG'S concept of principle, a key characteristic of his thought, anticipated the Song era Neo-Confucians use of it by many centuries, but adds that it "lacks the sense of ontological independence that is apparent in the later development of the concept." (Chan 1991: 51–54) I am not so sure, for it seems to me that the only real difference between WANG'S *li* and the later Neo-Confucians' use of this term is WANG'S lack of detail in describing what he meant by it and his failure to define its place in a philosophical system, both aspects that the later Neo-Confucians wrote about extensively.

5 The "Many" and the "One"

Nevertheless, WANG'S consistent use of various terms often hints at such a system, as, for example, in his "General Remarks on the Changes of the Zhou" (*Zhouyi lueli* 周易略例):

> The many (*zhong* 衆) cannot govern the many; that which governs the many is the Most Solitary (*zhigua* 至寡) [the One]. Activity (*dong* 動) cannot govern activity; that which controls all activity that occurs in the world, thanks to constancy (*zhen* 貞), is the One (*yi* 一). Therefore for all the many to manage to exist, their master (*zhu* 主) must reach back to the One, and for all activities to manage to function (*yun* 運), their source cannot but be the Unique (*wuer* 無二) [the One]. No thing behaves haphazardly but necessarily follows its own principle (*li* 理). To unite (*tong* 統) things, there is a Fundamental Regulator (*zong* 宗); to integrate (*hui* 會) them, there is a Primordial Generator (*yuan* 元). Therefore things are complex but not chaotic, multitudinous but not confused. (LOU 1980: 591; Lynn 1994: 25)

The "Most Solitary," the "One," the "Unique," the "Fundamental Regulator," and the "Primordial Generator all are epithets of the Dao". "Master" and "principle" refer to the differentiated configurations, the patterns or paradigms that govern both the embodiment and the function of each of the myriad things. The sum of all these principles, as we saw in the previous passage, is Perfect Principle, another epithet of the Dao. The polarity of "the One" and "the many" is echoed elsewhere in WANG'S writings by two pairs of parallel terms: "root" (*ben* 本) and "branch tips" (*mo* 末) and "Mother" and "child" (*zi* 子). Depending on context, "root" has the sense of "fundamental principle," "fundamentality," or "original substance," all of which appear as epithets of the Dao as foundation of good government, and "branch tips" refer to the details of government and social life: The "Mother" and "child" polarity represents the same idea, as WANG asserts in his commentary to *Laozi*, Section 52:

> The Mother is the root, and the child is the branch tips. It is by having access to the root that one knows the branch tips, so one must not discard the root in order to pursue the branch tips. (LOU 1980: 139; Lynn 1999: 151).

When the sage ruler tends to the "root" and the "Mother," the "branch tips" and "child" take care of themselves, and, thus guided by the Dao, the state will flourish. However, if rulers reverse their priorities and instead neglect their tending to tinker with the "branch tips" and the "child" by burdening government with aggressive bureaucracy and inflicting excessive laws and punishments on the populace, the state withers. This view is frequently raised in both the *Laozi* and Wang Bi's commentary to it; see *Laozi*, Sections 20, 38, 52, 54, 57, 58, and 59 (Lou 1980: 48–49, 95, 141, 143, 149–150, 153, and 156; Lynn 1999: 85, 123–24, 151, 154, 158–59, 160–162, and 163).

The "Mother" is also an epithet of the Dao as the creative power that produces and sustains everything that exists—an essential idea that appears at the beginning of the *Laozi*, Section 1: "Nameless, It [the Dao] is the Origin (*shi* 始) of the myriad things; Named, It is the Mother of the myriad things."

Wang Bi comments:

> Anything that exists [or "has somethingness"] originates from nothingness, thus, before It has forms and is still nameless, It serves as the origin of the myriad things, and, once It has forms and is named, It grows them, rears them, ensures them their proper shapes, and matures them as their Mother. In other words, the Dao, by being Itself formless and nameless, originates and brings the myriad things to maturity. They are originated and matured in this way yet do not know how it happens, for this is the Arcane (*xuan* 玄) beyond Arcane. (Lou 1980: 1; Lynn 1999: 51).

And again in *Laozi*, Section 51: "The Dao gives them [the myriad things] life; Virtue (*de* 德) nurtures them, matter (*wu* 物) gives them physical form (*xing* 形), and characteristic potential (*shi* 勢) brings them to maturity (*cheng* 成)."

Wang Bi comments:

> Once things achieve life, they are nurtured. Once nurtured, they acquire physical form. Once they have physical form, they achieve maturity. What is the origin from which their lives comes? It is the Dao. What is the source from which they are nurtured? It is Virtue. What is the cause (*yin* 因) for their physical form? It is matter. What is the agency (*shi* 使) that brings about their maturity? It is characteristic potential.[9] It is this cause alone that makes it possible for each and every thing to have physical form. It is this characteristic potential alone that makes it possible for each and every thing to achieve maturity. From the way all things achieve life to the way the potentiality (*gong* 功) of things reaches maturity, all these processes have an origin. Since there has to be an origin for them, this origin without exception is the Dao. Thus, if we trace these processes back to their ultimate origin, we arrive inevitably at the Dao, and when we follow each process back to what caused it, there is a different designation (*cheng* 稱) for each process. (Lou 1980: 136–137; Lynn 1999: 149).

The Dao in all its aspects generates, sustains, and matures everything that exists; though it is utterly without physical existence itself, and devoid of all "somethingness," it is responsible for all phenomenal reality—everything that has

[9] *Shi* 勢 has a wide range of meaning, including "propensity," which also would work here, but "characteristic potential" seems better since it more explicitly suggests that maturity is the realization of the potential for growth inherent in the character of things. For *shi* as "propensity" and related meanings, see the work of François Jullien (Jullien 1999).

"somethingness." This "nothingness"—"somethingness" divide signifies a dualism that defines ultimate cause and effect: the Dao both *causes* things to exist and *determines* their properties. In his commentary to *Laozi*, Section 25, "there is something, amorphous and complete, which was born before Heaven and Earth," WANG Bi makes it quite clear that the Dao exists apart from things and is antecedent to them:

> Amorphous, there is no way to know It, yet the myriad things by It achieve maturity. Thus the text says It is "amorphous and complete." We do not know whose child It could be, which is why "It was born before Heaven and Earth." (Lou 1980: 63; Lynn 1999: ?)

Wang's comment on the next line, "obscure (*ji* 寂), oh, and immaterial (*liao* 寥), oh, It stands alone, unchanged," continues in the same vein:

> *Ji* and *liao* [ordinarily "silent" and "empty"] means "without physical form or substance" (*wu xingti* 無形體). Nothing exists that corresponds to It. Therefore, the text says: "It stands alone." In the end It always transforms Itself back to what it was at the start, thus never losing its constancy (*chang* 常). Thus the text says that It is "unchanged."

The Dao is thus eternal, stands apart from all things, and is antecedent to Heaven and Earth and all they contain. However, although the Dao as primogenitor is thus ontologically transcendent in substance (體), in function (用), it is imminent in all things. As Alan K. L. Chan proposes, the link between the transcendent Dao and its immanence in things is principle (*li* 理):

> If the *Dao* is by definition what being is not, how is it related to the world? The concept of *li* ("principle") plays an important role in bridging the gap between transcendence and immanence. In his commentary on the *Yijing*, Wang Bi stresses that phenomena conform to fundamental principles, such as the laws of nature, which can in turn be traced to a logically necessary unity. (Chan 2003: 216)

The following examples (not inclusive) from WANG'S *Changes* commentary, which address the concept of "principle" both in general and in specifics, confirm Professor Chan's observation: (1) "Once one recognizes how things act, then all the principles of their existence (*suoyi ran zhi li* 所以然之理) can be understood." (Hexagram 1 *Qian* 乾, "Commentary to the Words of the Text" (*Wenyan* 文言); LUO 1980: 216; Lynn 1994: 140). (2) "[A ruler] devoid of hard and strong substance (*ti* 體) can let things fully realize their innate tendencies (*qing* 情) only by thoroughly grasping their principles (*li* 理), and he can only occupy a noble position with the virtues of compliance and obedience only if he has given himself over entirely to the principles of civility (*wenli* 文理) [i. e., as embodied in "etiquette and ritual" (*yili* 儀禮]." (Hexagram 2 *Kun* 坤, "*Fifth Yin*" (*liuwu* 六五); LUO 1980: 228; Lynn 1994: 149). (3) "As such a one understands wherefrom misfortune and fortune arise, he does not take delight thoughtlessly, and as he distinguishes what constitutes ineluctable principles (*biran zhi li* 必然之理), he does not allow his behavior to vary from them (*bugai qi cao* 不改其操)." (Hexagram 16 *Yu* 豫, "*Second Yin*" (*liuer* 六二); LOU 1980: 299; Lynn 1994: 236–7).

The following passage addresses the particular *dao* (lower case to distinguish particular *daos* from the great Dao) that underlies Hexagram 21 *Shihe* 噬嗑: (4) "Whereas one can in this way derive benefit from the good fortune that obtains

from ‘exercising constancy in the face of difficulties,’ this falls short of fulfilling the *dao* that comprehensively covers the principles here (*tongli zhi dao* 通理之道).” (Hexagram 21 *Shihe* (噬嗑), “*Second Yin*” (*jiusi* 九四); Luo 1980: 323; Lynn 1994: 270).

A passage that exemplifies the convergence of Confucian and Daoist thought in Wang Bi occurs in the following: (5) “If [a ruler] were able to embrace the *dao* of moral principles and the mean (*lizhong* 理中) and that of generosity and obedience (*houshun* 厚順) and use them to try to hold them [the people] fast, none would manage to break away.” (Hexagram 33 *Dun* 遯, “*Second Yin*;” Lou 1980: 383; Lynn 1994: 342). This use of particular *dao* seems identical to particular *li*, for it signifies the principles that underlie two distinct but interrelated sets of sociopolitical values and behavior. As this and other *daos* are particular differentiations of the Great Dao (*dadao* 大道) of Nature, so are particular principles differentiations of Perfect Principle—the overarching sum of all principles—another way of referring to the Dao—so on this level *dao* and *li* are unquestionably interchangeable terms.

6 Daoist Nature and the Confucian Human World

Hexagram 38 “Contrariety” (*Kui* 睽), “Commentary On the Great Images” (*Daxiang* 大象): “Above Fire and below Lake: this constitutes the image of Contrariety. In the same way, the noble man differentiates among things while remaining sensitive to their similarities” (*junzi yi tong er yi* 君子以同而異). Wang’s commentary contrasts “principle” (*li* 理) and “affairs” (*shi* 事): (6) “His appreciation of similarities stems from his thorough grasp of principle (*tong yu tongli* 同於通理), and his appreciation of differences emerges from his practical handling of affairs (*yi yu zhishi* 異於職事).” (Lou 1980: 405; Lynn 1994: 368). That “grasp of principle” leads to an appreciation of similarities suggests understanding of the underlying unity of all things, whereas awareness of differences stemming from the handling of “affairs” surely means involvement in human, sociopolitical affairs, each of which has its own underlying *dao* or *li*. Such passages in Wang’s commentary to the *Changes* do indeed articulate that principle is the link between the transcendent Dao and its immanence in things, including human affairs, thus bringing to bear Daoist insight into what had hitherto been largely a Confucian area of concern.

However, besides Wang Bi’s reading of the *Changes*, his *Resolving Problems In Interpreting the Anal*ects (*Lunyu shiyi* 論語釋疑) is an obvious text to explore to see how he went about applying arcane learning (*xuanxue* 玄學) to interpret the Confucian classics. Although the *Lunyu shiyi* has apparently been lost since the end of the Tang dynasty, a significant number of fragments survive as quotations in three other works: Huang Kan 皇侃 (488–545), *Exegesis of the Analects* (*Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏); Lu Deming 陸德明 (556–627), *Explications Of the Texts of the Classics* (*Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文); and Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010), *Correct Meaning*

of the Analects (*Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義) (WANG 1996: 328). All such fragments have been collected by LOU Yulie (LOU 1980: 621–637). For example:

> When LIN Fang asked about the roots (*ben* 本) of ritual (*li* 禮), the Master said, "What a great question!" (Analects 3.4)

WANG Bi's commentary:

> Since people of that time had discarded the root and instead venerated the branch tips (*mo* 末), he [Confucius] thought it great that he [LIN Fang] was able to seek the root for the meaning of ritual. (LOU 1980: 622)

The "root" vs. "branch tips" polarity occurs frequently in the *Laozi* itself, in WANG's commentary to it, and in his *Outline Introduction to the Laozi* (*Laozi zhilue* 老子指略)—in all instances the "root" is extolled as the fundamental manifestation of the Dao and "branch tips" denigrated as mere superficialities—ramifications far removed from the essential Dao. (See Lynn 1999: 33, 37, 38, 40, 76, 85, 89, 121, 123, 124, 128, 130, 143, 148, 151, 154, 158–59, 163–164, 170). It is apparent from a survey of the fragments of WANG'S commentary to the *Analects* that the above passage is typical of his tendency to use the *Laozi* to explicate the *Analects*—and the *Changes* as well—and to merge the Dao of the Confucians with the Dao of the *Laozi*. This tendency seems to permeate arcane learning hermeneutics in general. Rather than cite more such examples, I shall focus only on one more passage in Wang's *Analects* commentary:

> The Master Said, "I set my heart on the Dao" (*zhi yu dao* 志於道). (*Analects* 7.6)

WANG Bi's commentary:

> Dao is a designation (*cheng* 稱) for Nothingness. It is because It goes through absolutely everything and absolutely everything comes via It, we make a simile (*kuang* 況) for It and thus call it the Dao (Way). As It operates silently and is without physicality (*ti* 體), it is impossible to provide images for It. Since such a Dao is impossible to conceive of as a physical entity (*buke ti* 不可體), he [Confucius] could do nothing more than set his heart on emulating It" (*zhimu eryi* 志慕而已). (LOU 1980: 624).

Much of this passage—"Dao is a designation for Nothingness. . . . it is impossible to provide images for it"—is quoted in HAN Kangbo's commentary to the sentence "The reciprocal process of *yin* and *yang* is called the Dao" in the "Commentary on the Appended Phrases," Part One, of the *Changes of Zhou*, answering the question, "What is this Dao?" (LOU 1980: 541; Lynn 1994: 53). Its presence there makes one suspect that HAN'S commentary might well contain other excerpts from WANG'S commentary to the *Analects* and others of his lost writings. In any case, HAN consistently read the "Commentary on the Appended Phrases" in terms of arcane learning and drew heavily on the thought of the *Laozi* and other early Daoist philosophical writings (Lynn 1994: 47–101). Modern scholarship rejects the traditional view that the "Commentary on the Appended Phrases" was either authored by Confucius or at least represents his teachings, but concludes instead that Confucius had nothing to do with it, that it probably dates from the early

Han period, and is actually a hybrid text that contains more Daoist than Confucian thought. (Peterson 1982). Although the last sentence in the above passage is worded ambiguously, since we know from HE Shao's biography of WANG Bi that WANG asserted that Confucius "embodied nothingness," *buke ti* 不可體, we know here that it cannot be rendered "he could not embody the Dao." Moreover, it is obvious that *mu* 慕 should be rendered "emulate" and not "admire," its more usual meaning. Consider another part of WANG'S commentary, to *Analects* 11.19, "As for Hui [YAN Hui], how close he came to it (*shuhu* 庶乎), yet he was constantly in poverty":

> He almost succeeded (*shuji* 庶幾) in emulating the sages (*mu sheng* 慕聖), but since he was utterly indifferent to wealth he was constantly poor. (LOU 1980: 629).

Returning to *Analects* 11.19, WANG seems to be saying that Confucius recognized he could not *learn* how to practice the Dao, since nothing objectively existed of it that could be *studied*, so all he could do was intuitively emulate it.

7 Wang Bi on Language

One cannot "study" the Dao, of course, because it is impossible to name or describe (*Laozi*, Section 1): "The Dao that can be described in language is not the constant Dao; the name that can be given it is not its constant name."WANG comments:

> The Dao that can be rendered in language and the name (*ming* 名) that can be given It point to a thing (*zhishi* 指事) or creates a semblance (*zaoxing* 造形), neither of which is It in Its constancy (*chang* 常). This is why It can neither be rendered in language (*buke dao* 不可道) nor given a name (*buke ming* 不可名).

"Point to a thing" (z*hishi* 指事) is the first of XU Shen's 許慎 (fl. ca. 100 C. E.) "Six Graphic Principles of Chinese Characters" (*liushu* 六書), the simple ideogram. "Creates a semblance of something" (*zaoxing* 造形) seems equivalent to "image the form" (*xiangxing* 象形), XU'S second Graphic Principle, the simple pictogram. See *Explanations of Simple and Compound Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字) (XU 1982: 15A.3a–3b). WANG here addresses the limited way language functions, too limited to capture the transcendent Dao because it always has to refer to aspects of phenomenal reality. "Creates a semblance of something" likely also alludes to a passage in the *Zhuangzi*, *Xu Wugui* 徐无鬼 (Chapter 24): "Although you, my lord, may practice humanity (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義), this is tantamount to falsehood (*wei* 偽)!" GUO Xiang 郭象 (252–312) comments: "The people will just continue such falsehood, unwilling to act authentically (*zhen* 真)." The *Zhuangzi* continues: "And your semblance (*xing* 形) of them will certainly result in further semblances of them being created (*zaoxing* 造形)." GUO: "As soon as semblances for humanity and righteousness exist, counterfeits (*weixing* 偽形) will surely be made of them" (GUO 1997: 4.633). It is likely that WANG Bi read this passage in the *Zhuangzi* in much the same way: Not only is language limited to naming specific things, it consists of names that, at best, only approximate the real nature of things, and, as such, are inevitably false or "counterfeit."

However, WANG'S view of language is far more complicated than this, for it defines and analyses the relationships among "images" (*xiang* 象), "ideas" (*yi* 意), "concepts" (*yi* 義), "principles" (*li* 理), and "words" (*yan* 言)—a view that had immense impact on later Chinese hermeneutics and poetics (Lynn 2001). In his commentary to the "Commentary on the Images" (*Xiangzhuan* 象傳) to "*First Yin*" in Hexagram 40 "Release" (*Xie* 解), "To be on the borderline between hard and soft as a concept (*yi* 義) means 'there is no blame'," WANG equates concept (*yi* 義) with principle (*li* 理): "When something incurs blame, it means that it does not measure up to its principle (*fei qili* 非其理). Concept is the same as principle." FENG Youlan 馮友蘭 said of this passage:

> Both terms ["concept" and "principle"], therefore, would seem to be his [WANG'S] designations for the primary principles which underlay the phenomenal world, whereas by "ideas" he would seem to mean these same objective principles as they are mentally imprinted in men's minds. (FUNG 1973: 2.186).

Although earlier in his analysis Feng suspects that what WANG calls "ideas" and what he calls "concepts" are "essentially the same," here "ideas" seem defined as individual mental experiences of general "concepts" or "primary principles." TANG Junyi 唐君毅 says something similar in his own analysis of WANG Bi's terminology: "When ideas are made known, they become concepts" (*yi zhi suo zhi ji yi* 意之所知即義) (TANG 1973: 2.885). That is, once ideas are articulated (rendered in knowable form), they are concepts: "ideas" are private and personal; "concepts" are public and general. An individual experiences a concept or principle first as an idea, which to be shared with and communicated to others, must be put in knowable form: as a concept or principle. Therefore, ideas become concepts, when starting from the individual (subjective), and concepts/principles become ideas when starting from the general (objective).

WANG'S most detailed and explicit discussion of language occurs in the "Clarifying the Images" (*ming xiang* 明象) section of his "General Remarks on the *Changes of the Zhou*":

> Images (*xiang* 象) are the means to express ideas (*yi* 意). Words (*yan* 言) are the means to clarify (*ming* 明) the images. To yield up ideas completely, nothing is better than images, and to yield up images completely nothing is better than words. Words are generated by the images, thus it is possible to ponder words in order to observe the images. Images are generated by ideas (*yi* 意), thus one can ponder images in order to observe ideas. Ideas are yielded up completely (*jin* 盡) by images, and images are made explicit (*zhu* 著) by words. Thus, since words are the means to explain images, once one gets the images, he forgets the words, and, since images are the means to allow us to concentrate on ideas, once one gets the ideas, he forgets the images. Similarly, "the snare exists for the hare, but once the hare is caught, one forgets the snare, and the fish trap exists for the sake of fish; once one gets the fish he forgets the trap."[10] If so, then words are snares for images, and images are traps for ideas .... someone who stays fixed on words will not get the images, and someone who stays fixed on images will not get the ideas. Images are generated by ideas, but if one stays fixed on the images themselves, then what he stays fixed on will not be images as we mean

[10] *Zhuangzi*, "External Things" (*Waiwu* 外物) (Chapter 26) (GUO 1997: 4.944).

> them here . . . . This is why anything that corresponds analogously (*chulei* 觸類) [to an idea] can serve as its image, and any concept that fits (*heyi* 合義) [with an idea] can serve as its symbol (*zheng* 徵). (Lou 1980: 609; Lynn 1994: 31–32).

Wang also says something similar but in more succinct fashion in his commentary to the "Commentary To the Words of the Text" to "*Top Yang*" in Hexagram 1 "Pure Yang" (*Qian* 乾):

> The *Changes* consist of images, and what images are produced from are concepts (*yi* 義). One first has to have a particular concept, which one then illustrates by using some concrete thing (*qiwu* 其物) [to symbolize it]. Thus one uses the dragon to express "Pure Yang" (*Qian*) and the mare to illustrate "Pure Yin" (*Kun* 坤) (Hexagram 2). One follows the concept inherent in a matter (*shi* 事) and chooses an image for it accordingly. (Lou 1980: 215; Lynn 1994: 138–39).

Although Section 1 of the *Laozi* and Wang's commentary both state that language is incapable of naming or describing the Dao, we now know that language can begin an approach to the Dao that may reach it through intermediary stages, a paradigm of which can be induced that looks like this: Although *words* can but point to things or reproduce semblances for them, they also articulate subjective *ideas* and convey them into the public realm where they become *concepts. Concepts* so generated by the human mind and universally shared are inherently identical to the natural *principles* that create and control the properties of all phenomenal reality. Finally, the perfect sum of these *principles* constitutes the *Dao. Principle* in Wang's thought not only mediates between the natural and the human worlds but also provides linkage between the *ontology* of the Dao and the phenomenology of Heaven, Earth, Mankind, and the myriad things.

8 Conclusion

The bifurcation of Daoism into a philosophical Daoist Lineage of the Way (*Daojia* 道家) and a religious Daoist Teachings of the Way (*Daojiao* 道教), commonplace in an earlier era of modern scholarship, has become increasingly suspect in more recent times, and instead of two separate and inimical traditions, the growing consensus now, especially in religious studies circles, is that the philosophical and religious dimensions of Daoism are best seen not as a pair of incompatible opposites but in terms of a complementary polarity within a single tradition. However, historians of Chinese philosophy continue to emphasize philosophical approaches to the foundational texts of Daoism—the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*—and the commentary traditions associated with them. They consider the "arcane learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學) of the Wei-Jin and Six Dynasties eras, including the thought of Wang Bi, firmly within their purview; see for example Wang 1996; Luo 2003; Tang 2000a; Hu 2007; Xu 2003; Wagner 2000, 2003a, b. Alan K. L. Chan contrasts and compares the *Laozi* commentaries of Wang Bi and the "Old Man By the River" (Heshang

Gong 河上公), a work traditionally ascribed to the early Han era. He concludes that although WANG'S insights led to essential features of later Neo-Confucian thought and those of Heshang Gong were later appropriated by Daoist religion, they originally shared many fundamental interests and presuppositions, and it would be both anachronistic and simplistic to think of them in terms of inimical opposition (Chan 1991: 188–191). Contemporary scholars of Chinese religion, on the other hand, can roughly be divided into those who readily admit that a separate Daoist philosophical tradition, including arcane learning, contributed significantly to the initial development of Daoist religion, and on the other, those who adamantly deny any such independent contribution and instead insist on subsuming all early "Daoist" thought into Daoist religion.

WANG Bi fares rather well with the former, who note, for example, (1) that his use of "nothingness" or "Non-being" and "somethingness" or "Being" had significant influence on Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343), the author of the *Sayings of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity* (*Baopu zi* 抱朴子), an important transmitter of early Daoist scriptures, and a prominent alchemist/herbalist (Robinet 2008a: 21)[11]; (2) that WANG'S *wu—you* polarity became an important element in the development of the Highest Clarity (*Shangqing* 上清) School of Daoist teaching during the fourth and fifth centuries C. E. (Robinet 2008a: 21); and (3) his "substance" and "function" paradigm "provided a basic conceptual framework for Buddhist thought, which in turn was adopted by Taoism [Daoism]" (Robinet 2008b: 973–74). (4) WANG influenced the way the "inner elixir" or "inner alchemy" (*neidan* 丹) Daoist tradition understood the role of images in the development of its alchemical metaphors (Robinet 2008c: 1086–87). However, WANG Bi comes off rather badly with scholar who claim for religion all manner of "Daoist" thought. For example, Kristofer Schipper, among WANG'S most negative and vociferous critics, denies that he had anything at all to do with Daoism but was actually a "Confucian" reason-monger who distorted the meaning of the *Laozi* so badly that "instead of clarifying the text, his commentary makes it more difficult to understand" (Schipper 1993: 193).

Lastly, we should note that for WANG Bi the concept of "Nothingness," his principle epithet for the Dao, was the transcendent primogenitor of all things—of all "somethingness." Although PEI Wei wrote a treatise refuting WANG'S concept of *wu*, it met with limited success. However shortly thereafter Wang was challenged far more successfully by Guo Xiang, who took arcane learning in an entirely new direction that emphasized the spontaneous self-generation of everything—a transcendent creator entirely absent. Guo expresses it this way:

> Nothingness is just that—nothing—so it cannot create "somethingness" [i.e., phenomenal reality], and as long as "somethingness" is not yet created, it cannot bring about creation either. Since this is so, what is it that does all this creation? Actually, clod-like (*kuairan* 塊然) [i.e. intrinsically] things create themselves. Since they just create themselves, it is not

[11] Entries by Robinet and others in Pregadio 2008 end with recommendations for further readings on the subjects involved.

> any I who creates them. As I cannot create something else, something else cannot create me either, thus I am spontaneously (*ziran* 自然) what I am. When something is so by itself (*ziji er ran* 自己而然), we call it "natural" (*tianran* 天然). What is natural is not made (*wei* 為), and that is why it is referred to by the term "Heaven" (*tian* 天), a term used to make it clear that something is what it is utterly by itself (*ziran* 自然). (GUO 1997: 2.50)

The essential differences between WANG Bi's and GUO Xiang's positions on *wu* and *you* are discussed in detail in the chapter on Guo Xiang.

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Chapter 17
GUO Xiang: The Self-So and the Repudiation-cum-Reaffirmation of Deliberate Action and Knowledge

Brook Ziporyn

1 Introduction

GUO Xiang (郭象 252–312), also known as GUO Zixuan (郭子玄), is the author of the most influential commentary ever written to the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*. Guo's work has traditionally been prized both for the nuance and subtlety of its exegeses and for its original philosophical ideas, which rank him among the most important thinkers in Chinese intellectual history. Though Guo was born to a humble family, he was a man of impressive intellectual talents who rose rapidly in the ranks of public service, enjoying a long career as a high official in the government of the turbulent early Jin dynasty (265–420). His commentary to the *Zhuangzi* is an immensely complex and in many ways controversial work. Guo sometimes makes a point of reading against the grain of the surface meaning of the *Zhuangzi* in the service of his own philosophical agenda, and in fact is said to have edited down an earlier 52 chapter version to the 33-chapter version now known to us; to some extent, we may say that he molded the *Zhuangzi* into his own image. Moreover, since ancient times he has been accused of plagiarizing the bulk of his masterpiece from an earlier commentary by XIANG Xiu 向秀 (c. 227–280). From the fragments of XIANG Xiu's work that survive as quotations in other sources, direct influence is undeniable, to the extent that it might be appropriate to refer to Guo's work as the Xiang-Guo commentary. Nonetheless, modern scholarship has generally agreed that Guo made significant philosophical advances beyond the positions expressed by

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XIANG Xiu.[1] The resulting GUO Xiang commentary is complex, unique, profound, and of global philosophical significance.

Guo's work can be seen as merely a radicalizing of some key themes in earlier Daoist thought. We can quickly discern a sense in which many of GUO Xiang's characteristic ideas were already discoverable in the *Daodejing* (also known as the *Laozi*) and *Zhuangzi*, in particular the Daoist critiques of conscious knowledge and moral ideals as such. The *Daodejing* points our attention away from the aspects of the world normally central to our purpose-driven consciousness—the exalted, the bright, the active, the full, the eminent—toward the generally neglected and devalued background behind them: the lowly, the dark, the still, the empty, the nameless. According to this line of thinking, the high is rooted in the low, the light in the dark, the moving in the still, the formed in the formless, the named in the nameless, and so on. It is in these generally neglected and unwanted elements that we are to recognize the Dao, the "Way" of nature, which, unlike the smaller "ways" of cultural practices for producing things and attaining goals (the Way of Yao and Shun, the Way of Confucius, the Way of the Sage Kings, the Way of Mozi, etc.), brings all desired things into being precisely by virtue of its lack of explicit purpose or deliberate activity. True value is achieved not through the explicitly recognition and pursuit of goals, but through the absence of such goals. The Way encompasses the spontaneous and purposeless processes in nature and man that undergird and produce things, begin things, end things, compose the stuff of things, and guide things along their ways by not deliberately guiding them at all. The Way is antithetical to knowledge in two senses: it does its work without any conscious plan to do so or awareness of doing so, and it is itself resistant to being explicitly known. The ideal human activity shares these traits.

One can regard Guo's views on knowledge and deliberate action as an extension of some of these ideas. But it is of course the *Zhuangzi* from which GUO Xiang derives his most direct and decisive inspiration. Among the most distinctive features of the *Zhuangzi* is the eruption of value relativity and multiperspectivism in that text. While the *Daodejing* seems to take for granted the universal validity of the standard values of the culture—life, longevity, social harmony—while offering contrarian and counterintuitive strategies for attaining them, the *Zhuangzi* for the first time raises questions about these values themselves, focusing on their dependence on particular points of view, and affirming the value-to-themselves of all possible value perspectives. Zhuangzi's idea that a thing's value derives not from its accordance with a single pre-existing universal norm of what is desirable, but rather from its inalienable relation to the standard of rightness implicit in the being of its own quiddity, would become the central pillar of all GUO Xiang's thinking. For the living, life is better than death. By the same token, might not death be better than life for the dead? Might not early death be as good as longevity from some point of view? Doesn't chaos have its own value, when viewed from its own perspective? These points are here summarized in the form of rhetorical questions to suggest something else about Zhuangzi's modification of Daoism. For the stress on non-

[1] See especially Su 1980 and Tang 1983 for a thorough discussion.

knowing is now pushed much further than it had been in the *Daodejing*, where it was still knowingly (and thus somewhat paradoxically) presented as the best strategy for attaining what one wants, what we all presumably want. But now what is valued could be anything, and could be different at different times. Zhuangzi's radicalization of the critique of knowing also solves some of the unconsidered paradoxes of the *Daodejing*, since it can cheerfully undermine also its own position; it need not pretend to present a stable system of secret knowledge. Multiperspectival value relativity and a more radical critique of knowledge are perhaps the two most salient influences of the *Zhuangzi* on Guo's thinking.

But the *Zhuangzi* text is now known to be the work of many hands, expressing many distinguishable points of view.[2] In many if not most of them, the Daoist position continues to be presented as an alternative to prevailing cultural norms that stress commitment to ethical responsibilities within the family and state, sometimes in favor of a rustic primitivism, sometimes an eremitic withdrawal from society, sometimes an untamed mysticism. Guo Xiang's greatest single divergence from classical Daoist thinking is the unification of these opposed positions toward the prevailing social norms, which he accomplishes precisely by means of his expansion and radicalization of the concept of "the self-so." The cultural significance of this achievement can only be understood within the context of the "Mysterious Learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學) movement that arose during the Wei-Jin period (third–fifth centuries).

The relation between spontaneity (*ziran* 自然, self-so, spontaneity, "nature") and morality (*mingjiao* 名教, the teaching of names)[3] was a central concern of this movement, of which Guo is considered, along with Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249), one of the two greatest representatives. Spontaneity was commonly associated with the teachings of the Laozi and Zhuangzi, while moral endeavor, the "teaching of names" concerned with the ordering of society, was associated with Confucianism, which had been the dominant official ideology throughout most of the Han dynasty. From its inception the Mysterious Learning movement placed the unification of the two high on its agenda. Wang Bi and He Yan 何晏 (190–249), considered the intellectual founders of the movement, both wrote commentaries to both the *Daodejing* and Confucian works like the *Zhouyi* (周易 *Book of Changes*) and the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) of Confucius. Wang Bi is moreover credited with the interesting assertion, later to become a standard position among the Mysterious Learning metaphysicians, that Confucius was a greater sage than Laozi, truly embodying the unutterable Non-being and therefore saying nothing about it, while Laozi, precisely because he was so prone to talk about it, showed his incomprehension of it. Nonetheless, Wang Bi's conception of the relation between the two realms remained somewhat ambiguous. The problem confronted here was not to find a way to relate the Natural sensuous

[2] See Liu Xiaogan's chapter in this volume for a detailed discussion.

[3] I.e., the teaching concerned with the names corresponding to various social roles, and hence the ethics of human interaction; the term is probably ultimately derived from the concept of the "rectification of names" (正名 *zhengming*) in early Confucianism, whereby the actions of individuals were to correspond with their named social roles. Cf. *Analects* 13:3 and *Xunzi*, "Zhengming pian."

universe of finitude to the infinite metaphysical Absolute Being, and determine the former's value or legitimacy accordingly, but rather to find what place or value morality had with respect to the spontaneity of nature, which was taken as the absolute value. Wang's formulation of this problem remained indecisive, and this allowed his successors to try to solve this problem each in his own way. But Wang's metaphysical stance was clear: the Dao is "original Non-Being" (*benwu* 本無), conceived of as prior to and transcendent to all particular beings, the source of all existence and the matrix of the determinate principles by which all things operated. Since all beings were expressions of Non-Being, the Dao, they were subordinated to its principles, so the laws of both nature and society found a common grounding in this unseen, formless Non-being.

Wang's concept of metaphysical Non-Being was rejected forcefully in a defense of the Confucian moral position in the *Chongyou lun* (崇有論, Discourse on the Exaltation of Being) of PEI Wei 裴頠 (263–300). While admitting that Wang's doctrine may have had some positive influences, such as encouraging certain passive virtues and discouraging ambition and acquisitiveness, Pei decried the neglect of social norms and propriety that this theory also brought with it. More significantly for our present purposes, he sought to refute the validity of Wang's notion of Non-Being on philosophical grounds. Pei interpreted Being as the only possible reality, and Non-Being therefore as an absolute nothing, something which does not exist in any sense. Apparently picking up on some of Xiang Xiu's ideas concerning self-transformation and self-generation (*zihua zisheng* 自化自生), Pei took the next logical step and did away with the concept of Non-Being altogether, which he considered nonsensical, superfluous and harmful. "Perfect Non-Being has nothing by which it could generate anything. Therefore whatever is generated is self-generated, and what is self-generated must have its ground (or substance, *ti* 體) in Being." (Tang 1983: 58) Here we see Non-Being dismissed as utterly ineffectual, and replaced in its generative function by Being, or more specifically, the self-generation of all Being, which need depend on nothing outside itself for its generation.

It is after this breakthrough that GUO Xiang steps onto the scene. Adopting Pei Wei's notion of Being and likewise doing away with all remnants of any transcendent Non-Being, Guo nonetheless does not advocate a full-fledged return to Confucian purposivity as the ultimate value as Pei had, but rather remains radically committed to spontaneity as the ultimate value. Pei denies the value of "non-activity" and "non-knowing" as part of his denial of "Non-Being," whereas these values are stressed most emphatically by GUO Xiang. Guo adopts XIANG Xiu's notions of self-generation, adapting them however by doing away with Xiang's residual transcendent ungenerated generator which remains in some sense prior to concrete existence. Moreover, he takes Xiang's harmonization of Confucianism and Daoism a step further; Guo attempts to *identify* spontaneity with purposivity completely, not merely harmonize them or allow a place for each.[4]

[4]See Tang 1983: 66–70, for an elegant elaboration of this point.

For GUO Xiang, nature is indeed purposeless, unconscious, and non-teleological, but the same was ultimately true of every human society and every human being, indeed, of every human action. As was the case in the discredited orthodox Han dynasty cosmology, heaven and man shared the same essential traits. It was simply that the essential traits of heaven and man were now claimed to be precisely the opposite of those attributed to them by that orthodoxy. Hence GUO Xiang seems to have resolved the dilemma of social legitimization and the union of heaven and man, by taking the original skeptical claims that had toppled the old orthodox legitimization to their most extreme possible conclusion. To do this he incorporated in his system elements from very disparate trends in the thought of his day, from both the Confucian and Daoist camps, coming up with a complex reinterpretation where all these apparently contrasted notions converged, integrated into a new and more basic conception that manages to integrate and harmonize them. GUO Xiang gets all this work done through an elaboration of his most central idea: *ziran* 自然, literally "self-so."

2 The "Self" as Self-Forgetting: The Self-So as Causelessness and Inalienable Value

The term *ziran* occurs occasionally in both the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*, generally denoting simply the way a particular thing is when not interfered with from outside.[5] But it is in Guo's work that it becomes a truly dominant idea, the implications of

[5]The binome appears five times in the Wang Bi *Daodejing*. In four of these occurrences (chaps. 17, 23, 51 and 64), it clearly means "what is so without external compulsion." The other usage, in chap. 25, is somewhat more controversial: "Man models himself on earth; earth models itself on heaven; heaven models itself on Dao; Dao models itself on *ziran*" (道法自然). This could be taken to mean there is something called *ziran* which stands above even Dao, providing the law of its being. Or it could be taken to mean the Dao models itself on its own essence in some way. But I think the most likely reading, in context, takes this as meaning something quite similar to the use of the term in *Zhuangzi*, chap. 5: "Consistently following along with *ziran* and not adding to life." To "follow along with *ziran*" (*yin ziran* 因自然) is quite close to *fa ziran* 法自然, and both seem to mean taking as one's model the way *things themselves* already are without interference, rather than deliberately trying to augment or control them. Hence I would read *Daodejing* 25 as bringing the discussion full circle, back to things themselves: "Dao models itself on the way each thing is of itself."

The only other usage in the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (*shun wu ziran* 順物自然: following the self-so of things) means roughly the same thing, and is even more explicit in referring this to the self-so *of things*. The term appears six times in the remaining chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (not counting the occurrence in chap. 17, which is really a coincidental use of the same characters for another meaning, albeit one which would be extremely important for Guo Xiang: self-affirmation, considering oneself right). The only place it seems to mean anything other than the condition of things contrasted to deliberate or extrinsic action upon them is in the discussion of music in chap. 14. The term does become more central and substantialized in the *Hanfeizi* commentary to the

which are deeply pondered and expanded upon to their last consequence. Guo gives this term a meaning somewhat different from what is now usual. There are two senses of the Chinese character *ran* 然; like the English word "so," it can signify either that some thing is thus and so, or that some proposition is true or correct. *Ran* means both "being as it is" and "being right."[6] Guo's assertion that each thing is self-so plays on both of these meanings: each thing is considered both "right to itself," and "autonomously and spontaneously the way it is, like this, so." In this way, the term *ziran* for Guo designates both fact and value.

Guo reaches this conclusion by way of a thorough rejection of the idea of a creator of things, expanding upon PEI Wei's notion of the impotence of Non-being:

> Some in the world say that the penumbra is dependent on the shadow, the shadow is dependent on the physical form, and the physical form is dependent on the Creator. But I ask: As for this Creator, is he existent, or is he nonexistent? If he is nonexistent, how can he create things? If he is existent, having a definite form himself, then he is not qualified to form all forms. Thus only after you understand that all forms form themselves can you understand what is meant by creation. Hence of all things involved in the realm of existence, even the penumbra, there has never been one that did not transform itself entirely on its own, constantly positioned in the realm where all agency vanishes. Thus creation is without any lord or master, and each thing creates itself. (Guo 1983: 111)

A creator of all existence would have to be prior to all existing things. Prior to all existing things, it could not be an existent thing itself, for then it would fail to be prior to *all* existing things, not being prior to itself. Not existing, it can not do anything of any kind at all. Unable to do anything, it can not be a creator of anything, much less of all existence. The notion of a creator of all things is, Guo thinks, inherently self-contradictory. But rather than conclude therefore that there is one all-embracing indestructible Parmenidean Being, perhaps the totality of *qi* (vital energy) composing the universe, that creates or transforms into all particular beings,[7] Guo takes this to imply that Being per se is necessarily ungrounded in anything else, and this ultimately applies to any individual instance of being as much as it does to Being-as-a-whole. Though there may be a particular chain of connection between some particular being and prior beings, since ultimately this chain can never lead back to any ultimate grounding, the entire process of trying to ground one thing on another comes to naught, and we are better off abandoning it entirely when considering what things ultimately are; in the end, the totality of things and *thus* each thing, turn out to be causeless. Guo does not say, "Because Non-Being is nonexistent, there is only Being, and this Being is the creator, lord,

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Daodejing, and in Han Daoist-tinged writings like the *Huainanzi* and the *Wenzi*, which has an entire chapter with this title.

[6]The former meaning is emphasized by Guo's use of the term *zi'er* 自爾, and the latter by the terms *zide* 自得 and *zidang* 自當, interchangeably with *ziran* in certain contexts. This usage is prominent in chap. 2 of the *Zhuangzi*, and the term *ziran* is used in chap. 17 to mean "affirmation of their own rightness, approval of themselves" as opposed to "disapproval of each other" (*xiangfei* 相非).

[7]This view, which does seem to be put forward in parts of the *Zhuangzi* and is a commonplace of later Daoist thinking, is ascribed to Guo in Chan 2003.

and master of each individual being." Instead, he concludes that *each* being is an inexplicable self-creation. Neither Non-being nor any particular Being can stand at the beginning of the sequence of the generation of all beings. Not having a first term, Being cannot be a limited whole. For even to posit a "totality of Being" as if it were a limited and definite entity, which it would have to be for it to serve as any kind of explanation of individual things, presupposes either a first Being or a contrasting Non-being standing outside of Being; but this Non-being "does not exist," and hence cannot "stand" anywhere or "contrast" to anything. Thought through to the bottom, Being qua Being is groundless, uncaused, beyond reason or purpose. Each entity can thus ultimately be described only as self-so.

Indeed, the only real "itself" of any given entity is just this self-so: its true essence is its unknowability in terms of chains of causality or networks of explanation and description. But to be unknowable in these terms is simply to be unknowable, for such embeddings into explanation and description are all that knowing is. Any attribution of a definite identity to an entity derives from viewing it from outside itself, situating it in a framework of relations and setting in motion the tracing of connections that ultimately presupposes the impossible existence of Non-being or First Being as creator or guarantor. Leaving such connections aside, it is a self-so event, with no definite characteristics that are subject to cognition. It is not made the way it is by connection to some other thing (a goal or purpose) which is supposed to follow it, nor by some other thing (a cause or reason) which is supposed to precede it. To be self-so is to have nothing to do with such cognizable connections, either as conscious will or as a relation to a definitely knowable cause or precedent.

This however is also its real value, which means only its perfect coincidence with whatever is unintentionally happening and its freedom from beholdenness to any outside standard or cause or purpose. The self-so in this sense is its self, and also its being right to itself, which is testified to by its being comfortable and fit (*shi* 適), and *therefore* not conscious of itself. To be fully itself, as viewed from within, is to be a forgetting of itself, a non-cognizance of itself. This last line of reasoning derives from the following passage in the *Zhuangzi*:

> To forget the feet indicates the fitness (or comfort, *shi*) of the shoes; to forget the waist indicates the fitness of the belt; when consciousness forgets right and wrong it indicates the fitness of the mind... He who begins in fitness and is never unfit has the comfortable fitness of forgetting even fitness. (Guo 1983: 662)

Guo comments:

> When all the parts of the body are fit, one forgets the body....[8] Right and wrong are born from unfitness.... He who still has consciousness of fitness is not yet really fit. (Guo 1983: 662)

[8]Since different editions arrange the text of Guo's commentary in different formats, sometimes separating them line by line and sometimes clustering his comments together at the end of the relevant *Zhuangzi* section, I have added ellipses only in places where something is omitted form Guo's own comments, considered as one continuous text.

To be conscious of anything indicates a problem, a lack of fit, a mismatching deviation of self-rightness/self-so. Hence the sign of anything's self-rightness is precisely the lack of reflexive consciousness of it, the absence of any cognition that embeds one thing in a chain of causes, reasons, and purposes.

This relating of "one thing" to "other things" is a kind of cognition that is involved in the positing of explicit values and goals. These values, however, are the antithesis of real value, which resides precisely in non-awareness: the fitting comfortableness of the traceless self-forgetting self-so. An entity is not made thus and so because of cognition of the desirability of being thus and so, and is not made truly valuable by an attempt to make it conform to a consciously conceived "value." Just the contrary is the case: a thing view from outside itself leaves "traces" which inspire esteem and emulation; but these "traces" come only after the fact and are impotent in producing this genuine article and it genuine value, its self-rightness, which is produced precisely in the absence of any teleological intent dependent on the cognizing of goals.

When Guo says "self-so," he emphatically does not mean, "What I myself make so, by an act of volition or knowledge." Guo tells us:

> My life is not generated by me; thus my whole life long, within [my] hundred years, whether I sit, stand, walk, stop, move, or stay still, whatever I take or renounce, all my feelings, my innate determinacy, my knowledge, my abilities, whatever I have, whatever I don't have, whatever I do, *whatever I encounter*, none of it is [because of] me; it is just the principle of things to spontaneously be that way. (Guo 1983: 199–200; italics added)

Thus even that which I knowingly "do" ultimately rests not upon not knowing and willing, nor on my "self." "These merely come to be of themselves; they are not made so by their selves" (*zisheng er; fei wosheng ye* 自生耳; 非我生也) (Guo 1983: 50). This is just what Guo means by "self-so": not done by me, nor by anyone or anything else. This distinction is to be kept in mind whenever Guo speaks of things "creating themselves." This term has a purely negative significance for Guo; it means simply that nothing cognizable as an entity makes it so. Thus he says:

> Although (the text) has the term, 'What makes things what they are' (*wu wu zhe* 物物者), this is meant merely to show that things make themselves what they are (*wu zhi ziwu* 物之自物); ultimately there is no thing that makes things what they are .... Once we have understood that there is no thing that makes things what they are, we should also understand that neither can things make themselves what they are (*wu zhi bu neng ziwu* 物之不能自物). But then who is it that does it? They are all unconsciously and abruptly thus[9] and self-so. (Guo 1983: 754)

We must guard, then, against taking "self-so" as a synonym for the Dao in the sense of being the entity that is in some sense responsible for things being as they are. Rather, it is a way of asserting the absence of any such entity:

[9] *Huran* 忽然. This term, which normally means simply "suddenly," has a rather extended meaning in Guo Xiang. The *hu* here also implies to not pay attention, to neglect, unconsciousness. Moreover, the *ran* has a sense of both being-so and affirming, embodying a particular point of view.

> The Dao has no power. When the text says, "They attained it from the Dao," this is merely to show that they spontaneously attained it. It is simply spontaneously auto-attained; the Dao cannot make them attain it. What I have not attained, I cannot make myself attain. Thus whatever is attained [i.e., whatever qualities one has], does not depend externally on the Dao, *does not come internally from my self* (*wai bu zi yu dao, nei bu you yu ji* 外不資於道, 内不由於己). It is simply abruptly self-attained and self-right (*zide* 自得), and thus a singular transformation (*duhua* 獨化). (Guo 1983: 251; italics added.)

Thus we see that when Guo says all things are "self-so," he means that they are what they are without being made so by anything apprehendable by any consciousness, be it their own conscious volition or a transcendental Dao, or anything else that may be taken as a cause as a definite entity, which can only be a figment of trace-cognition. No identifiable entity, internally or externally, makes them as they are. This self-forgetting, in turn, is what makes them "self-so" in the other sense, that is, self-right, possessed of inalienable value.

The phrase I have put in italics is to be especially noted. A more moderate interpretation might take this denial of "coming internally from myself" to mean only "I do not make it so through my own conscious, purposive endeavor." A comprehensive view of Guo's pronouncements on this topic, however, presses us to a more radical conclusion: neither a transcendent Dao outside ourselves, *nor an immanent principle located somehow within ourselves*, determinates what we are. That is what it means to be self-so. But this point is controversial, and requires further elaboration.

3 The Self-so as the Unchangeable but Constantly Changing "Nature" of Each Entity

Contrary to what one might expect, "self-so" not only does not mean "made so by my own conscious purposive activity"; it also does not mean "made so by my own fixed but unknown inner nature." Many—nay, most—interpreters of Guo Xiang, noting his denial of an overriding Dao or single universal principle that determines the being of all things, and his concomitant stress on the unrestricted multiplicity of differences, suggest that Guo replaces this with an emphasis on the self-determination of each thing by itself, an immanent determinative principle within each thing, something called "its own nature" or "its principle" that makes each thing what it is.[10] This is how the phrase I have above translated, "it is just the principle of things to spontaneously be that way (*li zi er er* 理自爾耳) is usually understood: there is something called a "principle" (*li* 理) which, though it is itself spontaneous and uncaused, *makes* particular things the way

[10] Almost any work on Guo Xiang presents some variation of this view, which fits neatly into narrative surveys of Chinese thought. In particular, see Chan 1963, Tang 1983, Huang Knaul 1985, Chan 2003, Wang 2006 and Huang 2007.

they are. But this interpretation clashes sharply with Guo's insistence that there is *no* ruler of things, *no* Dao that makes things so, as well as Guo's specific statements about what this "nature" or "principle" actually refers to. Some writers try to solve this problem simply by saying that, while Guo denies an *external* determinative principle controlling things, he posits in its place an *internal* one.[11] But this type of explanation can seriously impede our ability to understand what is really distinctive about Guo's thought, unthinkingly assimilating it to familiar metaphysical categories such as "immanence" and "principles" without considering what these terms really imply, and the way in which they depend for their coherence on occidental metaphysical assumptions which are not a part of the Chinese intellectual universe.

To begin with, as we have just seen, the alleged "internality" of any determinant is explicitly denied by Guo. Such an internal determinative principle would solve precisely nothing for Guo, would prevent the "singularity" he attributes to every event by making of each entity a complex unity of distinguishable parts, and hence would not get any closer to the self-so in Guo's sense. As long as there is a determining of one distinguishable quality or entity by another, even between two distinct "parts" of a single putative entity, a relationship of control and determination, we have, strictly speaking, an *external* relationship (i.e., the two "parts" of this entity, while both internal to the entity as a whole, are by definition *external to one another*). If the "inner self" or "principle" or "allotment" that does the "determining" is in any way other than the manifestation that it "determines" (which it must be to accomplish anything we could rightly call "determining"), these two are mutually exclusive, and it is still a relationship of externality, not truly "self-so."[12]

Put another way, a close examination of what Guo calls a "principle" (*li*) reveals that it is (1) by definition unknowable and (2) pertains to only one entity. But this implies that it cannot be in any meaningful sense be what we normally understand as "a determining principle," i.e., something that provides an explanation for why some entity or event is the way it is. To do this, a determining principle must (1) be other than what it determines; (2) be instantiated in more than one instance, providing a connection between entities (since explanation is a way of specifying the connection between different events or entities); and (3) be potentially cognizable. A truly *unique and definitionally unknowable* principle is no longer a principle at all. In fact, it is not even "the essence of" the one thing of which it is putatively the principle: for Guo, it is rather a word for *that thing itself*, regarded in its true,

[11]See, for example, Mizoguchi 1994, where this move from external to internal determining principle Is identified as Guo's distinctive contribution to the development of the theory of "principle" in Chinese intellectual history.

[12]It is true that Guo will sometimes say that the traces of a self-so event are merely its "external forms." But this is not to be taken as if internal and external were opposed in the obvious sense, where the agent himself alone knows his true nature, and those outside him do not, and see him only externally and know only his traces. He himself knows only his traces; knowing per se can pertain only to traces.

uncognizable, uncaused condition: it is its self, in the sense of its self-so. The real self of anything is not any set of determinately cognizable characteristics it might happen to have at any time, but rather the fact that it is always comfortable being what it happens to be, not interfered with by anything external. Whatever self-so events it is joined with so comfortably that they are *not* cognized at any moment are internal to its true identity at that moment. It is not an unknowable inner principle or nature or allotment that makes things and events as they are. What Guo calls their principle, their nature or their allotment is the unknowability itself, the lack of any determinate and determining connection with other things, even with a fixed internal character which is "other" to its expression. This is meaning of self-so, the real "self" of any thing.

Guo's frequent and insistent use of this term *li*, which in later Chinese thought, *does* come to mean something like a determinative immanent principle, is thus one of the factors that tends to mislead readers. Another is his constant assertion that each thing has its own "nature" (*xing* 性), "allotment" (*fen* 分), or "limits" (*ji* 極). These three terms come to be more or less synonymous in Guo's usage. Perhaps forgivably, many scholars have interpreted Guo's use of these terms as well in accordance with their more usual meaning: a *fixed* nature, allotment, limit or principle that serves as the determining underlying character of a thing, persisting over time and remaining unchanged despite the phenomenal flux of appearances.[13] This would seem logically the simplest way to understand Guo's juxtaposition of total denial of any controller of each thing and the insistent appeal to its "nature": the logical conclusion would seem to be that "self-creation" means that something inside each being, something inborn though unknowable, makes it what it is, as opposed to something outside. There are two problems with this straightforward solution. The first is that, as we have seen above, Guo goes out of his way to undermine any neat distinction between the "inner" and "outer" for each being, telling us explicitly and in many other places, that what a thing "encounters" (*yu* 遇*) and* what it "does" (*wei* 為) are in exactly the same boat: "none of it is [because

[13]Some variation of this view is taken in Su 1980, Zhuang 1998, Wang 2006, Huang 2007 *et alia*. It is the standard doxa of Guo Xiang studies, although as I argue in this essay and elsewhere it can easily be shown to be based on a superficial misreading of his work. A view closer to the one developed here appears in Wang Deyou 1987 and Fung 1933. Fung attributes to Guo the view that the way any thing is to the totality of existing conditions (rather than invoking the thing's unchaning "nature"), without delving into the further details of how to interpret the rest of Guo's pronouncements. (Fung, pp. 120–121.) Tang 1983 offers a more complex account which stands somewhere in between these two views: on Tang's account, all things have an unchanging nature, but they are also made what they are by the totality of other events in the universe, which makes inquiry into those events in principle fruitless: "To say that any and every condition is a condition of its existence is tantamount to saying that its existence is unconditioned." (Tang, p. 294). It is their unchanging nature to be dependent on this totality of other things in a specific way. With a slight modification, Tang's position is equivalent to what I am arguing here: instead of seeing "its own unconditioned uncreated nature" and "its uncondtionality because determined to be conditioned by all things in a certain way" as two separate facts, I view them as synonyms. They are two ways of describing the same contents.

of] me; it is all simply self-so." The standard interpretation, although it generally fails to take this sort of statement of Guo's as seriously as it should be taken, must assume that what I do and what I encounter, although both are "self-so," belong to *different* self-so principles or natures. The problem with this move, though, is not only that Guo himself makes no distinction between these two (he does not say, for example, that "what is done by me" is due to *my* "nature" or "principle," but "what I encounter" is due to the natures or principles of *other beings*); more importantly, it fails to take into the full meaning of Guo's notion of "self-so" as "self," which explicitly precludes the separation of "inside" and "outside." It is precisely for this reason, according to Guo, that the *Zhuangzi* describes the sage as "taking all around him as a single body": "He has neither inside nor outside, looking on all of them in just the same way." (Guo 1983: 881). For the "nature" is defined by Guo not as what is inner as opposed to outer, or what is unchanging as opposed to what changes, or what is one's own doing as opposed to what one happens to encounter. Instead, for Guo the "nature" is defined by its contrast to *knowing* and *deliberate activity*. Simply stated, whatever occurs for any being, whether "done" or "encountered" by that being, qualifies as "the nature" of that being if it is (1) not known to that being (i.e., "fit" and hence unnoticed) and (2) not deliberately done by that being. It is precisely the "self-so." Commenting on a passage where the *Zhuangzi* states, of the sage, "He does not know it to be so, [for] it is his own nature," Guo takes the opportunity to twist the intent of the passage to give a clear definition of what *he* means by "the nature": "What is self-so, though one doesn't knows [how or why] it is so—what is that but one's nature!?" (Guo 1983: 881). It is not being "inner" as opposed to "outer" that qualifies it as the "nature," nor being unchanging as opposed to changing: it is what is so though one cannot not know how or why it is so. One's nature is what is so of one without being determined to be so by any knowable determinant, not what is determined by something internal and unchanging called "one's nature."

Both what is "encountered" by me (the "external") and what is "done" by me (the "internal") are strictly intrinsic to "my self,"—in Guo's sense of the term, i.e., the self-so, explored above—and Guo tells us that *neither* can ever be changed. If I am stupid as opposed to smart, it is my nature to be so. If I lift my hand at this moment (i.e., "what is done by me"), it is my nature to lift my hand at this moment. But if a tree falls on me while I'm walking to work (i.e., "what I encounter"), that is *also* my "nature." If what I "encounter" is due to "my nature," it seems highly implausible to hold that this "nature" is some kind of immanent principle within me. This makes it impossible to hold that Guo contrasts a changing external world to an unchanging inner principle for any entity: we must understand his definition of "the nature" in a modified way to account for such claims.

This brings us to the second and related reason we must reject the standard attribution to GUO Xiang of a doctrine of immanent as opposed to transcendent fixed principles or natures that determine things from within: his handling of the question of *change*. For Guo's insistence that the limits, nature, principle, and allotment of a thing can never be changed is matched by his equally shrill insistence that everything is constantly changing, instant by instant, to the point where even identity

is not continuous between moments: the former me is not the present me: "The previous I is not the I of the present moment. 'I-ness' moves along together with the present moment; how could one constantly hold on to the old?" (*xiangzhezhiwo feifujinwoye, woyujinjuwang, qichangshouguzai* 向者之我非復今我也。我與今俱往。豈常守故哉) (Guo 1983: 244). There is no particular content to selfhood, either as a nature or as an immanent principle which remains the same behind its changes and which would therefore determine what those changes are. Rather, selfhood is purely a form, meaning whatever is going on unintentionally at the present moment, regarded as self in Guo's distinctive sense of the self-so. Thus Guo says, of the various changes that might be encountered *or* committed, "I 'self' them all (*wujiewuzhi* 吾皆吾之), and hence there is no loss of selfhood; since there is nothing I do not consider myself, the inner and outer are vanishingly unified, past and present are strung along one thread, I am daily renewed along with all changes; how could I *know* wherein resides my 'self'?" (Guo 1983: 277; italics added). The self in question here is, again, the self-*so*, which means simply whatever is going on right now apart from what is made so by either objectified objects of knowledge or deliberate acts of will. To "self" them, as a transitive verb, means just to merge into them comfortably, to vanish them and oneself into the self-so, forgetting the determinate traces of both. This does not denote a true self, a real or original inner nature that persists beneath appearances and remains the same.[14] Even being some particular thing, for example a human, is itself "just one encounter amongst the ten thousand changes" (*renxing naishi wanhua zhi yi yu er* 人形乃是萬化之一遇耳) (Guo 1983: 245). The idea of a metaphysical essence, or set of multiple essences, behind changing things that makes them what they are or makes them change as they do would re-establish the same metaphysical quandary cited by Guo to overthrow the notion of the Dao as a real entity, a creator, or an actual source of all things. So on

[14] A contrast with Buddhist ideas may be useful here. It may seem superficially that Guo's insistence on constant flux makes his view similar to the early Buddhist notions of impermanence (*annica*) and "nonself" (*anatta).* But Guo does not deny the reality of the self; on the contrary, he affirms that there is *always* a self: whatever I regard as self is myself, and I *may* regard as self whatever is self-so. The Buddhists deny self because of the criterion of "selfhood" they are applying: to be a self, for Buddhists, means to be an independent, self-determining, unconditional agent, which through its own power can determine its own fate at will. Since nothing meets this definition, nothing is a self. Guo, on the other hand, does not share this criterion. For him, what is self-so is self, when one is able to "vanish into it" undisturbed by "traces." The criterion for selfhood, for Guo, does not require that the self have this ability to make things so at will, or to exercise a determining power over anything: as quoted above, things are "simply self-generated, not generated by the self" (*zisheng er; fei wosheng ye* 自生耳; 非我生也) (Guo 1983: 50). Guo, unlike the Buddhists, thus asserts a true self at any moment, though one defined by this "*zi*" rather than this "*wo*." Nor does Guo's view exactly accord with the later Buddhist view that *all* things are my self, although it more closely resembles this view; Guo would say instead that *any* situation may be my self, depending on how I relate to it. In this sense, Guo position is a kind of antithesis to Buddhism, although his view would exert considerable influence on later Chan modifications of Buddhist doctrine, particularly in the Hongzhou school of Chan which likewise denies the relevance of theoretical knowledge and identifies every and any momentary "function" (*yong*), if undisturbed by cognitive purposes which "seek outside" itself, with the true self or Buddha-nature.

the one hand, the nature, limits, or allotment of each thing can never be changed; but on the other, everything is constantly changing. How is this apparent contradiction to be resolved?

The answer is surprisingly simple. A "thing" is, for Guo as for many other Chinese thinkers earlier and later, a *situation*. For Guo, this idea is radicalized: the situation lasts only one moment: it is an "encounter." It has certain limits. It is an eternal fact. That I am here doing this right now at this exact moment in time and nothing else cannot be changed; by the time I am aware of it, and exert my will toward it, it is already gone. This means it is what it is, and it can never *be* changed. It can transform into something else, indeed it *must* transform, but it cannot *be* transformed. That is, it can never be the object of a deliberate alteration brought about by some other thing, some other situation. Any such linkage, situating events in an arrangement of determinate entities, for example as a discernible causal nexus, would be, for him, merely a projection of an illegitimate epistemological confusion, involving identification of definite facts and values, aspiration, purpose, and will, all of which he calls "knowing" (*zhi* 知) and its concomitant, deliberate doing (*wei* 為): the realm of "traces." Guo sometimes calls this unchangeable but always changing fitting-and-thus-uncognized-way-it-is-happening-now "the allotment," which also means "division" (*fen* 分) because it is just this much and no more. Its "nature" is its "limits" is its "allotment"—*which is this thing—this situation, this encounter—itself*. Each thing has its own limits, its own nature, its own allotment; but once purposive knowing and doing are eliminated, this "having" of limits is simply being self-so, and the self-so is the real pre-trace "self" of any event, its vanishing convergence with all other unintentional, unnoticed pre-trace self-so events going on at the time.

Hence Guo can say, "The heavenly nature (*tianxing* 天性) that each one receives has its original determinate portion (*benfen* 本分); it cannot be escaped, nor can it be added to" (Guo 1983: 128). At first glance such statements suggest the most inexorable predetermined fixity. But we must read carefully: Guo does not say that one's determinacy stays always the same, that it does not change; he says explicitly that it cannot be "escaped" or "added to"—both terms that unmistakably point to conscious deliberate activity, attempts to change what one is, acting upon oneself as an agent upon a patient. What is denied here is the transitive sense of "change"—"A changes B"—not the intransitive sense, "A changes." One's determinacy changes, but it cannot be changed by extrinsic action upon it. Deliberate action cannot change it; it is "fixed" within a given moment, and that moment cannot be otherwise. This is why Guo can repeatedly assert both an "unchangeable nature," and also, for example, "(Things) take self-attainment as 'right' and self-loss as 'wrong,' take what suits their own determinacy comfortably as good order, and what loses such harmony as disorder. But things have no fixed limits (*wu wu ding ji* 物無定極), and selves have no constantly comfortable fits (*wo wu chang shi* 我無常適); different determinacies come to have different conveniences, and thus right and wrong have no constant master" (Guo 1983: 583). What is right or so in a particular moment is just what fits the determinacy of that moment, and this rightness changes as that determinacy changes, which it must, since things have no fixed limits or determinacies. Things always "follow their allotted determinacies (*fen* 分), and *thus*

what they do is not constant" (Guo 1983: 585, emphasis added). Here it is precisely sticking to their own "allotted determinacies" that even *necessarily implies* change.

Hence we find Guo saying, "When we examine the alternations of fullness and emptiness, we come to understand that there is no constancy in the attainments of allotments (*fen*)" (Guo 1983: 570). The point is that all things are always changing of themselves and hence do not require extrinsic activity upon them to change them. Their changes, even when apparently coming from outside, are to be considered the intrinsic and spontaneous transformations of their allotted determinacy: "He whom the age regards as worthy becomes a lord; he whose talents do not match his generation becomes a vassal. This is like heaven's being high of itself, earth being low of itself, the head spontaneously being above and the foot spontaneously being below; how could they replace each other? Although they take no pains to be right they are necessarily self-right" (Guo 1983: 58–59). This remark gives us some insight into what Guo means by spontaneity and by unchangeability. In saying that the above and the below cannot change places he does not mean they are fixed in their places for all time, or that they are destined to be where they are by the material they are made of; rather, he states that they are given their positions purely due to their chance relation to the times in which they happen to live and whether the present generation esteems them. Circumstances at this particular point in time happen to put every one in some particular place, and when Guo states that they cannot be otherwise, he merely means that in this moment they cannot be otherwise. Further, this circumstantial becoming such is what Guo calls "self high, self low," and so on; precisely this is self-so. The constancy of things means only that they self-transform in Guo's sense, they spontaneously change into what they become rather than being deliberately changed, not that they do not transform at all.[15] As Guo puts it elsewhere, "If one acts upon or [deliberately] refrains from acting upon them, this ruins their self-transformation" (Guo 1983: 588).

[15] This is why Guo does sometimes sound like he considers the determinacy of things to be fixed, for example when he says, "This passage means to say that the determinacies of things have their different allotments and roles (*fen*); thus the intelligent await their end holding on to their intelligence, while the stupid await death embracing their stupidity; how could they change their innate determinacy in the middle?" (Guo 1983: 59). But in the light of his entire system, his emphasis on change and transformation, his admission of unfixity of worldly conditions which alone express determinate differences, we may rather interpret such assertions to mean that at any given moment one is just what one is and cannot be otherwise, that one's determinacy in that moment is self-so and absolute, not that one must literally be the same in every subsequent moment. For Guo makes it abundantly clear elsewhere that *xing* does not mean something eternally fixed: "Benevolence and righteousness are the determinate nature (*xing* 性) of man; but man's determinate nature changes (*ren xing you bian* 人性有變), it is different in the past and in the present" (Guo 1983: 519). Whatever changes happen to occur to one's determinacy are also self-so, and hence are also one's "nature." "To follow one's present determinacy and move directly forward (*zhiwang* 直往) is self-so. To so move and harm that determinacy, and the fact that the determinacy (*xing* 性) once hurt can change, are also self-so" (Guo 1983: 281). Here we see clearly that *xing* is something that can and does change; in fact, in light of Guo's general view of the uninterrupted all-pervasiveness of change, it must change.

4 Vanishing into Things

Before knowing comes to know the situation in this sense, it is merely a "vanishing merging" (*ming* 冥) of all things, the comfortably uncognized encounter itself. "Vanishing" means it is unknowable as a determinate object, because it is entirely within its own limits. "Merging" means that all of heaven and earth are involved in producing it, not as determinate objects of consciousness, but simply as the pre-reflexive coming-together:

> Although man's body is small and insignificant, it requires all of Heaven and Earth to support it. Thus all the things that exist between Heaven and Earth can never lack one another for even a single day. If even one being were missing, there would be no way for whatever is born to be born. If even one principle (*li* 理) failed to come to bear, there would be no way to live out one's natural years to the end. But Knowing (*zhi* 知) does not know everything that is present in the body, and Doing (*wei* 為) is not the agent that brings about every principle that exists. Thus what Knowing knows is little but what the body possesses is much; what Doing accomplishes is little compared to the abundance of operating principles . . . . (Guo 1983: 225)

This pre-reflexive coming-together at any moment is simply "the fitting and thus uncognized way it is happening," and this is all that is meant by "the self-so." It is called "the nature" because it cannot *be* changed—by knowing and doing. The term "the nature" is used in its usual sense, as we see most explicitly perhaps in the *Xunzi*: it is the opposite of purposive activity (*wei* 為) or the artificial (*wei* 偽). Hence Guo also sometimes calls it the "genuine nature" (*zhenxing* 真性). Whatever happens without purpose and unmotivated by purposive knowing is the nature. It is neither within nor without, and makes no distinction between what is encountered from without and what is emitted from within.

Guo's strictures against "changing one's determinacy" are thus aimed as always against extrinsic conscious activity; in no way do they imply a repudiation of change at some "essential" level or assert the existence of a fixed noumenal "nature" or intelligible character to each individual being, with which it is required to act in accordance. On the contrary, what Guo advocates is to change by vanishing (into) and following along with all changes, to take all changes as intrinsic to oneself, to "roam in the paths of transformation, abandon oneself into the flow of daily newness, transforming along with the ten thousand transformations of the ten thousand things . . . . This is to vanishingly unify oneself with the ten thousand things and form one body with transformation . . . " (Guo 1983: 246). This is taken to be the opposite of emulating extrinsic changes and willing to be other, which is alone the type of change Guo repudiates. The only constancy he advocates, conversely, is the constancy of change: "Taking transformation as one's constancy, one's constancy is inexhaustible . . . . Since all are leveled in being transformation, one does not take fixed constancy as one's master" (Guo 1983: 504–5). What is constant is merely that they are all self-so; indeed, this is precisely what all beings

in all states share: "They are all equal in not acting, but rather self-transforming" (Guo 1983: 403). They are constantly fit to whatever they happen to be, they always rest on a self-forgetting darkness of self-so.

From this we can see that Guo's repudiation of imposing the traces of one event on another thus does not imply a solipsistic isolation of each moment or each event, each self-so "self." For what is left out of this kind of trace-cognition, "what leaves the traces," is the self-right self-so of each entity, which Guo Xiang simply calls "darkness" (*ming* 冥) to indicate its antithetical relation to cognition and conscious willing. This same term is as a verb to suggest this less problematic way of relating to things: to merge with them so fully as to "vanish" into them and make them vanish into oneself, that is, to cease trying to know them or exert the will on them, instead allowing the traces of both oneself and the things around one to vanish into the uncognizable process of the present self-so event. Guo speaks repeatedly of "merging with the time," "merging with change," "merging with things," "merging with one's own nature," "merging with one's own allotment," "merging with one's own limits," "merging with whatever one encounters," and *these expression are strictly synonymous*. To vanishingly merge with whatever one encounters *is* to vanishingly merge with one's own nature, with one's own limits, with one's own allotment. In this sense the term "the nature" or "the allotment" or "the principle" is an ironic empty term for Guo, just as "Dao" or "nothingness" is. The nature, the self-so, is really nothing more than a name for whatever encounter, whatever vanishing merging, whatever particular events are presently pre-reflexively taking place.

These considerations must also make us reconsider the charges of a fixed predetermined fatalism that are often leveled against Guo Xiang. But Guo is definitely no fatalist. In fact, he is said to have authored, in addition to the *Zhuangzi* commentary, a work entitled "Good and Bad Fortune Come from Oneself" (Jixiong youji lun 吉凶由己論) as an explicit repudiation of fatalism, a work which is unfortunately no longer extant. But in this capacity, we should note the relevant multiplicity of senses of the term self-so (*ziran*) in his writings. For self-so means equally necessity, freedom, and chance. Guo uses it to mean all three, but in each case the other two are also implied. It is not merely that these three aspects can be identified for each and every thing, but that the three notions themselves are in their deepest meaning identical, for what these three concepts have in common is their self-so. All of these may be regarded as nothing but three different ways of viewing and describing what is at bottom one simple concept: "self-so." To be self-so means not to be grounded in anything. That is a definition of "chance." To be self-so means to be what one is without being grounded in anything else, hence not contingent on or changeable by anything else. That is a definition of "necessity." To be self-so means in this sense to be grounded only in oneself, or only in one's present moment of action and determinacy. That is a definition of "freedom." All entities are self-so. This means they are what they are and cannot be otherwise: self-so is necessity. There can be no ultimate explanation of their being so: self-so is chance. They themselves are so, not made so by others: self-so is freedom.

5 The Spontaneity of the Non-spontaneous

We noted above that for GUO Xiang, both what one "does" and what one "encounters" are self-so, are one's own nature and allotment. We established that the self-so-nature is defined not as the internal as opposed to the external, but as the unknowing and non-deliberate as opposed to the knowing and deliberate. But how then can what one "does" also be one's nature? Is this not precisely the known and the deliberate, a deliberate deed committed in the service of a consciously cognized purpose? It is the consideration of this point that allows us to grasp the full radical nature of GUO Xiang's notion of "self-so." For, after making the distinction between knowing/doing/traces on the one hand and the self-so/determinacy/limits/vanishing on the other, Guo *annuls it at a higher order of abstraction*:

> Doing cannot be done by someone "doing" doing. Doing is spontaneously doing, [it is self-so doing]. Knowing does not know by someone "doing" knowing. Knowing is spontaneously knowing, [it is self-so knowing]. As self-so knowing, knowing is not [a result of] knowing, [is unknown, is itself a kind of non-knowing]. Being always in this sense a non-knowing, what we call knowing emerges from non-knowing. As self-so doing, doing is not [the result of] doing, [is undone, is itself a kind of non-doing]. Being always in this sense a non-doing, doing comes from non-doing. Since doing comes from non-doing, non-doing is always the master. Since knowing comes from non-knowing, non-knowing is always the source. Hence the Genuine Human Being discards knowledge and thereby knows, does nothing and thereby does. Self-so he comes to life, sitting and forgetting he finds himself. It is only for this reason that he is described as eliminating knowledge and discarding doing. (Guo 1983: 224–225)

Here Guo asserts that even Doing and Knowing, the perpetual nemeses of the self-so, are themselves self-so. One cannot decide to decide, one cannot deliberately determine to have a deliberate purpose. This would lead to an infinite regress of the kind Guo rejects in his critique of a creator. One just spontaneously finds oneself having deliberate purposes and making decisions. "The eye's ability to see does not come from its knowing how to see; we see without knowing how to see, we know without knowing how to know, and this is what makes it self-so" (Guo 1983: 812). Ultimately, whatever one does, even deliberate action, is not accomplished by knowing and doing. The free-will theorist would say, "If you choose not to decide, you've still made a choice. We cannot abstain from deliberate purposes and actions, from making choices; even abstaining to choose is itself a choice." Guo accepts this premise, but draws the opposite conclusion: since both choosing and not-choosing are instances of making a second-order choice, I have no choice but to make a choice. Hence even when I make a choice, I have no choice: I am forced to be choosing. I cannot but be choosing, and therefore I cannot choose between choosing and not-choosing. I am not free to decide to be free. Because I am "condemned to be free," my freedom is itself a spontaneous fact not of my choosing. Hence even when I am doing, I am really, ultimately, non-doing, and even when I am knowing, I am really, ultimately, non-knowing.

This means there is no need to actually eliminate knowing and doing, or to change one's behavior in any way whatsoever. The acknowledgement of the self-

so is simply a noticing of this second-order spontaneity that pervades even my deliberate activity and knowing, a focusing on a different level of the doing and knowing itself. To focus on the self-so aspect of any situation, even of apparently deliberate action, attuned to the beyond-knowing-and-doing process that ultimately grounds it, its vanishing convergence that cannot go outside itself to any external objects of knowing or goals of doing, its limitedness to its own limits, is to know its nature, its determinacy, its principle, no more and no less.[16]

6 Morality and Politics: Guo's Polemic Against, and Reaffirmation of, Values and Ideals

Guo asserts that these points have far-reaching practical implications. First, they imply unequivocally that anything we want, anything we consider good, any ideal we might posit, is the result of a cognitive and moral error. To see something as intrinsically good is a result of failing to be attuned to the self-so, seeing instead only the "traces" of a particular self-so event. This means that there is nothing more pernicious than any concept of "Goodness." Guo says:

> That which causes no harm to things does not do so because it is practicing benevolence, but the trace "benevolence" moves in it; that which makes every principle hit the mark is not practicing righteousness, but the effect "righteousness" appears in it. Thus hitting the mark and causing no harm are not brought about by benevolence and righteousness. But the world goes running after [these traces], discarding themselves to follow others so that they lose their ever-so [i.e., their self-so]. Therefore the disordering of the mind does not come from what is ugly but always from beautiful appearances; the disruption of the world does not come from evil, but always from benevolence and righteousness. Thus benevolence and righteousness are tools for the disruption of the world. (Guo 1983: 323–324)

Here the traces are not simply ineffectual for producing spontaneity and hence superfluous, they are positively dangerous because they cause beings to neglect their own inner necessity in favor of something attractive outside themselves. They allow a foreign ideal to interfere with the function of each being's spontaneity, which, after all, was alone what allowed these emulated actions to occur in the first place. By cognizing attractive external traces of another being's spontaneity, one's own spontaneity, and hence one's true value, is effaced.

By holding one moment over into another moment, the value realized by one self-so event is allowed to serve as a model for another self-so event, which makes the latter event no longer truly self-so, and thus deprived of its real value. That is to say, traces give rise to *values*, i.e., conceptions of what is good and what is bad, what is desirable and what is not. For Guo Xiang as for Zhuangzi and Laozi, this is a most disastrous development. The problem for Guo is not that the world has false values so much as that it has *any* cognitive values at all. Values,

[16]For a fuller discussion of these points, see Ziporyn 2003.

the conscious esteeming of one thing as inherently more worthy than another, are necessarily pernicious. These values spring from cognizing something or someone as external to ourselves and wishing to make ourselves like that external thing or person, and further believing this can be accomplished through conscious volition. The danger of traces, especially the particularly impressive traces of the sages' non-action, lies in their ability to be made the objects of valuation. "These errors all come from the fact that traces invite esteem," says Guo, summarizing the ills of the world complained of in the "Horses Hooves" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* (Guo 1983: 341). Guo's general principle is, "When something beautiful [i.e., good, attractive] is produced in front, falsification is born behind; thus all completed beauty [or good] is an instrument of evil" (Guo 1983: 828).

This is related to a second socio-ethical implication. The sense of unconsciousness which goes along with fittingness and comfort in following all changes is closely related to Guo's notion of oneness in diversity, which is explicated first of all and most forcefully in his recurrent use of the imagery of the parts of an animal organism to illustrate the relations between things. First Guo relates this to the differences among things and the differing roles thereby falling to them within the social and political hierarchy:

> If vassals and concubines merely accord with their own roles, this will not make them unable to "regulate each other" (*xiangzhi* 相治). By mutual regulation is meant the way hand, foot, ear, eye, the four limbs and each of the hundred parts of the body each is in charge of its own job and thus all ride on and utilize each other. (Guo 1983: 58)

That is, the hand uses all the other parts of the body as its subordinates when it is time for it to accomplish its hand-tasks; when it wants to pick something up across the room, the feet carry it over to it and support it as it does its job. When a foot-task comes up, the hands, in doing their hand-business, aid in its accomplishment as well. In all these changing foci of attention and activity, the unity of the organism is maintained, and yet each part therein maintains its own integrity and acts only as itself and for itself, never thinking of the others. Each member knows only itself and acts only for itself, but in so acting it aids all the others; the hand does not help the foot by lifting and dropping the foot every time walking is wanted; on the contrary, it aids it best by forgetting all about foot-work and tending to its own hand-business:

> The perfect benevolence is like the hundred joints in the body all being comfortable and fit; all day one is not cognizant of them. When the sage (rules) above, he does not take any deliberate action, but simply indulges all so that each attains what it is. If each attains its doing of what it does, then all the various duties will be comfortable, the mass of creatures will each be satisfied with itself; how then could any in the world fail to forget itself? If each forgets itself, where is the lord? This is what is called "forgetting both." (Guo 1983: 500)

The comfort and fit of the parts of the body in their relation to each other spells their unawareness of themselves, and by the same token, of each other. Each is alone, "singular," in its own transformations and forgets everything outside itself and also within itself. But this very vanishing of all conscious purposive awareness of other things signifies that it is interacting harmoniously with all other things; its feeling of independence is a sign that it is perfectly dependent, and its comfortable and

unconscious restriction to its own determinate limits is whereby it participates in and aids the whole:

> In the world there are none that do not relate to each other as self and other. Self and other always want to pursue their own activities and thus are opposed to each other like east and west. But self and other are related to each other like lips and teeth; the lips and teeth never act for the sake of each other, and yet when the lips are gone the teeth are cold. Thus the other's activity for himself has vast merit (*gong* 功) in aiding me. Thus it is that mutually opposed entities cannot lack one another.... If they neglect the efficacy and merit of their activity for themselves and start thinking of acting kindly for the sake of each other, then the more conscientious they are in their kindness, the more falsity and meagerness [in actual mutual benefit] will flourish. (Guo 1983: 579)

Any conscious attempt to deliberately help one another interferes with the spontaneous aid each thing gives to each other thing simply by comfortably being itself, acting for itself, and thereby forgetting itself and its other.

It is thus that Guo can conclude that the fulfillment of highly complex social roles in a stratified social organization, to the extent that it fits the determinacies of the agents and is thus comfortable to them, to the extent that they forget about each other and thereby support one another, can be considered self-so and unimpeachably self-right. Guo makes this point explicit when commenting on the ninth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, which compares human civilization to the training of horses, and which delivers an equally negative judgment on both endeavors. Guo however sees it differently:

> The true determinacy of horses is not such that they reject the saddle and hate to be ridden; it is just that they have no desire for superfluous luxury and honor.... He who is good at riding them does so by actualizing their abilities to the utmost; the way to do this is to let them follow their own spontaneity (*ziren* 自任). But if when they would walk one makes them gallop, seeking a function that exceeds their ability, some will be unable to bear it and many will die. If however we allow both nags and steeds each to accord with its own power, going along with and fitting to the distinct determinacies of sluggish and swift, then although they leave their footprints all over the world's wildernesses and beyond, the natural determinacy of each horse will be kept whole. But when the deluded hear (us say), "Allow the horses to follow their own determinacies," they say we should release them and not ride them; when they hear talk of non-activity, they say walking is not as good as lying down; how is it that they go so astray without turning back!? They grievously miss Zhuangzi's point. (Guo 1983: 333)

Guo here twists the meaning of the *Zhuangzi* passage so that the problem is not in riding horses, or accepting particular social roles within human civilization, but rather merely in making the weak and slow horses try to conform to the standard of the strong and fast, that is, to make the petty man conform to the standard of the sages. The "standard" of the sages is really just the traces these sages leave through their own self-so, which are called benevolence and righteousness by those who later apprehend them. "The natures of the horses all differ; to seek to level their functions then is to exhaust their strength and cause the beginning of dissolute deception" (Guo 1983: 340). Thus the natures of the so-called exemplary men and the so-called petty men are spontaneously different, and this is as it should be; the problem is when one standard, the standard of the former, is applied to all, and this

occurs whenever a cognitive awareness of this difference comes to light, when the traces appear and are taken as the thing itself, that which makes it so. In reality, what makes them so is the non-reflexive level of spontaneity.

Thus while sharing the *Zhuangzi's* view that the ideals created by activity of the sages are something supremely dangerous, Guo does not endorse that text's suggestion for the rectification, i.e., the abolition of the sages and their benevolence and righteousness, since these bring about such perversions of self-so spontaneity. Guo draws a distinction between the sages themselves, on the one hand, and their benevolence and righteousness, on the other. This is the difference between that which leaves the traces and the traces themselves. In Guo's view, both of these must inevitably come to exist, but the traces can be *ignored*. Thus he places the blame for all perversions of self-rightness on the later generations who perceive and imitate the traces, not on the sages. These latter-born can perhaps learn not to be motivated by the traces, even though these traces themselves will always exist. Guo says:

> It is a self-so principle [i.e., a fact of things with no explanation, *ziran zhi li* 自然之理] that when one moves, a shadow follows, and when one speaks, an echo follows. When one smoothly follows along with things (*shun wu* 順物), traces in the form of names are established; but he who was going along with things did not do it for the name. Not doing it for a name is perfection, but ultimately the name could not be avoided; who then could release him [from this consequence]? Thus names are shadows and echoes; and shadows and echoes are the fetters of forms and sounds. When one understands this, the name-traces can be done away with; once this is done, the esteeming of others (*shangbi* 尚彼) can be cut off, and once this is done, one's determinacy and inner necessity can be kept whole. (Guo 1983: 206)

Traces are something that exist in the mind of the unenlightened of later times, who look back at the past and understand it in these terms.[17]

Thus we see the *Zhuangzi's* heated critique of the sages reversed by GUO Xiang into an attack on the unenlightened of later times who apprehend and try to imitate their traces. We see in the above passages how the concept of "traces" enables GUO Xiang to assert the unimpeachability of the sages, much in contrast to the *Zhuangzi*'s own heated critique but in close accord with Guo's Confucian agenda, and yet also to agree with the *Zhuangzi*'s contention that the sages have ruined the world. The existence of sages has indeed wreaked havoc on later ages; but this was not due to any fault of the sages themselves. On the contrary, they were perfect men; the fault is in their traces, and more specifically, in the fact that their traces invited cognition, retention, esteem, and imitation, and this invitation was not resisted. Thus, "disorder is born out of the traces of order" (Guo 1983: 389). It is precisely the greatness of the sages that makes them so dangerous. Hence Guo says, "Sagely wisdom, benevolence, and righteousness, these are traces that are far from any crime or defect; when traces are far from any defect, the common people esteem them; and

[17] We may further ask why there should be in the world any memory or consciousness which does in fact look at past moments and other beings in this way, why there is this deluded kind of cognition at all—and to this I think Guo can give no answer except his blanket response that this, like all else, is self-so, inexplicable, something simultaneously free, necessary, and arbitrary.

when they esteem them, artifice and deceit are born; and when artifice and deceit are born, the tools of atrocities are inevitably not lacking" (Guo 1983: 378).[18]

Guo can thus seem to agree with every statement made by the anti-Confucian chapters of the *Zhuangzi* text and yet completely reverse their meaning. For example, when the text says, "Thus the sages have benefited the world little and harmed the world much," GUO Xiang comments:

> How true this statement is! But although this statement is true, we still cannot do away with the sages. Since all the knowledge in the world is not yet able to be completely obliterated, the way of the sages is still needed to subdue it. If everyone else's knowledge is allowed to exist and only the sages' knowledge is obliterated, this will harm the world even more than allowing the sages to exist. Thus although the harm caused by the sages is much, it is still better than the disorder of having no sages. But although it is better than having no sages, it is undeniably not as good as the total lack of harm there would be if all [the knowledge] were obliterated. (Guo 1983: 348)

Here we see the full implications of Guo's position: He is willing to admit the value of the Confucian sages and even that it is better to have them than not to have them, given the fact that the rest of the world is not willing to give up its deliberate action and knowing. But at the same time Guo makes it clear that this is far from his ideal; it would be far better if all could obliterate their deliberate and discriminating trace-knowledge, and return to their own self-rightness. The sages have harmed the world much, not because they were themselves at fault, but because their traces were misapprehended by others and imitated. Even so, it is necessary to have them, since this trace-cognition already exists in the minds of their imitators and must be subdued by the governing cognition of the sages. Since they are inclined to imitate traces, have values, attain knowledge, and take deliberate actions, they would do so even if there were no sages; but this striving would be even less wholesome than the striving after the sages, which at least includes some hints of self-cancellation and non-knowing. It would be best if all trace-cognition vanished, but the existence of only ordinary people with their trace-cognition ungoverned by the sage and his institutions would be worst. What we have is a situation between these two, where the sage harms the world with his attractive traces but mitigates this harm somewhat by keeping these cognition-tainted people in relatively good order, presumably because the particular traces they are imitating are his traces of perfect spontaneity and self-rightness, rather than traces of something which is itself already a pale imitation. Thus, by an application of the concept of traces that might be described alternately as skillful or crafty, an essential place has been found for Confucian ideals while at the same time maintaining an ultimate allegiance to the Daoist ideal of spontaneity.

GUO Xiang thus calls for no changes in the objective structure of society or the world, nor for anyone to abandon it. It is inevitable that there be civilization and

[18] In statements such as this we do get a clue of a possible derivation of the appearance of traces from an inherent acceptance of the old Daoist idea of the mutual creation of opposites: it is precisely the perfection of the sages that creates the greatest calamity of traces and imitation, in accordance with the implicit broader rule that evil is born from good and vice versa.

records of past worthies, for these are the traces left by the perfect self-rightness of certain individuals, later called sages. Precisely their self-rightness and beauty made their traces so attractive, and hence so dangerous, so liable to pervert the self-rightness of others by being taken as normative values. All Guo recommends is that those who live in the wake of these beings learn to ignore their traces, forget them, not be fooled by them into imitation. Ideally, he wants us to learn to read these traces, these records of former worthies, differently; not as sets of instructions on how we must also act or descriptions of how we must strive to be, but merely as an inadvertent side-effect of someone else's self-rightness, which tells us only imperfectly about that unknowable spontaneity itself and cannot aid our own self-rightness; a text which may be left in place, which may be taken descriptively, but which should ultimately be ignored, lest it be taken prescriptively. In itself, any content—Confucian sages, involvement in social structures etc.—is self-right; yet as it affects other consciousnesses, it is a danger, the beginning of wrongness. Thus does Guo's conceptions of traces and the self-so allow him to place social purposivity and "spontaneous" non-action on the same level, as equally valid content in themselves, while at the same time maintaining a radical commitment to the ultimate value of spontaneity, unknowable self-rightness. He can thus on the one hand assert that all things without exception are completely right, on the other hand join the *Zhuangzi* in lamenting the perniciousness of sagely knowledge and deeds, while joining the Confucians in singing the praises of the sages.

7 Conclusion

Guo's thinking, though complex and counterintuitive, and further complicated by its the commentarial form, was hugely influential in varying ways in many schools of later Chinese thought: in religious Daoist mysticism (in the development of particular spiritual exercises), in Chinese Buddhism (especially Chan Buddhist exaltations of spontaneity and denigrations of theoretical knowledge), and in Neo-Confucianism (where the idea of an immanent determining principle in all things *did* appear, largely influenced by Guo's ambiguous clearing of a space for this development). Guo's own thinking, however, remains distinct from these developments. For convenience, we can perhaps summarize our conclusions about the overall worldview emerging from Guo's writings, as spelled out in detail above, in a few short paragraphs:

In GUO Xiang's view, there is no creator of the world, no source of the world, no goal of the world, no underlying substance of the world, no metaphysical absolute, no single truth about things, no ultimate value everywhere applicable, no single pattern or principle to things, no one Way that all things follow. The Dao spoken of by Laozi and Zhuangzi is not a word for a putative creator, source, goal, substance, absolute, truth or value, pattern, principle or Way of the world. It is a word for precisely their definitive absence. It is not that there is a Dao about which nothing can be said. Rather, the fact that necessitates the *rejection* of all possible statements

about a Dao—of saying anything about a unifying ultimate creator, source, goal, substance, absolute, truth, value, pattern, principle, Way—is the Dao. It is the fact that none of these things exist that actually does what all proposed Ways are supposed to do: it lets all things come into being, brings life to things, and gives all things their value. That is why the absence of all Dao is rightly called Dao.

GUO Xiang pushes this idea even further: There is, strictly speaking, not even a creator or source of any individual thing. No one thing produces another. The whole idea of creation of one thing by another is based on a profound mistake, a mistake that is at once both epistemological and moral. The type of cognition that posits "one thing" as opposed to "another" is an outgrowth of a mentality premised on human purpose, which contrasts the way a situation is to the way it ought to be and contrasts the goal of an action to its means. All explanation of why anything is so or is not so depends on this kind of cognition. An "explanation" is the positing of an "other"—a cause, purpose, situation, pattern, correlation, fact—that makes "this" do what it does. It is a way of indicating what other thing makes this thing the way it is. But, according GUO Xiang, whatever goes on ultimately happens for no reason. It is "self-so." This is not an explanation of why it is as it is. It is rather a rejection of the possibility of offering an explanation of why it is as it is. It is a way of saying simply that it is just as it is, and there is nothing more to say about it.

It might seem then that Guo has nothing interesting to say about the world, since he has, literally, nothing to say about the world. But Guo's radical conception of "self-so" proves very interesting indeed. For "self-so," as Guo uses the term, ends up bringing together three concepts that most philosophical systems, as well as common sense, regard as mutually exclusive: necessity, freedom, and contingency. What is self-so is necessary: it cannot be other than it is. What is self-so is free: nothing outside itself makes it as it is. What is self-so is contingent: there is no explanation for why it is as it is.

It is "knowledge" and "purpose" which ultimately distort human experience, obscuring the richness and intrinsic value of whatever is, of the self-so—even though, as we shall see, the occurrence of knowledge and purpose are themselves also self-so. For the failure to appreciate the depth of unknowability and purposelessness of all events brings about a kind of extrinsic viewing of one self-so event by another. Guo calls what is then cognized a kind of "trace" of the original self-so event. This trace has a particular knowable character, is describable and explainable, is a determinate fact to be known. All facts to be known, understood, or done something about are these traces of self-so events. The self-so events themselves, in their original occurrence, and in relation to themselves rather than to one another, are simply a darkness, a blank to cognition. But because all self-so events have a certain self-affirming value to themselves, fitting perfectly into their situation and affirming whatever is affirmable from their own perspective, each such event also embodies its own value. Trace-cognition reframes this once-only intrinsic value-to-itself as a kind of definitive value applicable to all times and places. It then tries to impose the trace of one self-so event on another self-so event. Rather than transferring the value of the first self-so event onto the second, however, this merely destroys the value of the second self-so event. For the real value came from the self-so-ness of

the event itself, not what this self-so looked like when translated into the definitive self-other relations of trace cognition. This is the cause of all the world's problems. Left to itself, untroubled by attempts to impose models, purposes, and values on it, whatever happens is right. For there is no other meaning to the word "right."

Nonetheless, since ultimately even knowledge and purpose are real only because they are themselves self-so events, purposive activities and human purposes are not themselves a problem, if viewed in a certain way. Anything can be viewed, qua self-so event, as something that happens ultimately for no reason, for no purpose, beyond the understanding or intention of any participant. To the extent that "having a purpose" is also a mental or existential event, it too is purposeless and inexplicable. This applies also to political institutions and human culture. Viewed *sub species incogitatus*, all of these are self-so, and all of them are thus just as they should be.

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Chapter 18
The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove

Yuet Keung Lo

1 Myth or History?

The epithet *Zhulin qixian* 竹林七賢 (The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove)[1] conjures up a romantic image for the modern student of sinology since it refers to a small group of men from the Wei 魏 (220–265 CE) and Western Jin 西晋

[1]According to LI Daoyuan's 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shujing zhu* 水經注 (Commentary on the Water Classic), the Seven Worthies reputedly gathered at JI Kang's 嵇康 (223–262) country estate in the foothills of the Taihang 太行 range, some 8 km southeast of Bailu shan 白鹿山 (White Deer Mountain). And GUO Yuansheng's 郭緣生 (fl. fifth century) *Shu zheng ji* 述征記 (Account of Conquests), cited by Li, says that there was a bamboo grove in JI Kang's estate (Li 1990: 180–181). This, I believe, is the basis of the standard English translation of the epithet *Zhulin qixian* as the Seven Worthies/Sages of the Bamboo Grove. But "the bamboo grove" should be understood collectively because there must have been more than one bamboo grove in the district of Shanyang 山陽, and the Seven Worthies' outings need not be confined to JI Kang's relatively small estate. It should be noted that Guo was also quoted twice in the tenth-century encyclopedia *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (The Emperor's Mirror from the Taiping Era) to have said in the *Shu zheng ji* that JI Kang's former estate was located about seven kilometers northeast of the prefecture city of Shanyang (i.e., Zhuolu cheng 濁鹿城). Guo reported that the estate had then become a wild field full of bamboos, and for that reason local people claimed that it used to be JI Kang's estate (Ouyang 1983: 1144; Li 1992: 1006, 4403). The two locations given for JI Kang's estate by LI Daoyuan and GUO Yuansheng do not match. XIANG Xiu向秀, one of the Seven Worthies, had actually stayed in Shanyang with JI Kang and his close friend LÜ An 呂安 (d. 262). While on his trip back to Shanyang after his two friends were executed, he composed his "Si jiu fu" 思舊賦 ("Rhapsody on Recalling Old Friends") upon hearing somebody playing the flute near JI Kang's home. In the rhapsody he mentioned he had passed by the corner of the city (*chengyu* 城隅) on his visit to the former home of his two old friends (Knechtges 1996: 163). Thus Guo's account is probably more reliable in this regard because JI Kang's estate should be located inside the prefecture city.

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periods (265–317 CE) who are believed to have pursued a lifestyle modeled on the Daoist philosophy of spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) current in third-century China. Some of them flouted Confucian social norms and propriety, and openly scorned the government whose legitimacy was grounded on alleged Confucian moral authority. In approximate chronological order, the Seven Worthies are: SHAN Tao 山濤 (205–283), RUAN Ji 阮籍 (210–263), XIANG Xiu 向秀 (d. 275–280), LIU Ling 劉伶 (ca. 221–300), JI Kang, RUAN Xian 阮咸 (nephew of RUAN Ji, died after 274), and WANG Rong 王戎 (233–305). Beginning as early as the Eastern Jin period (317–420), this epithet appeared frequently in works of various genres, including historical writings and biographies. The earliest of these still known to us today may be DAI Kui's 戴逵 (d. 395) eponymous work *Zhulin qixian lun* 竹林七賢論 (*On the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove*). Other works such as SUN Sheng's 孫盛 (ca. 302–374) *Weishi chunqiu* 魏氏春秋 (*The Spring and Autumn Annals of the Wei Dynasty*) apparently use only the term *qixian* (seven worthies) instead to refer to the same group of people. In Sun's work, the seven men were said to be "good friends; they wandered in bamboo groves and were called the Seven Worthies" (相與友善，遊於竹林，號為七賢) (Chen 1977: 21.606).[2] It should be emphasized that Sun was widely recognized as a reliable historian of integrity in his time and many of his contemporaneous readers actually lived at the same time with the Seven Worthies. Given the chronological proximity of the earliest records to the time of the Seven Worthies, we have good reason to trust the historicity of these would-be legendary figures. In fact, their individual reputations were well known, albeit to different extents, in their own time and their collective identity was never in question in premodern China.

While the Seven Worthies were all historical figures, modern scholars began to question their collective identity, presumably because they were not mentioned in writings from Wei and Western Jin times. It is not clear whether the Seven Worthies were actually identified by that epithet in their own time. In a 1945 article the influential Chinese historian CHEN Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) argued that the epithet was coined in the early years of the Eastern Jin under the influence of the Buddhist hermeneutic strategy of *geyi* 格義 (idea-matching) which, he alleged, gained wide currency at the end of the Western Jin (Chen 1982: 181). Chen drew a distinction between the epithet and the term *qixian* and believed that the latter, which was inspired by a similar notion of seven alleged recluses (*zuozhe* 作者) mentioned in the *Analects* (14.37), was coined first.[3] However, he did not specify

Van Gulik believed, on the authority of John C. Ferguson, that *zhulin* is a "geographical term" but this claim, in the best of my knowledge, cannot be substantiated. The term in all extant sources where it appears is only a regular noun (van Gulik 1941: 1, n.1).

[2]All translations are mine unless stated otherwise after the original source.

[3]In fact, Chen was not the first scholar to see the alleged connection between the seven *zuozhe* in the *Analects* and the Seven Worthies. YANG Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) and WANG Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1590) had pointed it out centuries ago (Yang 1993: 1270–559; Wang 1983: 1279–14).

the time of the coinage. Chen's reasoning is that during the final years of the Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220) it was common to identify groups of individuals of remarkable character such as generosity with epithets prefixed with a numeral as in *sanjun* 三君 (three lords) *bachu* 八廚 (eight treasure houses), and *baji* 八及 (eight paragons). Chen claimed that the modifier *zhulin* (bamboo grove) was actually the Chinese translation of the Buddhist term *venu* or *veluvana*, which refers to the place where Śakyamuni preached in India, and that it was combined with *qixian* only in the Eastern Jin. Consequently the epithet *Zhulin qixian* was invented and appeared in writings in the second half of the fourth century (Chen 1973: 334).

Convincing as it may seem, Chen's accretional explanation of the epithet is speculative. It is critically important to distinguish two separate issues here. It is one thing to say that JI Kang, RUAN Ji, and their five associates frequented bamboo groves and drank wine together in the third century and quite another to say that the group was contemporaneously identified as *Zhulin qixian*. Even if the epithet did not come into currency until the second half of the fourth century, that does not necessarily mean there was not a group of seven like-minded men who had socialized frequently in bamboo groves decades earlier. It is important to note that Chen does not dispute the fact that the Seven Worthies *had* a collective identity and socialized together in their own time. What he tries to establish is that the epithet itself was coined only decades later. The evidence he offers to support his accretional theory, however, is not tenable. The epithet *Zhulin qixian* need not be a composite accretion over time. Rather, it might well have been the popularity of the term in the Western Jin that gave rise to the shorthand *qixian*.

A similar case in point is *balong* 八龍 (eight dragons). The Eastern Han Confucian scholar-official XUN Shu 荀淑 (83–149) had eight sons famous for their various talents and they were contemporaneously nicknamed *Xunshi balong* 荀氏八龍 (The Eight Dragons of the Xun Family) or, for short, *balong* (Fan 1973: 62.2049). The Seven Worthies—or at least some of them—were well-known charismatic figures in Wei-Jin times who enjoyed drinking and conversing in bamboo groves; they could conveniently be dubbed "Seven Worthies" without any possible confusion, and the contemporaneous modifier *zhulin* could be omitted. SHEN Yue's 沈約 (441–513) discourse on the Seven Worthies called *Qixian lun* 七賢論 illustrates this situation perfectly (Ouyang 1983: 671–72). In Shen's time, *Zhulin qixian* was virtually a household word. Clearly, it makes better sense to take *qixian* in Shen's title as an abbreviation for *Zhulin qixian* rather than treat it as the original form of the epithet. Epithets are informal expressions, after all, and as such, they could easily give birth to abbreviated forms, something which in fact attests to the popularity of the people thus identified.

Recently WANG Baoxuan has attempted to defend the traditional Wei-Jin origin of the nickname by raising the possibility that the legend of the Seven Worthies actually originated with WANG Rong, the youngest member of the group, who informed others about the group's routine activities (Wang 2002: 334–38). Wang's argument is convincing. While it in itself is not indisputable, it certainly bolsters our aforementioned thesis.

As to the Buddhist hermeneutic, *geyi*, it is not clear how widespread that practice was in the Jin period. Victor Mair has recently argued that its currency was in fact very limited (Chan and Lo 2010).[4] Therefore, the possible influence of *geyi* on the formation of the epithet must be considered either speculative or at least hard to ascertain. According to Huijiao's 慧皎 (497–554) *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (*Lives of Eminent Monks*), SUN Chuo 孫綽 (314–371) compared seven monks from India (*tianzhu* 天竺) to the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove in his *Dao xian lun* 道賢論 (*On Men of the Dharma and the Worthies*) (Tang 1992: 24). It seems logical that Sun's comparison of the Indian monks to the Seven Worthies must have been predicated on the Seven Worthies' epithet already being in circulation. This also coincides with the appearance of DAI Kui's *Zhulin qixian lun*. While CHEN Yinke's speculation was apparently inspired by SUN Chuo's account, he in fact reversed the direction of the Sino-Indian influence.

In Western scholarship skepticism about the actual existence of the Seven Worthies as a group and their social gatherings is perhaps best represented by Donald Holzman, a leading expert on Wei-Jin literature. While acknowledging the widespread popularity of the Seven Worthies in the late fourth century (and he cited as evidence a tomb dating from around that time in which they are depicted in bas-relief on the brick tomb walls), he questioned their historicity because they were mentioned "only in works that date from at least a century after the fact" (Holzman 1976: 81; 2003: 847).[5] Holzman writes, "It is possible, perhaps probable, that the stories told about the meetings of the seven men are apocryphal, fabricated when the northern aristocrats exiled in the south, were attempting to reimagine the history of their ancestors so that they could find in them models who lived the kind of life they themselves would like to live a century later when the intellectual atmosphere had changed enormously" (2003: 847). Holzman's skepticism is more radical than CHEN Yinke's; it challenges the very existence of the group in the third century.

According to DONG Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636), LU Ji 陸機 (262–303) wrote a work titled *Zhulin qixian lun* (Dong 1999: 72). This claim was corroborated by two other sources from around the sixteenth century. If Lu did compose such a work, the group identity of the Seven Worthies would be assured. Yet, Lu's work is not mentioned in any work prior to the sixteenth century. While no extant source from the third century expressly refers to the Seven Worthies collectively, Holzman may have overlooked one early fourth-century work that seems to address his positivistic doubt. LIU Yiqing's 劉義慶 (403–445) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account*

[4]Recently, CHEN Yinke's theory of *geyi* influence has been challenged for a variety of reasons in Chinese scholarship. See, for instance, Wang 2001: 91–99; Cao and Shen 2003: 101–2, and Lin 2005: 31–38.

[5]Han Geping holds a similar view, but he further distinguishes two different images of the Seven Worthies popular among different gentry classes in the early fourth century. See Han 2003: 2.25–31. The two tomb murals discovered in Nanjing, dated to the fifth century, which depict the Seven Worthies and a famed recluse from a much earlier time who excelled in playing the zither may also betray a projected image of the seven men in the minds of the gentry class in early medieval China (Spiro 1990)

of Tales of the World) explicitly states that the Seven Worthies often gathered in bamboo groves and drank to their hearts' content, and as a result they were so nicknamed. For Holzman's requirements, this is much too late a source, but in the annotation to this anecdote, LIU Xiaobiao 劉孝標 (462–521) cites the historical work *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin*) without the name of its author. It also notes, "Their [the Seven Worthies'] reputation swept over the realm *at the time* and is admired to the present day" (于時風譽扇于海內，至于今詠之) (Yu 1983: 727; Mather 1976: 371). Evidently, the historian in question meant to show that the Seven Worthies were an identifiable group known to socialize together in their own time, and Liu's citation of his work no doubt was intended to drive this point home as well. The *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin* could be written by SUN Sheng or YU Yi 庾翼 (305–45).[6] In either case, it should be a reliable source. As mentioned earlier, Sun was a respectable historian. His *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin*, in particular, was contemporaneously praised for its "honest language and upright principle" (詞直而理正). Sun refused to compromise his writing in the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin*, which was deemed disgraceful to the power that be, and would even risk his life and his family in order to preserve accurate history.[7] On the other hand, YU Yi was a high-ranking Eastern Jin military official whose fraternal aunt was empress to Emperor Ming 明 (r. 323–325) of Jin. Since Yu was born the same year the youngest member of the group WANG Rong died, his report should be factual rather than legendary, otherwise it would not have been credible to his contemporaries, many of whom lived in the time of the Seven Worthies but survived them into the Eastern Jin.[8] Fundamentally, it is hard to imagine why YU Yi as a historian would find it profitable or necessary to elaborate a well-known fact into a legend in the first place. Moreover, given his blood connection to the Jin royal family, it seems less likely that Yu would fabricate or perpetuate the celebrity of the Seven Worthies whose leader, JI Kang, was executed for his open contempt of the Jin regime.

The popularity of the Seven Worthies might have given rise to fictional legends about themselves in later generations (Yu 1983: 637, 272; Mather 1976: 323, 140), but it would be difficult to identify and ascertain them today. In all likelihood, facts and fictions were intertwined. While Holzman's speculation about the Eastern

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[6]SUN Sheng's *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin* was mentioned in his biography in the *Jin shu* 晉書 (*History of the Jin Dynasty*) and also listed in the bibliographical sections in the official histories until the Song dynasty (960–1279). YU Yi's work of the same title was not mentioned anywhere until its excerpts were included in Tao Zongyi's 陶宗儀 (1329– ca.1412) massive collectanea *Shuo fu* 郛 (Territories of Narrative Accounts). The citation in question is included in Tang Qiu's 湯球 (1804–1881) redaction of Sun Sheng's *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin* but not found in Tao's excerpts.

[7]Fang et al. 1982: 82.2148.

[8]WANG Xiaoyi and CAO Daoheng and SHEN Yucheng made a similar point about the veritableness of SUN Sheng's account of the Seven Worthies in his *Spring and Autumn Annals of the Wei Dynasty*. See Wang 2001: 99 and Cao and Shen 2003: 102.

Jin invention of the Seven Worthies myth is sensible, whether or not they were fabricated models of a lost lifestyle that emigrant aristocrats craved to recover needs textual substantiation. However, portrait-murals from the fifth century that depict the Seven Worthies and the legendary recluse RONG Qiqi 榮啓期 may offer pictorial evidence for the re-imagination of the seven men as exemplars of aristocratic values of the time (Spiro 1990). In reality, the Seven Worthies became, ironically, a benchmark for moral condemnation of the irresponsible behavior rampant in the humiliated empire in exile. DAI Kui criticized even people in the Western Jin for mimicking the wanton behavior of the Seven Worthies without actually cultivating their authentic spirit (Fang et al. 1982: 94.2458; Holzman 1976: 135; Spiro 1990: 92–93). This means that the perceptions of the Seven Worthies in the Eastern Jin, at least, were not entirely fabricated.

The better explanation for the plethora of Eastern Jin sources on the Seven Worthies lies in this: The epithet appears in numerous histories of the Western Jin by Eastern Jin dynasty authors, who invariably blame the Seven Worthies for the downfall of the short-lived regime, which fell apart as non-Chinese nomadic peoples forced the Chinese to flee to the South. Nonetheless, the Seven Worthies inspired many imitators of their unorthodox behavior in the Eastern Jin—a fact that also suggests they were celebrated as a group early on as the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Jin* claimed—and so they were deemed to have had a pernicious influence on literati behavior, which made them easy scapegoats for historians who were trying to understand the dynastic downfall. On the other hand, the scarcity of sources from the Wei and Western Jin may simply be an unfortunate caprice of history; contemporaneous records of the Seven Worthies may have been lost as the regime fled south. In fact, most of the Eastern Jin sources on the Worthies had disappeared when China was reunified in the sixth century. Today, the remnants of relevant Eastern Jin sources survive only in fragmentary form.

2 A Political Refuge

The Seven Worthies did not gain their reputation simply by drinking wine and socializing in bamboo groves. Nor did it derive from their behavior flouting Confucian social conventions. Only JI Kang, RUAN Ji, and RUAN Xian were specifically known for openly ridiculing or defying Confucian ritual practices, and they were publicly condemned or executed. Scholars have agreed that the Seven Worthies began to socialize frequently during the Jiaping 嘉平 reign (249–253) of Wei. It is no coincidence that SIMA Yi 司馬懿 (179–251) staged a successful coup d'état in the early months of 249 and removed the imperial CAO family from power. The new reign title marked a new political era. In 265 SIMA Yi's grandson Yan 炎 finally usurped the Wei throne and established the Jin dynasty. The timing of the Seven Worthies assuming a collective identity should not be overlooked. Nor should the locale of their famous outings.

We know that the Seven Worthies lived in the Shanyang District 山陽邑of Henei Prefecture 河内郡 (modern-day Xiuwu 修武, Henan Province). Interestingly enough, none of them was originally from Shanyang and only SHAN Tao and XIANG Xiu came from Henei Prefecture. The question, then, would be: What made them come to settle in Shanyang?

It turns out that in 220 Emperor Xian 獻 of Han (r. 189–220) abdicated the throne to CAO Pi 曹丕 (187–226), who then became Emperor Wen 文 of Wei. The abdication was modeled upon the transfer of power from sage king Yao to Shun in the Confucian political tradition—a historical precedent and political ideal sanctioned by Han dynasty Confucians. CAO Pi capitalized on this cultural model to gain political advantage when he announced in his inaugural edict that "he would respectfully serve the Lord of Shanyang in the fashion Shun had honored Yao" (敬事山陽公，如舜之宗堯). In reality, he enfeoffed the dethroned Han emperor with the Shanyang District of 10,000 households where, as Lord Shanyang, he could continue to enjoy virtually all of his quondam political privileges, if on a lesser scale; this plan included maintaining the dynastic bureaucracy of the bygone Han dynasty. In other words, a miniature "Han dynasty," as it were, was kept in place within the new polity as a humane and sagely gesture from the new emperor. Further, the enfeoffment continued for four generations until the Yongjia 永嘉 reign (307) of Emperor Huai 懷 of Jin, ten years before the collapse of the Western Jin dynasty. It is not clear how much political autonomy the Shanyang fiefdom actually enjoyed, but it must have held tremendous symbolic meaning for those who remained loyal to Han sovereignty or who despised the Wei, or its equally hypocritical successors, the Sima family, as illegitimate.

In 254 when SIMA Yi's son Shi 師 deposed CAO Fang 曹芳 and replaced him with CAO Mao 髦, the deposition clearly revealed the Sima family's dynastic ambitions. In the autumn of that year, RUAN Ji wrote a rhapsody titled "Shouyang shan fu" 首陽山賦. Mount Shouyang was the mountain where Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊 sought reclusion in protest of the uprising of King Wu of Zhou 周武王, who had overthrown his former lord, King Zhou of Shang 商紂. Mount Shouyang also housed the tomb of CAO Pi—the first Wei emperor. In his rhapsody RUAN Ji condemned the followers of King Wu as traitors and lamented his personal loneliness in the dangerous present. He declared, "Even if I might really fulfill my true self without leaving the world, I should still rather soar up to the heights where I can be my own companion!" (信可實而弗離兮，寧高舉而自儐) (Chen 2006: 26). Evidently, RUAN Ji was looking for an egress. As Holzman put it, "The *fu* is thus built around the fundamental tension between a political and social life on the one hand, and a solitary, eremitic life in loyal retirement on the other" (Holzman 1976: 24). Similarly, JI Kang lamented over fragrant plants that had been plucked from a towering mountain to be arranged as decoration in the courtyards of the nobles and in the parks of the emperor. To him, these plants were like recluses coming out of hiding for political service; they should never have left their native places in the high cliffs (Ouyang 1983: 1388). In his "Nan zhai wu jixiong shesheng lun" 難宅無吉凶攝生論 ("Refutation of 'Residence Has Neither Auspicious nor Harmful

Effect on the Maintenance of Life'"), JI Kang also declared that he "would not enter a dangerous state, but steer clear of the troubles of disorderly government" (Dai 1962: 277). This advice actually comes from Confucius himself (*Analects* 8.13).

Extant evidence suggests that even though XIANG Xiu and SHAN Tao were natives of Shanyang, it was actually JI Kang whose charisma drew like-minded people and admirers to him in the district.[9] The group identity of the Seven Worthies took shape over time, but it was JI Kang who made it possible. After JI Kang was executed, XIANG Xiu left Shanyang to assume an official post in the capital Luoyang. When Emperor Wen of Jin met him, he asked, "I heard that you had the ambition of retiring [as a recluse] to Mount Ji.[10] What are you doing here?" (Yu 1983: 79; Mather 1976: 40). Regardless of the veracity of this rumor, the decision of XIANG Xiu and his associates to take residence in Shanyang was evidently perceived as a political act. Perhaps it is closer to truth to say the leaders of the group—JI Kang and RUAN Ji, who drew people to them in Shanyang—were indeed making a political statement in their choice of domicile.[11] Their followers, who had various connections with their spiritual icons, might not have gathered there for the same reason. Human motives are just too complicated and capricious to be reduced to one single constant consideration.

Although CHEN Yinke's theory of Indian influence in the invention of the Seven Worthies' name cannot be substantiated, the inspiration behind his speculation is worth considering. While Shanyang (or specifically, the bamboo groves in the district) was not other-worldly like the bamboo grove where the Buddha had reputedly taught in India, it seems to have represented to the Seven Worthies a sort of spiritual enclave away from the chaos and hypocrisy of the political intrigues in the imperial court. My close reckoning of the number of people recognized to be recluses in primary sources of various sorts from and about the Sanguo 三國 (Three Kingdoms) period (220–265) yields a total of forty-two known recluses, of whom twenty-nine resided in the state of Wei, nine in Shu 蜀 and four in Wu 吳. People in the state of Wei seemed more inclined to stay out of current affairs and the government, and this situation continued when the Sima family usurped the throne and established the Jin dynasty. The flight of the Seven Worthies to Shanyang makes perfect sense in light of this peculiar historical and political circumstance.

[9]JI Kang's handsome appearance and endearing manner is highlighted in contemporary accounts (Henricks 1976: 177–182), and his charisma is most powerfully attested to by the fact that thousands of students at the Imperial Academy pleaded for his release when he was falsely accused and sentenced to death. In fact, ZHONG Hui 鍾會 (225–264), the very person who fabricated the charge, was also fascinated by JI Kang and took the trouble of paying him a visit. When he was refused a friendly welcome, the insult prompted ZHONG Hui to frame JI Kang for a deadly political offense.

[10]Legend has it that the two famous recluses XU You 許由 and CHAO Fu 巢父 stayed away from politics and hid themselves in Mount Ji.

[11]Perhaps JI Kang's intense interest in arguing that one's residence could influence the maintenance of one's life can be better understood in light of such a peculiar political circumstance.

3 Varied Affinities, Talents, and Fortunes

Whether or not *Zhulin qixian* was a contemporaneous epithet, it does not represent self-identification. The Seven Worthies themselves may not have shared much in their worldviews other than a nonconformist attitude toward hypocrisy and illegitimate rulership. In fact, even this alleged nonconformism might not have been uniformly valued among the group's members (He 1966: 152–157). The Seven Worthies each maintained their own intimate friendships within the group rather than being a close-knit circle as a whole. For instance, RUAN Ji, RUAN Xian, and WANG Rong formed a dear relationship, while RUAN Ji, SHAN Tao, JI Kang, and XIANG Xiu were particularly close. Their common delight in getting drunk made RUAN Ji and LIU Ling a unique pair in the group. Strictly speaking, only XIANG Xiu can be legitimately considered a philosopher, while JI Kang and RUAN Ji are primarily poets and artists with a philosophical bent.[12] Artistically, both were accomplished zither players and RUAN Ji was good at whistling as well. Only JI Kang and RUAN Ji have left us with a sizable corpus of writing. XIANG Xiu wrote a philosophical commentary on the Daoist classic, the *Zhuangzi*, which unfortunately only survives in fragmentary form. The remaining four, SHAN Tao, LIU Ling, RUAN Xian, and WANG Rong, bequeathed to us nothing significant either in size or in quality.

4 RUAN Ji

RUAN Ji was a lonely man. Among later generations, he was primarily celebrated for his poetry, in which he poured out his soul, often in notoriously cryptic fashion. The image of a mythical bird in bondage struggling to soar to celestial heights recurs in his poetry. He aspired to the kind of free and easy wandering glorified in the *Zhuangzi*. To his contemporaries, RUAN Ji was some sort of self-styled social pariah who challenged Confucian norms of propriety. Unlike his enigmatic poetry, his impudence was barefaced. Although his social transgressions were real and unseemly, his intention in perpetrating these acts was usually to create a sort of camouflage for himself or simply to express disgust for hypocritical ritualism.

While RUAN Ji felt he was poorly understood, he was not shy to proclaim his aspirations and reveal his predicament to the world. In a letter to FU Yi 伏義, who tried to persuade him to take up a political career and bring peace to the world and glory to himself, RUAN Ji replied,

> Now, when a man sets up his aims in life, he should spread his net wide to catch the world; why would he complacently march into the net himself? It is he who should set himself up as an example, to serve as a frame of reference to the vulgar crowd: why would he idly cut down his own natural gifts to conform to a label they give him? And if by chance the

[12] JI Kang merits an entry in Fabrizio Pregadio's *Encyclopedia of Taoism* (2008: 1085–86), but RUAN Ji and XIANG Xiu do not presumably because the former did not contribute much to Daoist philosophy while the latter is little known in the West.

> moment is not propitious to his designs, if the secret springs of destiny do not conform, then he must let his spirit leap up, he must raise high his will and leave the world far behind as he transcends it. (Chen 2006: 70, Holzman 1976: 86)
>
> 夫人之立節也, 將舒網以籠世, 豈樽樽以入罔?方開模以範俗, 何暇毀質以適檢?若良運未協, 神機無准, 則騰精抗志, 邈世高超。

This is perhaps the most faithful self-portrait he could have offered. RUAN Ji was pulled in two directions—Confucian social engagement and Daoist self-transcendence—which he perceived to be incompatible. The tension between them became a refrain in virtually all of his extant writings as it strained his agonized intellectual life. In *vita activa*, RUAN Ji could not and did not commit himself to any social or political career because he found nothing that could bring him self-fulfillment. In *vita contemplativa*, he seemed too overwhelmed by his emotions to speculate much philosophically. His creative energies were devoted to his poetry.

No doubt RUAN Ji was well versed in the Confucian and Daoist classics; his essays on music ("Yue lun" 樂論, On Music), the *Book of Changes* ("Tong Yi lun" 通易論, Comprehending the *Book of Changes*), and the *Zhuangzi* ("Da Zhuang lun" 達莊論, Understanding the *Zhuangzi*) demonstrate that he was a faithful student of the two doctrines, but showed little philosophical originality. For instance, he insisted upon the interrelation of music and morality as well as on the importance of music to the functioning of the universe—a traditional view that JI Kang would later demolish. Even his famed "Daren xiansheng zhuan" 大人先生傳 (Biography of Master Great Man), in which he attempts to realize spiritual self-transcendence in greatness, permanence, freedom, and purity, remains exclusively indebted to the *Zhuangzi*. Nevertheless, there are signs that RUAN Ji attempted to integrate Confucianism and Daoism in some fashion though he did not formulate a sustained and coherent philosophy. In his "Tong Lao lun" 通老論 (Comprehending the *Laozi*), he identified the Dao 道 in the *Laozi* with the Beginning (*yuan* 元) in the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals) and the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) in the *Book of Changes* (Chen 2006: 159). Similarly, he claimed in his "Kongzi lei" 孔子誄 (Eulogy to Confucius) that Confucius, in writing his *Spring and Autumn Annals*, "investigated the formless to understand the inchoate Origin and traced the basis of transformations to the Great Beginning" (考混元於無形, 本造化於太初) (Chen 2006: 195). Due to the fragmentary nature of these intriguing texts, it is not clear if and how RUAN Ji achieved a philosophical syncretism, but his attempts to synthesize Confucianism and Daoism are obvious. Further, the works he studied—the *Book of Changes*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Laozi*—would become the standard texts for the later *Xuanxue* 玄學 (dark learning) philosophers in early medieval China.

5 JI Kang

Of the Seven Worthies, JI Kang left us with the largest corpus of writings, in ten scrolls. Besides his sixty-six poems, the rest of his works are primarily discursive and argumentative in nature; at times they include an autobiographical or personal

twist. They cover a range of diverse topics but do not form a unified philosophy. In particular, Ji Kang also compiled an anthology of biographies of recluses called the *Shengxian gaoshi zhuan* 聖賢高士傳 (*Biographies of Recluses Who Are Like Sages and Worthies*).

Ji Kang wrote on self-interest, the nature of learning, how to nourish life, and even the influence of residence on longevity, but his lasting contribution to Wei-Jin *xuanxue* and Chinese philosophy in general is his analysis of the nature of sound and music.[13] "Qin fu" (琴賦, Rhapsody on the Zither) is actually an essay on sound and music with a case study of the "virtue of the zither" (*qinde* 琴德). Like his numerous other essays, it was polemical in nature. Ji Kang complained that people of the traditional Confucian view were ignorant about music (*yue* 樂) because they did not seem to understand the nature of sound (*sheng* 聲) and patterned notes (*yin* 音). They believed that the spirit of sound and patterned notes could express sorrow and music's purpose was to transform people by moving them to tears. Consequently, they failed to understand the reality of ritual music (Dai 1962: 84). To Ji Kang, the "virtue of the zither" is profound and quiet (*yinyin* 愔愔)[14] and unfathomable (*buke ce* 不可測). It is not limited to its power to stimulate sorrow. Indeed, its "essence" (*ti* 體) or ultimate nature is "clear" (*qing* 清)—it is not predisposed to the expression of any particular emotion. Hence, its "heart" (*xin* 心) or innermost character is "far-reaching" (*yuan* 遠)—the amplitude of its inspiration is all-encompassing.[15] Thus, the virtue of the zither is a power that can move its diverse audience in different ways because it "embraces a harmonious equilibrium and can govern all things" (*zong zhonghe yi tongwu* 總中和以統物) (Dai 1962: 109).

The ideas of *zhong* (equilibrium) and *he* (harmony) actually come from the Confucian text *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean), where it says, "Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, it is called equilibrium and when these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony" (Chan 1969: 98). But Ji Kang's concept of *zhonghe* is a unitary one, and it is not about feelings and emotions. This is a conscious reworking of Confucian moral philosophy into a new amoral Daoistic metaphysics. *Zhonghe* now denotes the primordial equilibrium and the all-inclusive character of sound and patterned

[13] Ji Kang's philosophy of music and life nourishment gained considerable currency in the Eastern Jin. See Yu 1983: 211 and Mather 1976:102–103. For a good discussion of Ji Kang's thought, see Holzman 1957: 3–79 and Hou et al. 1958: 123–196.

[14] Li Zhouhan 李周翰 (fl. early eighth century) glosses *yinyin* as "profound and quiet" (*shenjing* 深靜) (Li et al. 1987: 339).

[15] Li Zhouhan says that because the virtue of the zither is essentially clear and far-reaching, "its beauty is ineffable" (難說其美) (Li et al. 1987: 339). It should be pointed out that Wang Rong, who claimed to have associated with Ji Kang for twenty years, also adopted his notions of *qing* (pure) and *yuan* (far-reaching) in evaluating people's reasoning skills (Yu 1983: 22; Mather 1976: 11). And this means the currency of the two notions must have gained considerable currency even in Ji Kang's time.

notes. Sometimes, he simply calls it summation or harmony (*he*).[16] This unitary transformation of the Confucian ideas of equilibrium and harmony might owe its inspiration to *Laozi* 42 where it says the myriad things "carry yin on their back and embrace yang, equilibrizing [their] vital forces into harmony" (沖氣以為和). As the ontology of the myriad things models upon the Dao, the latter's nature, according to the *Laozi*, should also be a harmonious equilibrium of yin and yang forces. With specific regard to his understanding of musical sound, however, JI Kang evidently borrowed the concept of *tianlai* 天籟 (heavenly piping) in the "Qiwulun" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. Heavenly piping refers to the totality of the sounds emitted through a multitude of hollows and cavities in a forest when the wind blows. It is, as it were, a natural symphony without a conductor since in the *Zhuangzi* the wind is understood as a self-generated phenomenon. JI Kang himself alludes to the concept of *tianlai* twice in his "Sheng wu ai le lun" (聲無哀樂論, Musical Sounds Have in it Neither Joy nor Sorrow), but his peculiar focus is on the uniqueness of each of the myriad sounds that constitute heavenly piping rather than the holistic symphony itself.

Ontologically, then, the virtue of the zither is actually an unusual kind of profound silence, which is full of hidden potentialities. Precisely due to its ontological state, the virtue of the zither encapsulates the totality of sounds and patterned notes in an unmoved equilibrium and inchoate harmony, which diffuse in multifarious musical particularities and move audiences of diverse personalities and sentiments. In his "Musical Sounds Have in it Neither Joy nor Sorrow" JI Kang explicitly calls this primordial sound "soundless music" (*wusheng zhi yue* 無聲之樂) (Dai 1962: 223). This is what the *Laozi* (ch. 14) calls the "sound that is barely audible" (*ting zhi bu wen yue xi* 聽之不聞曰希). Because it is soundless, it can embrace all sounds. The "Qiwulun" chapter also mentions a zither virtuoso ZHAO Wen 昭文 who, by not playing the zither, captures the completeness of music in soundlessness. JI Kang's notion of soundless music no doubt was inspired by the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*.

Before sound is manifested in its musical particularities, it exists in a soundless equilibrium and inchoate summation. Soundless sound, then, has an independent existence unencumbered by musical instruments or artificial meters. Even when actualized into audible physicalities, patterned notes and sounds, as JI Kang argues, are similar to smell, they are neither good nor bad in themselves and impervious to circumstantial influences. Sounds and patterned notes then have their ontological autonomy. This is what JI Kang means by their self-existence (*ziran* 自然). In his

[16]The idea of *he* (harmony) is also mentioned in the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 chapter (On Equalizing Things) of the *Zhuangzi*. No later than the Eastern Jin, WANG Xun 王珣 (350–401) already adopted JI Kang's characterization of the zither. In his "Qin zan" 琴贊 (In Praise of the Zither), he said, "Silent is the zither of harmony, which is perfect and profound. Like a clear breeze, it passes through the woods, clear and crisp" (穆穆和琴，至至愔愔，如彼清風，泠焉經林) (Ouyang 1983: 784).

"Qin zan" (琴贊, In Praise of the Zither), he actually says that "the character [of the zither] is in harmony with its self-existence" (*qing he ziran* 情和自然) (Dai 1962: 328).[17]

Ji Kang's ontology of sound has an important bearing on politics. His essay begins with a rebuttal of the Confucian view of music, to which Ruan Ji subscribed, that operates on the symbiotic relationship between the musical quality of a state and the moral and social condition of its people. This fundamental belief in the transformative power of music operates on the mundane and physical level—music is generated by and gives expression to human feelings and emotions, which are stimulated by the quality of political governance. Ji Kang raises the discussion to the metaphysical level and argues that "the human heart and sound are clearly two separate entities" (心之與聲, 明為二物) (Dai 1962: 214), and the latter has no role in changing or reflecting the former. In other words, music has its intrinsic artistic value and serves no political or moral purpose. This could easily be considered a veiled criticism of the Sima usurpers. But given Ji Kang's straightforward character, his writing should perhaps not be understood in such a roundabout way. In fact, his essay on sound concludes with an extended explication of the relationship between music and governance. Clearly, Ji Kang himself exhibited an interest in the genuine nature of rites and music and entertained his own theory of the socio-political expressions of music. Just as his philosophical analysis of sound regresses from the mundane to the ontological level, his concern with socio-political expressions of music extricates itself from the relative merits of contemporary governments and harks back to an age of great peace (*taiping* 太平) when the Great Way (*da dao* 大道) prevailed. Hence, he said,

> One who speaks of transforming customs and bettering traditions must come after a period of decay and decline. The kings of antiquity, carrying on the work of Heaven in bringing order to things, necessarily venerated teachings that were simple and easy, and controlled by means of the government of non-action. The ruler was tranquil above and the ministers submissive below. Mysteriously things transformed and in hidden ways interfused. Heaven and man were united in peace .... All forms of life were secure and at ease, 'bringing to themselves many blessings.' Silently they followed the Way, cherishing loyalty and holding righteousness dear, unaware of the reason why things were so. Filled with a harmonious heart on the inside, they manifested a harmonious manner on the out. So they sang to express their wills and danced to make known their feelings. After that they refined it [music] with stylish ornament, and displayed it in the "Airs" and the "Elegant"; they spread it by means of the eight kinds of sound, and responded to it with Great Harmony .... Respectfully things loved one another ....Of the flourishing periods of the Great Way, none was greater

[17] Dai Mingyang emends 情 as 清. I follow the traditional reading. And insofar as the ontological virtue of the zither is concerned, Ji Kang's view found sympathetic ears no later than the Eastern Jin. In his "Qin zan" 琴讚 (In Praise of the Zither), Yin Zhongkan 殷仲堪 (?–399) said, "With the five sounds not being manifest, who can articulate the Great Patterned Note? The Perfect Man is good at expression and he articulates it eloquently in the elegant zither. The sound is produced by movement and its aspirations are profound by virtue of its vacuity" (五聲不彰, 孰表大音? 至人善寄, 暢之雅琴。聲由動發, 趣以虚深). (Ouyang 1983: 784).

> than this; of the accomplishments of the Great Peace, none was more illustrious Therefore, [Confucius] said: "For improving customs and bettering traditions, nothing is better than music." However, the essence of music is such that the mind is the central thing. And therefore, music that has no sound is the father and mother of the people. (Dai 1962: 221–23; Henricks 1983: 101–3)
>
> 夫言移風易俗者, 必承衰弊之後也。古之王者, 承天理物, 必崇簡易之教, 御無爲之治。君靜於上, 臣順於下, 玄化潛通, 天人交泰......群生安逸, 自求多福, 默然從道, 懷忠抱義而不覺其所以然也。和心足於內, 和氣見於外, 故歌以叙志, 儛以宣情, 然後文之以采章, 照之以風雅, 播之以八音, 感之以太和......穆然相愛......大道之隆, 莫盛於此。太平之業, 莫顯於此。故曰移風易俗, 莫善於樂。樂之爲體, 以心爲主, 故無聲之樂, 民之父母也。

Clearly, JI Kang was not so much interested in criticizing the imperium as in offering a model of exemplary government that transforms its people through non-action so that they "silently follow the Way, cherishing loyalty and holding righteousness dear, unaware of the reason why things are so." This ideal government naturally reminds us of the utopia depicted in the *Laozi* (ch. 80). In this prelapsarian state of human co-existence, social and political hierarchy was nominal as things transformed themselves mysteriously and became interfused in hidden ways. People were inspired them to love one another with a harmonious heart without knowing the reason. Just as the *Laozi* (ch. 27) says, "Good conduct leaves no traces" (善行無轍跡) so that people who were naturally transformed would think that they did all the good of their own accord (*Laozi* ch. 17). Hence, they "sang to express their wills and danced to make known their feelings." This is JI Kang's theory of rites and music (*yue* 樂), and music to him could only be the music of joy (*le* 樂) because his Daoistic utopia would bring forth nothing but an absolute joy that transcends the relative merits of the joy made possible by any government guided by Confucian ideology. That is why the music of his utopia is soundless. To JI Kang, then, the contemporary government, be it under the Sima usurpers or their predecessors, the royal Wei house, was nothing but a degeneration of the Daoistic utopia he envisioned after the manner of the *Laozi*, particularly chapter 18, where it says, "When the Great Way is abandoned, humaneness and righteousness come into being" (大道廢, 有仁義). It is precisely this Great Way that JI Kang wanted to see flourish once again in his own era.

6 XIANG Xiu

At age 20, XIANG Xiu composed a work called *Ru dao lun* 儒道論 (Discourse on Confucianism and Daoism), but he later destroyed it, and so no trace of it survives. Some have argued that Xiang abandoned his work after the dramatic coup d'état in 249, but his exact motive remains unclear (Wang 2002: 372). Given what we can infer about his mature thinking from the fragments of his *Zhuangzi* commentary, I suspect that XIANG Xiu in his youth probably recognized, as would his contemporaries, the distinctness of the two doctrines and argued for their

incompatibility.[18] XIANG Xiu composed a commentary on the *Book of Changes*, only a few fragments of which survive today, but they tell us nothing about his philosophy. He also wrote a commentary on the *Zhuangzi* called the *Zhuangzi yinjie* 莊子隱解 (Hidden Meanings) in 20 scrolls, which actually covered only 27 of the 33 chapters of the received version we have today (chapters 13, 15, 21, 27, 28, 30 were not included) (Wang 2002: 398–99). *Hidden Meanings* was later incorporated into GUO Xiang's 郭象 (d. 312) classic commentary on the *Zhuangzi*. Its incorporation had led many scholars to suspect Guo of plagiarism, but the evidence seems inconclusive (Hou et al. 1958: 208–17; Wang 2002: 392–407; Robinet 1983: 73, n. 1). XIANG Xiu's *Hidden Meanings*, again, was no longer extant, but its citations survive in GUO Xiang's commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, ZHANG Zhan's 張湛 (fl. 350–400) commentary on the *Liezi* 列子, LU Deming's 陸德明 (ca. 550–630) *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 (Annotations on the Classics), and ZHANG Junfang's 張君房 (fl. early eleventh century) Daoist encyclopedia, *Yunji qiqian* 雲笈七籤 (Bamboo Book Box from the Clouds in Seven Sections). Though limited in scope, these citations clearly show that XIANG Xiu was acutely aware of the tension between worldly affairs and spiritual autonomy. In all likelihood, this tension must have been the central thesis in his earlier work on Confucianism and Daoism.

We know that XIANG Xiu was a scholarly type, so his insights on the tension between mundane affairs and self-autonomy prior to the 249 coup d'état must have been purely philosophical in nature. As is clear from his commentary on the *Zhuangzi*, in his mature thinking XIANG Xiu attempted to harmonize this doctrinal tension. And the 249 incidence of realpolitik might have inspired him because we know that he composed his commentary in Shanyang (Yu 1983: 206; Mather 1976: 100). As argued earlier, both RUAN Ji and JI Kang had attempted to synthesize Confucianism and Daoism in their own ways. It makes perfect sense that the philosopher XIANG Xiu also contributed to this historic project. *Hidden Meanings* indeed represents his new understanding of Daoist philosophy. It should be noted that JI Kang and his good friend LÜ An 吕安 ridiculed XIANG Xiu when he revealed his plan to write a commentary on the *Zhuangzi*. To them, the meaning of the Daoist classic was self-evident, its focus was the striving for spiritual autonomy—a view that XIANG Xiu himself probably also espoused in his youthful *Ru dao lun*. But Xiang's new understanding explains why JI Kang and LÜ An were both surprised upon reading *Hidden Meanings* and instantly became convinced that the spirit of Zhuangzi himself had been revived (Yu 1983: 206; Mather 1976: 100).

In his mature thinking, XIANG Xiu saw the tension between Confucianism and Daoism resulting from the two doctrines being cast in an incompatible dualism. Once that dualism was resolved, he thought, the tension would evaporate

[18]In his essay "Nan Yang sheng lun" 難養生論 (Refutation of "Essay on Nourishing Life") that attempted to refute JI Kang's "Yang sheng lun," XIANG Xiu seems to see Confucianism and Daoism as incompatible, and thus it might be a work from his young age. Perhaps it is no coincidence that it only survives in JI Kang's corpus as a refutation of his essay (Dai 1962: 161–67).

accordingly. Rather than transcending dualistic values in principle, he affirmed bipolar opposites by equalizing them in terms of their expedient values vis-à-vis existential circumstances. This idea of equalization no doubt owed its inspiration to the "Qiwulun" chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. Thus, for example, action and nonaction, nobility and humbleness, shame and honor, and the like are not irreconcilable options that one must choose between in accordance with conventional values; instead they each have their own practical and expedient worth in a particular situation. Consequently, dualistic distinctions can be "forgotten." Observable behavior in the light of traditional wisdom and social mores, then, is superficial and subject to dualistic appraisals, therefore, it cannot be a reliable yardstick by which to measure the true worth of a person.

From the perspective of individual agency, XIANG Xiu would say that the agent should not predispose himself to any particular course of action as this will compel him to commit to the fallacy of dualistic evaluations. Rather, he should not be invariably for or against anything (*wudi wumo* 無適無莫) (Yang 1985: 76). He should emulate the metaphoric model provided in the *Zhuangzi* and conduct himself like a boat without mooring (*fanran wu suo xi* 汎然無所係) (Yang 1985: 76). If he succeeds, he would be able to move smoothly wherever he goes because he has equalized his circumstances in a nondifferential fashion (無往不平，混然一之) (Yang 1985: 73). There are no longer any obstacles as he rises above duality, and so he is called the Perfect Man (*zhiren* 至人). In practice, the "Perfect Man's actions compare to heaven and his stillness resembles earth; his movements flow like water and his depth is silent like an abyss. Whether it is abysmal silence or flowing water, the movement of heaven or the stillness of earth, they are all identical in being attuned with themselves in their nonaction" (至人其動也天，其静也地，其行也水流，其湛也淵嘿，淵嘿之與水流，天行之與地止，其於不為而自然，一也) (Yang 1985: 72).

Based on surviving fragments of XIANG Xiu's *Hidden Meanings*, he seems particularly keen on the art of social and political engagement in his reading of the *Zhuangzi*. He sees the world as a shifting matrix of unpredictable circumstances and such a worldview calls for the cultivation of the art of existential engagement. And XIANG Xiu's Perfect Man exemplifies this art. In explicating his fundamental philosophy of social and political engagement, XIANG Xiu was particularly enamored of the river analogy. Instead of swimming in the river or even with the river, his swimmer, in totally merging with the river, actually lets it, as it were, "swim" him. He is swimming and yet not swimming. He advances and retreats in the same natural undulating rhythm as the current; he simply empties his mind to yield to the direction he is carried and follow the emergent changes ahead (*wuxin yi suibian* 無心以隨變) (Yang 1985: 75). The swimmer literally goes with the flow, or rather, lets the flow carry him. In this peculiar sense, his self is absent in trailing the changes, and the rigidity of conventional duality is rendered irrelevant and impractical.

The absence of self does not mean a lack of acquired intelligence or knowledge (*zhi* 知); on the contrary, our predicament in the real world, according to XIANG

Xiu, originates in the *application* of our acquired intelligence or knowledge (Jiang 1996: 179). Hence, the loss of self refers to letting go at once of ego and ego-based intelligence when the Perfect Man is engaged in an existential circumstance. Intelligence negates itself and becomes intelligence-less. Insofar as intelligence remains "his," it must be transformed until everything "his" is annihilated. Only then can he follow the shifting changes of the circumstances so that nothing can stand in his way or harm him anymore. In terms of the swimming analogy, he is swimming without swimming. This is called "mindless self-existence." Circumstances are only coincidences that are incidental to the ultimate goal of the Perfect Man; they may as well not come into play at all.

Yet, the Perfect Man is no passivist as one might expect from the *Zhuangzi*—and this is the original interpretation of XIANG Xiu—he is a man of action, who "responds to the changes in the world and acts in a timely manner" (*ying shibian er shi dong* 應世變而時動) (Yang 1985: 76). "He yields to the changes and flows along with the waves of worldly affairs, and as long as his engagement does not fail to adapt, the agency does not reside in his self" (變化頹靡，世事波流，無往不因，則為之非我) (Yang 1985: 76). The elimination of self or ego (*wo* 我) is critical here; it makes equalization of dualistic values possible. With the self's absence, circumstances shape up of themselves and events unfold of their own accord.

The Perfect Man's art of negotiating in the real world is informed by an innovative metaphysics. Ontologically, XIANG Xiu distinguishes two realms of existence. He opines that "Things of form and color are equal in nature; therefore, they cannot be superior to one another. What is indeed superior to all is self-existence alone" (同是形色之物耳，未足以相先也。以相先者，唯自然也) (Yang 1985: 49). In realistic terms, dualistic values or norms belong to the realm of form and color; they are thus equal in nature and cannot be used as the invariable criterion to evaluate and judge human behavior. Such a criterion must come from another realm that is ontologically disparate. It is called *ziran* or self-existence (自然, literally, self so).

Ontologically, *ziran* is an independent state of being and thus axiologically, its value is absolute and not amenable to dualistic characterization or limitations. This is a new interpretation of *ziran* and it represents an innovative Daoist metaphysics, the profound moral implications of which would contribute to what came to be known as *xuanxue* in the Wei-Jin period. With regard to self and agency, XIANG Xiu argues,

> My birth is not what I caused into being; it is merely birth giving rise to itself. Can that which gives rise to birth be a thing in itself? [No, it is not a thing,] therefore, it does not [actually] give birth. My transformation is not a transformation caused by a thing; it is merely transformation taking place itself. Can that which transforms be a thing in itself? [No,] if that which gives birth to things was also subject to birth and that which transforms things was also subject to transformation, then how are they different from things themselves? It is clear that only that which is not subject to birth or transformation can be the root of birth and transformation. (Yang 1985: 4)

> 吾之生也，非吾之所生，則生自生耳。生生者豈有物哉? [無物也,][19] 故不生也。吾之化也, 非物之所化, 則化自化耳。化化者豈有物哉?無物也, 故不化焉。若使生物者亦生, 化物者亦化, 則與物俱化, 亦奚異於物。明夫不生不化者,然後能為生化之本也。

No doubt this is a sophisticated cosmology. It attempts to unseat the cosmic creator because such a creator implies a fixed system of values that inevitably engenders dualistic evaluation and condemnation. To replace it, XIANG Xiu's new cosmology argues for the existence of a dynamic process of creation and transformation which itself transcends genesis and change. It has the power of genesis in itself and draws unending energy from itself. In other words, it cannot be captured by duality. By virtue of its self-sustaining power, this ceaseless dynamic process or the "root of birth and transformation" is called *ziran*, and as it transcends duality, it is dubbed *tian* 天 (heaven), which embraces all without distinction.

The Perfect Man attains the completeness of heaven, abides in the state of self-existence and "mindlessness," and surrenders himself in conformity to the ultimate pattern (得全乎天者，自然無心，委順至理) (Yang 1985: 51). In surrendering himself to all-embracing heaven, the Perfect Man gets rid of his self and becomes "mindless," and follows its dictates. In the real world, he mingles with the crowd and follows its motion while constantly deepening his own roots and letting his ultimate capacity rest in tranquility (雖進退同羣而常深根寧極也) (Yang 1985: 75). In other words, he nurtures and protects his inner core where his ultimate capacity (*ji* 極) is hidden, and remains unperturbed by the changing circumstances around him. Indeed, he acts like a boat without mooring, adrift in the ocean of unpredictable vicissitudes. Action and non-action are now "equalized," so are movement and stillness. As XIANG Xiu put it, "Whether the water flows or stills, whether the whale swims around or the dragon leaps upward, there always remains a self-composure [in them] that resembles an abyss and never loses its stillness and quietude" (水流之與止，鯢旋之與龍躍，常淵然自若，未始失其靜默也) (Yang 1985: 75). This is how the Perfect Man tries to "hide himself in heaven," identifying himself with the "root of birth and transformation" that is subject neither to birth nor transformation.

One cannot but notice that a critical feature of XIANG Xiu's metaphysics is change and transformation (*bianhua* 變化)—an element that was missing in the fledging attempts of RUAN Ji and JI Kang to synthesize Daoism and Confucianism. This perhaps explains his motivation to compose a commentary on the *Book of Changes*, a Confucian classic that teaches us how to embrace, manage, and take advantage of changes in our lives. He was looking for the best way to deal with the caprices of the world. As he plainly says, "The Perfect Man has only one sole purpose: to respond to the changes of the world and move in a timely manner" (夫至人一也，然應世變而時動) (Yang 1985: 76). In this regard, it is hard to imagine that the political turmoil and ruthless murders in the imperial court during the Wei-Jin transition played no role in shaping his mature philosophy. XIANG Xiu averred

[19] The three graphs 無物也 are missing in ZHANG Zhan's quotation but without them the text does not make sense here. Moreover, in the next segment on transformation in the commentary is structurally parallel to this segment on birth, the same three graphs are present. Thus, the missing graphs should not be added back.

that "Dao is made manifest in affairs; Dao without affairs is just the same as the female without the male" (道以事彰，有道而無事，猶有雌無雄耳) (Yang 1985: 71). It is no coincidence that he identified Dao as female, which was the traditional view of Daoism as Ji Kang and Lü An believed, but more important, he emphasized that Dao is expressed in the affairs of the mundane world and so is meaningful, relevant, and viable, much the way humanity would not be possible with only the female sex. Philosophically, the male sex would be Confucian doctrine. In effect, then, Xiang Xiu advocated the integration of Daoism and Confucianism; with the caveat that privileging one over the other is to fall victim to the trap of duality. As mentioned earlier, Xiang Xiu advised that our minds should not be invariably bent for or against any particular course of action in navigating in the real world. This is actually truncated Confucian advice with a new syncretic twist. The Master's advice for the gentleman was: "not [to be] invariably for or against anything, but to stand on the side of what is right or appropriate (*yi* 義)." (*Analects* 4.10) Xiang Xiu apparently ignores the Confucian emphasis on rightness because he probably sees it as captive to stabilized dualistic norms. After all, his Perfect Man "merges into a mysterious holism with [everything from] the ten thousand quarters" (*xuantong wanfang* 玄同萬方) (Yang 1985: 73). The world is like a river and the perfect swimmer goes along with every and all variables that may come into a relationship with him. He would not go against the flow by insisting on swimming in a particular manner. In defining *Zhuangzi*'s notion of *xiaoyao* 逍遙 (freedom), Xiang Xiu said, "Different creatures, each in its own way, are equally dependent on something outside of themselves, and only after they obtain what they depend on are they free. It is the sage alone who unites mystically with other creatures and complies with the Great Transformation, who can be independent and continually unimpeded. How can it be that he himself alone is unimpeded?" (物之芸芸，同資有待，得其所待，然後逍遥耳。唯聖人與物冥而循大變，為能無待而常通，豈獨自通而已) (Yu 1983: 220; Mather 1976: 109).[20] Therefore, choosing reclusion rather than serving at court as Zhuangzi had is seen as far from commendable in the treacherous new age. This line of thought suggests why Xiang Xiu left Shanyang to take up a post in the imperial court soon after Ji Kang was executed. After all, he believed that "as long as [the Perfect Man] responds mindlessly, rising and falling with changes vis-à-vis worldly expectations, he is adequate to be the master of things, yielding to timeliness without end" (苟無心而應感，則與變升降，以世為量，然後足為物主，而順時無極耳) (Yang 1985: 72).

7 Conclusion

The Seven Worthies were not all philosophers, or even devoted Daoists for that matter. Nor were the philosophies of Ruan Ji, Ji Kang and Xiang Xiu consistent with one another. Still, they did share a common interest in synthesizing

[20]The last line is my translation.

Confucianism and Daoism, an interest that reflected the intellectual ethos of the third century and contributed to the further development of this philosophical project. On the other hand, the philosophies of the trio seem to be accurate reflections of their authors. To the end of his life, RUAN Ji probably continued to search for his life's direction; his mythical bird never did take flight, nor did his interest in the pursuit of physical immortality materialize. Thus his thought lacks a distinct character and coherence in spite of its elements of clearly Confucian moral and political values and the Daoist imaginary of self-transcendence. In reality, we are told that he often came to a dead end in his leisurely strolls whereupon he would cry bitterly (Fang et al. 1982: 49.1361). RUAN Ji was a lost man; he could perhaps only find his true self in his poetry, zither-playing, and whistling. JI Kang had a clear vision of life and he lived in its light. Tragically, he also lost his life for the same reason. JI Kang's intellectual interests were eclectic; while his views on a variety of disparate issues are clear and articulate, they are not unified. Such is also the case with his attempted syncretism of the Confucian and Daoist views on sound and music. He was simply not interested in building a philosophical system. Like RUAN Ji, he also found his spiritual freedom and joy in the zither. His argument for the autonomy of music was by no means a coincidence.

Unlike RUAN Ji and JI Kang who tried to their best to stay aloof from politics, the mature XIANG Xiu embraced it whole-heartedly. He managed to hang onto his precious life in a treacherous age, and he seems to have maneuvered between nonconformism and expedient pragmatism without a fixed principle. The "hidden meanings" he discovered in the *Zhuangzi* helped him amoralize the circumstances he confronted in life, to transvalue accepted standards and norms into dualistic values and equalize them in the river of nondifferentiation. This was all possible because he had successfully shed his self and merged with everything that came his way. So intriguing to his contemporaries was XIANG Xiu's innovative syncretism of the Daoist doctrine of spiritual freedom and Confucian sociopolitical engagement that it not only aroused a sense of "self-transcendence" in them and helped them "understand what lies beyond seeing and hearing for the first time" (無不超然......始了視聽之表) (Yu 1983: 206; Mather 1976: 100), but it also provided a new approach to thinkers in later times by which to philosophize about Confucianism and Daoism.[21] In particular, its influence on GUO Xiang's Dark Learning cannot be overemphasized. As we can see today, XIANG Xiu's *Hidden Meanings* and GUO Xiang's commentary on the *Zhuangzi* overlap to a great extent, but some dissimilarities are evident. In his analysis of birth and transformation, XIANG Xiu seems to have subscribed to cosmogonical thinking, which is also apparent in what RUAN Ji tried to formulate in his "Comprehending the *Laozi*" and "Eulogy to Confucius" even though the two Worthies' philosophical outlooks would be decidedly different. In contrast, GUO Xiang was solely interested in arguing for the autogeny of the universe and the myriad things therein instead

[21]XIE Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433) already noted that XIANG Xiu "integrated Confucianism and Daoism into one holism" (以儒道為壹) (Shi 1970: 20.9B).

of identifying their origin. As analyzed above, XIANG Xiu was keenly concerned with the practical issue of change vis-à-vis unpredictable circumstances; personal survival looms large in his new metaphysics. GUO Xiang, on the other hand, offered a sustained discourse on the seamless integration of "inner-sageliness" (*neisheng* 內聖) and "outer kingliness" (*waiwang* 外王)—a new political philosophy grounded in and nurtured by Daoist self-cultivation. The acute sense of personal exigency is missing in GUO Xiang's dual emphasis on human affairs and self-transcendence; instead, a passionate yearning for aesthetic elegance and carefree spontaneity is pervasive. Unfortunately, the meager excerpts of XIANG Xiu's *Hidden Meanings* do not allow us to fully appreciate how it might differ from GUO Xiang's commentary.

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Chapter 19
The *Liezi* and Daoism

June Won Seo

1 Introduction: The Man and the Text

Not much is known about Liezi 列子 or about the philosophy of the book bearing this name. Was he simply a legendary figure or a real person? Is the received text the genuine one written during the Warring States period, a fourth century forgery, or a mixture of both? Is the *Liezi* an unstructured conglomerate of various archaic and intriguing stories, or a systematically edited anthology of tales through which the editor argues his own view to the world of beings? Although Daoist tradition made it a rule to rank Liezi as the second major Daoist master, after Laozi 老子 and before Zhuangzi 莊子, just what Liezi or the text traditionally attributed to him was intended to present has not been made clear by either Chinese or Western scholarship. Apart from the bibliographic chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書 that confirms the early existence of "the *Liezi* in eight *pian*," all other early sources are silent about the text. During the era of "profound learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學), when the study of Daoist philosophy flourished, it was the *Daodejing* 道德經, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Zhouyi* 周易 that scholars were ardently reading and quoting; these works became known as the Three Mysteries (*sanxuan* 三玄); but the *Liezi* was at this point nowhere to be seen. The text called *Liezi*, now extant, suddenly appeared around 400 CE when the fashion for profound learning seemed to have expired. This text certainly was not written by the historical Liezi nor was this the book BAN Gu 班固 had seen and made note of. Still it is this "recovered" *Liezi* to which all later reputation attaches; the sporadic early references to the man Liezi make him merely one of many historically uncertain persons in Daoist literature.

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Should we care to speculate, Liezi may have been the appellation of a man famous for unique talents whom the early tradition made a hero by attaching to his name fictitious erudition and skills. Or he may have been a completely invented figure that resulted from the integration of various fantastic tales. Apart from the self-serving references to Liezi found only in the extant *Liezi* text, pre-Han sources mentioning the name Liezi are mystical, too brief, or inconsistent; in the end, the absence of reliable historical sources must dissuade us from regarding him as a real person. Stories involving Liezi appear sporadically only in historically irresponsible references such as the *Zhuangzi*, leaving aside the fact that mentions of the *Liezi* text are nowhere to be found. Given the fact that the *Shiji* 史記, which makes no mention of Liezi or any writings attributable to him, delivers a biography of Laozi, another historically problematic Daoist master, based on uncertain evidence, we should surmise that Liezi must not have been evaluated as an important name by SIMA Qian 司馬遷. No other person in early China had the same surname as Liezi, and Liezi's given name, Yukou 禦寇, a phrase occurring frequently in the *Zhouyi* and meaning "obstructing bandits," is also unusual. The legendary tradition remembers him as a man who rides the wind and enjoys long journeys. The few anecdotes about him more often describe him as a student rather than a master, receiving teachings from other legendary figures such as Huqiuzilin 壺丘子林 and Bohunmoren 伯昏無人. Still, he sometimes appears as a teacher elegantly conveying the secrets of "the world of beings" to his disciples. The anecdotes and mentions of Liezi largely reflect Daoist positions and concerns, but there are some exceptions. As, for instance, when Liezi, depicted as a married man living with his wife, refuses to accept the grain offered by a ruler, or when a political theorist in the *Zhanguoce* 戰國策 teaches one of Confucius' important axioms, "rectifying names" (*zhengming* 正名), but argues that it is Liezi's teaching; these suggest that Liezi is allied more closely with Confucianism than Daoism.

The extant *Liezi*, which was argued to have been "found" by a family called Zhang 張, is highly likely a fourth-century forgery concocted by a person within this family. Scholars have discovered that about one-fifths of its contents are copied from various texts as late as the third century CE, and this fact can be taken to suggest that most of the remaining unidentified parts were also borrowed from sources no longer extant. Despite undeniable evidence in the *Hanshu* of the earlier existence of a *Liezi* text, until this forgery was made public, nobody seems to have seen any such text. There is a bibliographical report by Han scholar LIU Xiang 劉向 (77 BCE-6CE), who had been commissioned with the retrieval of then-lost classical texts. The format of Liu's report on the editorial work done on the *Liezi* is identical to other surviving reports he prepared, including his enumeration of the exact fragments he incorporated in the final edition. Its contents generally correspond to what the extant *Liezi* contains, apart from some of the errata which Liu's report says had been eliminated; these, significantly, remain in the extant text. This report, therefore, seems to confirm that among the destroyed texts LIU Xiang restored is the extant *Liezi*, and thus it would have also been seen by Ban Gu; however is available only as an attachment to the extant *Liezi*. A.C. Graham prefers accepting the authenticity of the report on the basis that the *Bielu*, the collection of Liu's bibliographical reports,

was available until Tang times, and thus would have prevented any forgery. But Graham's thinking about the report cannot be considered conclusive since he did not carefully consider whether the *Bielu* included all of Liu's reports or whether Liu had ever prepared a report on the *Liezi.* ZHANG Zhan, who made the extant *Liezi* public, attaching his own annotation, supplied a preface explaining how his family came by this work, then available to no one else. According to Zhang, his grandfather Yi copied the *Liezi* from the library of the Wang 王 family. Zhang's claims for the early provenance of his *Liezi* are based on its association with the WANG Can 王燦 (177–217 CE) library that grew out of CAI Yong's 蔡邕 (132–192 CE) collection, which Cai had donated to Wang. Zhang further argues that a few people in his grandfather's maternal family had also enjoyed reading the text, and thus had seen the original copy. However, as Graham points out, by the time ZHANG Zhan made the text public, the people he listed as having seen the original copy would not have been alive to confirm the transmission of the text (Graham 1961: 146).

The authorship and the date of the extant *Liezi* began to generate heated disputes within academic circles as early as the Tang 唐 dynasty, and these remain unsolved to the present day. LIU Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819 CE) of the Tang first pointed out the chronological inconsistencies between the lifetimes of those who were said to have met Liezi in the text and the actual existence of Liezi claimed in the attached report ascribed to LIU Xiang (*Liezi jishi*: 287). Since then, disputes over the date and the authenticity of the text have completely overshadowed and sidelined discussions of its philosophy. Chinese scholars from the late Qing onwards have generally believed that the text came into being shortly before the time when ZHANG Zhan introduced it to the intellects of the age, at around 400 CE (*Liezi jishi*: 299–305, 308–311). The evidence they rely on is the text's inclusion of passages copied from considerably later originals. Expanding on the reasons discussed by earlier authors, MA Xulun 馬敍倫 laid out 20 reasons to reject the authenticity of the *Liezi* (*Liezi jishi*: 301–305). The reasons he advanced illustrate the chronological inconsistency among the references to Liezi in the extant *Liezi* and those in various other texts, as well as a number of passages copied from a wide range of texts; finally he concludes that the entire work, including LIU Xiang's report, was composed by someone inside WANG Bi's family. Although Ma's 20 reasons were soon challenged by Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 (*Liezi jishi*: 305–306), the Chinese critics maintained until the end of the 1980s that the extant *Liezi* is of a late date, and most parts of the text are dated to the time of Zhang Zhan. However, more recently some Chinese critics have argued for the complete authenticity of the text though their reasoning is far less convincing than the evidence leveled against it.

The inclusion of stories and passages in the *Liezi* that also occur in other archaic sources should leave readers unclear as to their original source. ZHANG Zhan in his preface admits the existence of parallel passages by alluding to texts such as the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, perhaps in fact the original sources for those stories and passages, but he argues that those parallels are quotes *from* the *Liezi*. Zhang makes a clear distinction, when mentioning such passages, between works written before and after 400 BCE, and he assumes that a parallel in a work traditionally dated before 400 BCE is quoted in the *Liezi*, and that the *Liezi* is the

primary source of the parallel passages that appear in texts later than 400 BCE (Graham 1961: 185). Nearly a hundred passages have been established as shared between the *Liezi* and other texts, most of which predate the *Yiwenzhi* but some of which originated as late as the third century CE. The list of passages worked out by Graham shows that the parallels are most frequently found in the *Zhuangzi* (27 times) and to a lesser extent in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (10 times) and the *Huainanzi* (17 times) (Graham 1961: 148–151).

Against some partial pieces of evidence raised to argue a late date for the text, Graham's exploration of the work's linguistic manner deserves the greatest attention, for he attempts to establish a stylistic unity that would provide evidence for a single date of composition. Graham explores the phraseological differences in parallel passages from the *Liezi* and the other texts where they appear to determine which text is original. No single shared passage turns out to have its origin in the *Liezi*. In some cases the compiler appears to have used more than one original, or integrated separate passages to constitute a single section (Graham 1961: 152–153). Another possibility he raises is that in some cases both the passage in the *Liezi* and in the other text may have been copied from an unknown original. He therefore concludes that the phraseological manner of the *Liezi* consistently reflects a post-Han linguistic style and that the text was forged within ZHANG Zhan's family during the fourth century.

Although Graham's research convincingly established the linguistic unity of the extant text and therefore assigns a single date for its compilation, he was not convinced that the contents of the *Liezi* signify a philosophical theory that is unique and homogenous throughout. He finds the "Yang Zhu" 楊朱 chapter heterogeneous for a non-linguistic reasons. Graham refers to LIU Xiang's report, which comments on the peculiarity of the "Yang Zhu" chapter compared to other parts of the text. Convinced of the authenticity of the attached report, he voices his suspicion that the compiler of the text made this chapter deliberately heterogeneous so that his forgery corresponded precisely to the argument in the report. Graham further argues that the "Liming" 力命 and "Yang Zhu" chapters demonstrate obvious contradictions. Yet Graham recognizes the stylistic features of the entire text surviving in the "Yang Zhu" chapter—more precisely, he says, "The difference is in the theme, thought and mood." Graham consequently asserts as follows: (1) the text as a whole corresponds to philosophical Daoism; (2) the "Yang Zhu" chapter consists of texts borrowed from heterogeneous sources; (3) the entire text, including the "Yang Zhu" chapter, is stylistically homogeneous; (4) therefore, a single compiler adopted heterogeneous sources to create this version of the *Liezi* (Graham 1961: 190–193).

Some partial accounts of the philosophy of the *Liezi* are also worth introducing here. XU Kangsheng 許抗生, in his pioneering work on the history of profound learning in the Wei-Jin period, *Wei-Jin Xuanxue shi* 魏晋玄學史, argues that the main characteristic of profound learning can be distinguished from the Warring States period's original context. While the philosophical fashion of the Warring States period focused on the issues concerning cosmogony, or *yuanqilun* 原氣論, that of profound learning did more on ontology, or *bentilun* 本體論 (Xu 1989). From the sources available to us, it is clear that texts predating profound learning, such as

the *Huainanzi*, are concerned with the primordial beginning of the world. Although Xu's verdict on the *Liezi* is that it falls under *yuanqilun*, the old-style philosophical concern, he understands the extant *Liezi*, compiled during the profound learning era, as reflecting a second wave of interest in cosmogony. Accordingly, he became convinced that the *Liezi* was a forgery. Nonetheless, a few years later, he used the same basis to argue for the authenticity of the extant text (Xu 1992: 345–346). Girardot (1983) provides a discrete investigation into the Chinese concept of "chaos" of the primordial energy, based on texts mainly dating before the Later Han and including the *Leizi*. Although Girardot does not particularly mean to argue that the entire *Liezi* text belonged to the Former Han or earlier, his study rather relates the *Liezi* to traditions older than profound learning.

2 The Structure of the *Liezi*

In spite of its intricate backgrounds and the doubts, from the contents of the text it must be made clear that the *Liezi* attempts to draw an ontological schema consisting of the creator (transcendental being) and the creatures (present beings) and to explicate how the dualistic world system works to result in the present world, notably centering around the inevitably disparate ontological qualities of the two realms through theoretical expositions and episodes which illustrate the *reality*. What have to be further identified is the fact that the extant *Liezi* has been edited, also written or rendered, by someone skillful not only at handling metaphysical discourses, certainly better than any other disputers of his time, but also exercising literary technique to deploy pre-existing stories and passages in the way suitable to signify his own metaphysical arguments; which however for a long time have gone unnoticed. Consequently, its own philosophical position, if not ontological, to be discerned in a strict sense from any preceding works of similar interests, even the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Huainazi* and all the following commentaries to them, is reflected all over the text. And therefore the passages dispatched from other books, including those mentioned above, now congregate here to signify a new philosophical system without any need to retain the significances in their original context. What is noteworthy is that especially the materials taken from previous ages are made in the *Liezi* to testify to the validity of the new ontological theory; and thus the compiler evaluates the scholarship of the past, selects passages to partake, and gives them clearer meanings to construct an unprecedented philosophical presentation. It is this manner that the compiler decides on to argue his own vision to the world and to have his book take part in the philosophical arena of his time; and therefore despite the repeat of old materials, the *Liezi* is not to be taken as a rehash repeating old philosophy *per se*, nor to be deemed simply as a corpus that collects multiple stories then available only because they have Daoist significances.

Averring that the *Liezi* was compiled by a single editor who had clear intentions to establish an ontological theory, and that the text reflects the scholarly fashion of profound learning, the analysis conducted in my doctoral thesis rejects the

arguments made by both Graham and Xu Kangsheng. First, the "Yang Zhu" chapter, which Graham finds heterogeneous, should in fact be understood as the logical extension of the philosophical points discussed in other parts of the text; these can be explained in light of the ontological schema that arguably functions as the main topic in the *Liezi*. ZHANG Zhan's remarks at the head of the "Yang Zhu" chapter rather clearly demonstrate that hedonism is an attitude held by those who understand the main thesis of the text. Second, a philosophical analysis of the text clearly confirms the text to be a fourth-century forgery, based on its concern with ontological rather than cosmogonic issues. Both Xu and Girardot find cosmogonical accounts in the *Liezi* that parallel those in earlier texts such as the *Huainanzi* and the *Qianzuodu* 乾鑿度. The inclusion of these accounts, however, hardly classifies the entire text as a book on cosmogony, nor does the received text stop at expounding on the significance of Confusion as the primordial energy; rather, the main thrust of these passages are their illustration of how Confusion works in the ontological schema currently operating and affects the lives of the myriad beings now existing in this world.

Philosophical issues in the *Liezi* are mostly expressed indirectly, hidden under interesting stories, through the compiler's literary skill. Juxtaposition of stories with a common theme is his main method, and establishing groups of different underlying themes is the key to the work's philosophy. In reading the *Liezi*, therefore, one must view the text as an edited whole, not as individual fragments; this will allow the reader to grasp its true arguments, which otherwise will be obscured. The compiler positions the abstruse and theoretical passages that establish his own ontological theory at the beginning of the text, precisely the first five passages of the first chapter, and then discusses the sub-issues by arranging anecdotes and allegories, each of which signifies a specific philosophical theme. The theoretical grounds explored in the beginning section outline an ontological schema based in the distinction between the transcendental and the present realms, as well as the ontological conditions that determine each realm. This ontological theory subsequently develops into detailed discussions (the anecdotes and allegories) that lay out more detailed ontological issues. Each thematic group is easily intelligible since stories with the same topic are arrayed next to each other; still, at the same time, themes are also hidden in stories that may appear philosophically irrelevant or may seem to illuminate something other than what the compiler actually intends to imply. This equivocal aspect of the text demands that readers of the *Liezi* bring to the text a keen literary sense with which to grasp the philosophical meaning of each passage. My own analysis of the *Liezi* is as follows:

Theoretical Exposition

1. The transcendental being as the producer (Ch. 1: 1)
2. The ontological conditions of the transcendental being (Ch. 1: 2)
3. Knowability and unknowability as ontological conditions (Ch. 1: 3)
4. The ontological conditions and their operation in practice (Ch. 1: 4)
5. Metaphysical reality and the unreal (Ch. 1: 5)

Thematic Arrangement of Stories

1. The destiny of present beings (Ch. 1: 6–8)
2. The ontological equivalence among present beings (Ch. 2: 18–21)
3. Dreams and actual life (Ch. 3: 1–9, Ch. 5: 9–16)
4. Confusion—utopia and the goal of study (Ch. 2: 1–17)
5. The voidness of human knowledge (Ch. 1: 9–13, Ch. 5: 1–8)
6. The study of the human masters (Ch. 4)
7. Fate and acceptance (Ch. 6)
8. Hedonism (Ch. 7)
9. Anecdotes about Liezi and miscellanies (Ch. 8)

A few things must be noted at the outset. The breakdown above divides passages according to thematic structure of the text and this sometimes does not match the commonly accepted YANG Bojun edition (cf. Seo 2000: Appendix). Although passage divisions are not of concern in the present discussion, proper separation of passages and finding the topic of each passage are the only routes to the compiler's intentions. For example, the story about the monumental friendship of Guanyiwu 管夷吾 and Poshuya 鮑叔牙, and the remark following that explains their friendship as destiny rather than a voluntary endeavor (the compiler's real point), are traditionally deemed separate passages but they appear to have been a single passage. The last chapter, "Shuofu" 説符, is not included in my philosophical analysis since it does not seem to have been designed to contribute to the main philosophical arguments. This chapter includes more accounts of Liezi than any other chapter but they are irrelevant to the main thrust of the text. The compiler seems to have felt obliged to collect every available Liezi passage, but those in this chapter are not useful for what he means to discuss. In addition, the chapter contains a number of miscellaneous stories that are not necessarily relevant; these may have been favorites of the compiler of the forgery—thus they are included, but bear no close association to the work's ontological theory.

3 The Theoretical Exposition

Appearing at the end of the era of profound learning, the *Liezi* belatedly participates in that era's major philosophical dispute: "What is the reason for the existence of the myriad things in the phenomenal world?" The metaphysical theory established by early profound learning scholars such as HE Yan and WANG Bi determines that Non-being, distinct and separate from all the myriad things, is the source of all things' existence in the world. Although their argument is based on a correct reading of metaphysical discourses already provided in earlier Warring States texts, especially the *Daodejing*, their incomplete logic, which attributed the existence of the world to a body that is equivalent to nothing came under serious criticism from later thinkers such as PEI Wei 裵頠 and GUO Xiang 郭象. These two advocated a single ontological realm; they rejected a dichotomous worldview and ruled out

any function for ultimate Non-being. The division of the two camps is determined by the one's inclination to accept or reject the theory that Non-being (*wu* 無) is the fundamental *reality*, transcendental being, and prime proprietor of the myriad things of the world. Chinese scholars adopted the terms "theory of valuing Non-being" (*guiwulun* 貴無論) and "theory of exalting beings" (*chungyoulun* 崇有論) to characterize the position of each camp. The arguments of the two sides are clearly presented in the well-accepted commentaries to the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, by WANG Bi and GUO Xiang, respectively. But for the appearance of the *Liezi*, the dispute on the source of existence in the heyday of profound learning would have closed with the "theory of exalting being."

The compiler of the *Liezi* explores the reality that underlies the existence of phenomenal things as did the prominent scholars of profound learning mentioned above. But, working at the close of that era, he cleverly chose to have his philosophical theory take the shape of a classical text instead of that of a commentary. Unlike Wang and Guo, he was able to elaborate his metaphysics through critical appraisals of their contradictory viewpoints; this enabled him to overcome his predecessors' arguably problematic interpretations of their source texts. For the same reason, the wider horizon of interpretation open to the compiler of the *Liezi* as a direct result of his two predecessors' work necessitated a more refined interpretation of the early Daoist classics. Consequently, the terminology the *Liezi* employs differs from what occurs in other major Daoist ontological discussions. Using of the terms that caused cumbersome arguments such as *wu* (non-being), *you* (being) or *wanwu* (myriad things) has been deliberately avoided in the *Liezi*; instead it refers to the transcendental being as the "Unborn" (*busheng* 不生) or the "Unchanging" (*buhua* 不化), and the myriad things, which I shall refer to as "present beings," as the "Born" (*shengzhe* 生者) or the "Changing" (*huazhe* 化者). These terms are useful because they at once represent the conditions imposed on each side of the dichotomy and express the fact that both are related in that one side is the source of the existence of the other. The text explains the Born/Changing as conditions of existence; present beings would not come into existence without a moment of birth and likewise no present form persists without moments of change.

The proposition that contradictory conditions exist in dichotomy may be the most invaluable contribution of the *Liezi* to the methodology of the ontological discourse in early China. The ontological theory in the *Liezi* is built on the notion that present beings and the transcendental being are subject to conspicuously distinct ontological conditions. Being "transcendental" is the most important condition of metaphysical reality in the context of Daoism. The first proposition of the *Daodejing* elucidates the nature of fundamental being as ineffable "constancy," beyond the variable and expressible scope of present beings; in so doing it argues that anything variable cannot be constant. In this regard, the phenomenal world filled with things, and their variations, which we can recognize and construe through language, cannot have an eternal constancy. Thus, eternal constancy must be reserved for the realm utterly distinct from the scope of our recognition and knowledge. It will be found only when we direct our enquiry towards the exterior of our phenomenal world. The *Liezi* introduces a clarity into this state, for it argues the transcendence of the

supreme entity and the existence of present beings in the phenomenal world. On this basis the text ushers us to the ontological dichotomy consisting of two different categories: the transcendental being and present beings. The text consequently argues that the births of all things that exist and the changes occurring in them inevitably suppose the existence of a certain being that functions to give births and changes to things. The *Liezi* applies the same logic to shapes, sounds, colors, and flavors to establish that all phenomena in the present world are due to the operations of the transcendental being.

Positing the undeniableness of the transcendental entity, the *Liezi* further develops its argument by enumerating the conditions that need to be fulfilled by the transcendental being, therefore defining the obverse conditions that are unwillingly fulfilled by present beings. Form, sound, color, and flavor that the *Liezi* lists as conditions for present beings are absent in the transcendental being. All the recognizable features of present beings exist at the discretion of the transcendental being, which lacks them all. In terms of its style of argument, the text is an echo of WANG Bi, and accordingly, the ontology of the *Liezi* is deeply associated with the theory of valuing Non-being, while not entirely accepting the transcendental entity as "nothing." Rejecting the traditional terminology, Being and Non-being, the *Liezi* nevertheless imposes "being nothingness" as one of the conditions of the transcendental being.

While the ontological dichotomy laid out at the beginning of the text remains its core foundation, the *Liezi* delineates its ontological schema by exploiting well-established metaphysical concepts developed in earlier sources. Notably, the *Liezi* draws on the concept of the Dark Female (*xuanpin* 玄牝) in the *Daodejing* to explicate the immortality or eternity of the transcendental being. The ideas of the One (*yi* 一) and Confusion (*hunlun* 渾淪) from the *Qianzuodu* are also adopted to describe the transcendental being as the one and only entity that has the state of chaos and as such brings the world into being by giving births and changes to present beings. In fact, the passage borrowed from the *Quanzuodu* is already an integration of passages, as well as concepts, borrowed from the *Daodejing* and the *Zhouyi*. Moreover, a long passage from the *Zhuangzi* is cited to exemplify the functions of the transcendental being. In the *Liezi*, the transcendental entity is described variously as: the Unborn/Unchanging (*busheng*/*buhua*), the Thing which produces/changes the produced/changed (*shengshengzhe*/*huahuazhe*), the One (*yi*), Confusion (*hunlun*), and the Zenith (*ji* 機).

On the basis of the Changing and the Unchanging dichotomy, the *Liezi* makes the transcendental being not only the producer of beings but also the reason that underlies the incessantly ongoing changes in present beings. One may think this concept is analogous to what had already been established by WANG Bi since his theory explains the One governing the multiple, and therefore the idea of the transcendental being influencing present beings would not be absolutely new. However, the *Liezi* reasons out in detail the structure by which the transcendental being endlessly engages the numinous changes of present beings, whereas WANG Bi simply posits the existence of phenomenal things as relying on Non-being. The *Liezi* claims that the transcendental being not only gives birth to present beings but also

"constantly changes" them, positioning the transcendental entity in an ever ongoing relation to each subtle movement and existing characteristic of present beings. The compiler of the *Liezi* attaches the utmost importance to this proposition. The transcendental being is further understood as a confused entity, which is complete and embraces the whole. Yet Confusion should not be thought of as a state of chaos, the condition prior to the emergence of present beings; more precisely it refers to one of the conditions imposed on the transcendental being that is presently meaningful as the source of present beings. Apparently oneness and confusion are of great importance here since the functions of producing and making changes to present beings must be conducted by the non-nothing feature of the transcendental being.

What deserves further attention is that the *Liezi* stresses the moment of returning, when present beings go back to Confusion, the fundamental realm, after their lives in the present world, and thus to their original source. The *Liezi* illuminates the transcendental being as the producer and changer through the moment of death. Deploying a passage from the *Zhuangzi*, the *Liezi* details how the transcendental being is completely involved in the entire life span of present beings (Ch. 1: 4). Unlike GUO Xiang, who has little to say about this passage—the story of how a small bug finally becomes a human through a series of metamorphoses—ZHANG Zhan adds a note that interprets the passage in favor of his own ontological argument, namely, that returning to *ji* means returning to the transcendental realm, and this is what happens to present beings when they terminate life in the phenomenal realm. This passage carries a considerably important illustration of the ontological system in which "everything comes out of the One and returns to the One" (Ch. 1: 2) and represents the compiler's intent to display the validity of the cycle of phenomenal things. What mattered most important to the compiler was the notion that every transformation from a previous state to a new identity involves the death of the previous identity, which dies to enter Confusion. Regarding the realm of the transcendental being as the genuine home of all the myriad present beings is again clearly presented in Passage 5 which reads, "Whatever is born reverts to the Unborn, whatever has shape reverts to the Shapeless." It also states, "That is why ghosts are called *gui* (鬼); *gui* means 'one who has gone back' (*gui* 歸), they have gone back to their origin (*zhenzhai* 眞宅)."

What the *Liezi* explicates through the concept of Confusion is an idea that had been prevalent since antiquity in China. Girardot (1983) introduces a few texts to demonstrate that in early Chinese cosmology the concept of chaos as the primordial energy is an ideal status and the destination of the myriad beings. The moment of "returning" to primordial chaos is the main topic of part two of his book, in which he examines passages of the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi* and the *Liezi*. In these sections he establishes that "returning" in Chinese cosmology is a returning to the "beginning" (Girardot 1983: 67–76, 99–112, 139–156, 156–165). Isabelle Robinet also asserts that the Daoist meditation practice of "preserving the One" means returning to the primordial unity that existed at the beginning (Robinet 1993: 119–138). These ideas reverberate in the later theory of the *Liezi*, but here Confusion does not only mean primordial energy. Although the cosmogonical implication of Daoist philosophical terms carries great importance, cosmogonical structure is not

to be seen as strictly limited to the beginning of the world. As it would be common to any religion, the god or fundamental entity that creates the world will everlastingly rules over it in the same way as when it first created the world. So too the ontological theory of the *Liezi* should be taken to mean that the primordial reason of the world rules over the present world.

The *Liezi* establishes the conditions of the transcendental being and present beings and defines the latter as unreal and the former as reality. The transcendental entity is unborn, unchanging, formless, soundless, odorless, flavorless, thus non-existing and inconceivable, but eternal and supreme and *reality*, while present beings are born, changing, formed, heard, smelling, flavoring, thus existing and conceivable, with no autonomy over their fate, thus relying on the discretion of the transcendental being, and so are *unreal*. The *Liezi* determines that the present world is an illusion, in its reality-phenomena schema, the realness of the existence of present beings is completely rejected. As regards to the ontological conditions imposed on the transcendental being and present beings, it is noteworthy that the theory of reality developed in the *Liezi* not only challenges our commonsense view, but also radically reverses it. In the *Liezi*, what should be conceived as reality is something we may deem as imaginary and unreal; it is distinct from our world, impossible to fathom, and equivalent to "nonexistence." All the things and qualities we normally accept as real, the things we can sense, are unreal. If this argument is followed, because reality is something fundamentally truer than our present world, true reality can only be obtained when we die and leave the conditions of present beings.

4 The Thematic Arrangement of the Stories

1. The destiny of present beings (Ch. 1: 6–8)

The stories from Passages 6 to 8 of chapter 1 aver that death is the moment of returning to the realm of transcendental being, and is therefore entering into a state of happiness. The two old men in Passages 6 and 7 are described as being cheerful at the prospect of imminent death. Underneath their happiness lie beliefs that allow them to accept the death as a matter of course. Both men voice the realization that death is the end of life, a state of a present being. Further, the account in Passage 8 repeats the idea that death is "going back to the true home." Whereas the old man in Passage 6 regards death as the eternal end, the man in Passage 7 believes in a rebirth after death, and this is probably why in this narrative Confucius evaluates latter as "great but incomplete," a lesser compliment than the one given to the old man in Passage 6.

2. The ontological equivalence of present beings (Ch. 2: 18–21)

As the *Liezi* recognizes only two ontological categories, the disparity we perceive among different kinds of things in our present world are of no differences in their ontological significance. The statements and anecdotes from Passages 18 to 21

of chapter 2 deal with the issue of the differences between men and animals and ascertain that no discrimination among present beings is meaningful. Thus, Passage 18 explicates that we should not equate the ability of the learned with greatness, and so sages and animals belong to the same category since they possess the same ontological status. The limitations of all present beings mean that there is no substantial difference in that status. To drive home this conclusion, the text relates stories involving animals and argues the equivalence between them and human beings. Some passages juxtapose the absurdity of human beings and the sagacity of animals, or put both humans and animals on the same level of absurdity.

3. Dreams and actual life (Ch. 3: 1–9, Ch. 5: 9–16)

The main purpose of the discussions on dreams in the *Liezi* is to present the actuality of illusions. Thus the dreams here take the form of seemingly illusory experiences that are too realistic to be regarded as illusions. The *Liezi* impairs our belief in actuality as something distinct from dreams in its description of the State of Gumang 古莽 (Ch. 3: 4). The text raises the question of how dreams seem actual and asserts that the actuality of our real life is not superior to the actuality of dreams. Since reality is reserved only for the transcendental being, the text argues that both life and dreams are equally actual but unreal. Through the stories in this part demonstrating the actuality of illusionary experiences, such as spiritual journeys, the compiler of the *Liezi* determines that dreams are another kind of actuality that will consequently be illusionary in the sense that everything we experience in actual life is an illusion. The first story in the "Zhoumu wang" 周穆王 chapter about the journeys of King Mu of Zhou perfectly reflects this idea. The king's first journey is an illusionary experience under the guidance of a magician and the other is an actual journey to the west. The utopian country the king saw on his illusionary journey was so realistic that he was astonished to realize it was an illusion.

The stories from Passage 9 to the end of the "Tangwen" 湯問 chapter regard illusionary experiences and actual experiences as having the same degree of vividness. The prevailing attitudes in these stories have been commented on by Chinese scholars who concluded that the *Liezi* is a text touting materialism (Tan and Li 1978). For two of the stories—one about the legendary doctor PIAN Que 扁鵲 (Ch. 5: 9), the other about an automaton (Ch. 5: 13)—these scholars' claims of a materialistic bent to the text seem highly plausible. However, when we consider them in the context of adjoining stories, their significance clearly emerges as part of the general theme of that story group. This deals with the unrealness of solid things and realness of spiritual things, and likewise the "Zhoumu wang" chapter is concerned with the ontological significance of illusionary experiences and what happens in actuality. In both cases, our beliefs in the realness of lived experience come under attack.

4. Confusion—utopia and the goal of study (Ch. 2: 1–17)

One of the conditions of the transcendental being that conspicuously serves as the base of discussion is "to be chaotic." The text pursues two important aims with this. One is to expand on the assumption that a state of confusion is the fundamental

truth of the world, and the other is to imbue us with the belief that our knowledge and abilities are confined to the illusoriness of the phenomenal realm. According to Harold Roth who argues for the *Neiye* 内業 chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子 as the earliest source of Daoist practice, the goal of its cultivation was, from the earliest stage, “keeping the One” (*shouyi* 守一) or “possessing the One” (*zhiyi* 執一), and he alludes that the One here seems to mean Dao as in the *Daodejing* (Roth 1999: 115–118). Isabelle Robinet, also suggesting the equivalence of the One and Dao in early Daoist texts, notices that the goal of Daoist practice is said to be obtaining the One (Robinet 1993: 123).

The masters appearing in this chapter identify themselves with the chaotic nature of the transcendental being. The *Liezi*, asserting that the fundamentally truer world is the realm of the transcendental being, projects its idea of fundamental truth, the ideal state it supposes, onto the state of confusion. The text suggests that it is the goal of study to obtain the state of confusion and thereby attain a state of perfect supernaturalness, a task that in fact involves reducing one’s knowledge, any of which obstructs the attainment of perfect confusion. This is often expressed as forgetting the differentiations among objects and between oneself and the outer world, just as the secret of Liezi’s skill at riding the wind is the ability to leave behind the differences among the organs of his own body and between them and the external world (Ch. 2: 4). Most of the other stories are about people who were from the start unable to distinguish one object from another, rather than achieving this skill through practice. A particularly important point here is the speculation that the embodiment of Confusion results in a lack of physical barriers: people who embody Confusion can go into a rock or a deep river since they do not possess perceptual distinctions (Ch. 2: 1). This assumption is persistently and repeatedly argued in this thematic group.

5. The voidness of human knowledge (Ch. 1: 9–13, Ch. 5: 1–8)

Denigrating the realm of present beings as fallacious illusion and establishing the transcendental being and its chaotic nature as true reality, the *Liezi* does not approve a belief in human knowledge and abilities that relying on nothing but the fallacious illusions they can perceive. The discrimination between the illusionary images in the mundane world and the arrogance of human beings based on their knowledge and ability are anathema to the true nature of transcendental being. On this matter, the *Liezi* emphasizes that transcendental being is unknowable and prohibits the use of human knowledge to grasp its nature. A well-known story, the origin of the expression *qiyou* 杞憂 (meaning “groundless fear”), aptly demonstrates this perspective (Ch. 1: 11). The story involves a man from the country of Qi 杞 who was paranoid that the sky might fall down. He was consoled by a rational reasoning that convinced him to forget his worry and consequently gave him comfort. Liezi, on hearing this, argued that the consolation was improperly achieved; his point was that all forms of human speculation should be rejected since the changes of the world are subject to the governing force of the transcendental being, which is beyond human knowledge. This story illustrates the impossibility of recognizing and construing the transcendental being, and this is the theme of the present group of stories.

The first half of the "Tangwen" chapter includes stories that contrast the limited range of human knowledge or ability and the diversity and scope of present beings, which are beyond even human imagination. This argument is based on the assumption that the transcendental being as the producer and changer extends far beyond the reach of human knowledge. The second half of this chapter is related more to the realness of non-material experience, a topic discussed earlier under the issue of "Dream and actual life"; nevertheless, the compiler must have thought that the ethereal existence of reality is beyond the normal range of human knowledge, and therefore the second half of the "Tangwen" chapter needs to be understood as related to this issue. Thus, while the first half speaks more directly of the diversity of present phenomena and the impossibility that human knowledge to encompass them all, the larger theme of the chapter remains the incompleteness of human knowledge.

6. The study of the human masters (Ch. 4)

The *Liezi* devotes the "Zhongni" 仲尼 chapter to introducing human masters whose study pursues the aim of understanding, but not perceiving, the fundamental entity and the limitedness of human knowledge. The protagonists of this chapter are described as not having completely attained the absolute state, and therefore they are to be distinguished from those who possess the perfectly confused mind described in the "Huangdi" chapter, for which a discussion is given above under "4. Confusion—utopia and the goal of study". The first story begins with the laments of Confucius who confesses that all his study has proved empty; the other masters who appear in the "Zhongni" chapter likewise possess a knowledge confined to the realization of the emptiness of human knowledge. These masters constitute a contradiction of the mythical characters in the "Huangdi" chapter. Here, apart from the story of Liezi floating in the air, there are no stories concerning uncommon powers of the type found all through the "Huangdi" chapter. These personages do not belong among those that are united with Confusion. Liezi's skill at riding wind is here reiterated perhaps to illustrate the desired direction of human study, but not arguing for the possibility that human beings may embody the chaotic state of the fundamental being. It is noteworthy that life as a student pursuing the proper goal is one of only the two desirable paths in the *Liezi*. The other is the hedonistic life celebrated in the "Yang Zhu" chapter. Hedonism may seem contradictory to the mindset that works to attain Confusion and hence reality, yet the hedonistic attitude is approved as an equally valid conclusion, based on the same awareness of the metaphysical structure of reality, a point to be discussed further below.

7. Fate and acceptance (Ch. 6)

According to the ontology of the *Liezi*, the unavoidable conditions imposed on the existence of present beings are to be constantly produced and changed by transcendental being, an idea that counters any suggestion that the endeavors of human beings can change their fate. Thus, the treatment of fate and destiny in the *Liezi* is closely related to its metaphysical arguments centered around the terms "change" and "unchanging." Since it is the transcendental being that causes changes in present beings, this schema already argues that changes to a thing cannot be

altered by present beings. The issue of endeavor and destiny is the main theme of the "Liming" chapter, where the text does not just argue that destiny has the greater influence over events, but also claims that every feat accomplished by men even down to smallest act is preordained by the fate rooted in the forces of the transcendental being. The central purpose of the arguments in this chapter, therefore, is not merely to reiterate this tired fatalism, but to demonstrate the external power that determines present beings. The "Liming" chapter can be divided into two parts. The first half, from Passages 1 to 7, aims to prove and establish the unavoidable determination of destiny over the fate of human beings. And the second half, from Passages 8 to 13, admonishes people to understand that they are trapped in destiny so they may obtain peace of mind by accepting their fates.

As was the case in the "Zhongni" chapter, the entire set of stories in the "Liming" chapter contribute to a single central theme, which imbues the readers with a belief in destiny. The first passage, a conversation between a personified Endeavor and Destiny (Ch. 6: 1) most clearly demonstrates this. The competition between the two as to who has more influence over things is won by Destiny at the moment when Destiny lists the people who lived a miserable, poor, and disappointed life in spite of their highly respectable personalities, leading to the conclusion that Endeavor has no influence over the life of things in the world. The notion of destiny in the *Liezi* is essentially equivalent to the notion of spontaneity. As the control of transcendental being is not grounded in any will for individual purposes but guides the spontaneous cycle of the world, the destiny allotted to each of the myriad things is only another aspect of spontaneity. When Endeavor asks whether things happening in the world are brought about by Destiny, Destiny denies actually controlling them. This evasive answer, however, does not mean that destiny is not the determining factor in the "beingness" of present beings, rather its function is to let things continue on their spontaneous way and develop according to the fate allotted to each of them.

8. Hedonism (Ch. 7)

The presence of the "Yang Zhu" chapter, centered on the topic of hedonism as a method of nourishing life, has been often used as evidence for the heterogeneous nature of the *Liezi*. This judgment, that the ideas in this chapter are at odds with the rest of the text, seems to largely have originated in the traditional distinguishing between its title figure YANG Zhu as an egoist and Mozi 墨子 as an altruist, following the criticism of Mencius. But in the *Liezi* YANG Zhu is not depicted as an egoist as such. Although the text includes a conversation between him and a person who asks about his doctrine "not to pluck a single hair to save the whole world," this simply provides him an opportunity to reason out this doctrine. In fact, viewed within the development of arguments throughout the entire text, including the chapter on destiny and endeavor, the theme of the "Yang Zhu" chapter turns out to be quite consistent. Little independent source material on YANG Zhu is available outside the *Liezi*, and even the sufficient number of anecdotes about him contained here need to be viewed with some suspicion since they cannot be corroborated by different extant sources and therefore cannot serve as a historically reliable reconstruction of his teachings.

Having cleared the issue of the determination of human life through destiny, the *Liezi* then defends the idea that a hedonistic lifestyle should be regarded as a recommendable way of living for a gentleman (*junzi* 君子). The "Yang Zhu" chapter, under the name of that most representative of hedonists, not only expounds on the title figure's pleasure-seeking, it also gives examples of other gentlemen who pursued a hedonistic lifestyle, and justifies its approval with a wide range of ideas. It is noteworthy that the accounts of YANG Zhu repeat the metaphysical argument that is foundational for the text as a whole. The compiler intentionally begins this chapter by reasoning out the emptiness of pursuing honor before embarking on his defense of hedonism as the reasonable lifestyle of those who understand the meaninglessness of ethical rules and pursuing knowledge. Since the end of life is the extinction of being where no honor is meaningful, and human endeavor is a meaningless effort to change destiny, those who do not choose the practice of forgetting distinctions to attain a perfect mental state of confusion have little else worth pursuing in life. Thus, where morality turns out to be void and destiny is known to govern human affairs, it does not seem meaningful to observe moral strictures. Moreover, pursuing honor through rigid abstention from physical pleasures would actually constitute a failure to acknowledge the illusionary nature of one's existence.

5 Value of the forged *Liezi*

The compiler of the *Liezi*, whoever it was, has produced the most peculiar work in the history of Chinese philosophy. Truly the *Liezi* is not the only counterfeit text for the Chinese. There were, for instance, a plentiful number of *chanwei* books 讖緯, forgeries purporting to argue the true meaning of the Confucian classics and there were serious disputes over the old text and the new text to reject either as inauthentic, both cases during the later Han. They are largely associated with political interests of the protagonists and the following people. While the *Liezi* would have no such interests, only reason we can surmise for the compiler to make this forgery is ironically his sheer and serious philosophical interest to elaborate a complete metaphysics with which he could explain the reason of the world and eliminate illusions from the truth. The manner of borrowing texts from other sources in fact makes the text as the critical recension, though not textual, of what has been achieved by his predecessors. As in the case of Guo Xiang whose redaction of the *Zhuangzi* is a result of trimming the fifty-two chapter edition into a shorter from where those which he detested are eliminated, and again the fifty-two chapter edition of the *Zhuangzi*, edited by a group of scholars in the Liu An's court who ought to redact text according to their understanding of the text and at the same time their own vision of the world (Roth 1991), the *Liezi* is here to reflect how the compiler understands the traditional metaphysics and how he incorporates them to produce his own vision of the world. Leaving aside that it is a forgery, what makes the *Liezi*

peculiar to be discerned even from similar others, e.g. the *Zhuangzi*, is the further refined elaboration of the philosophical terms so as to consolidate its metaphysics and a complete set of discussion on how to treat with the world and also oneself.

Likewise, the passages incorporated in the *Liezi*, in spite of their earlier occurrences in other texts, are there to constitute a new philosophical system. It has been made clear in this chapter that each of its passages, every single one, reverates the ontological theory of its own expounded at the head of the book; while the last chapter, *Shuofu*, is an exception in this respect but is furnished with anecdotes relating Liezi, the legendary master. At the same time this fact should be taken to mean that any attempt to read its passages without considering its ontology, and even reading the copied passages in their original context, might be listening to something other than what the text means to mean. His plan to advance a theoretically refined ontology and to enumerate seven proliferating issues, although which is according to my own grouping and to be refined by the better erudition, should make the forged *Liezi* in its entirety read as a meticulously weaved philosophical work in contrast to its appearance. Still, the *Liezi*, a bestselling story book for a long time, can be read even by an elementary school kids who will not understand the complication in metaphysics but will be just indulged in its plentiful fantastic stories; this way perhaps has been more common for the readers for the last thousand and six hundred years. The *Liezi* is a work of great disgrace for it is a forgery, and yet a work of great success which achieved both goals that every modern writer would like to gain; i.e. philosophical advancements and a wide readership.

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Part V
The Various Perspectives on Daoism

Chapter 20
Daoism from Philosophy to Religion

Xiaogan Liu with Xiaoxin He and Yama Wong

While this volume concerns the study of Daoist philosophy, we suppose some readers might appreciate a view of the whole landscape of Daoism; thus we include this chapter, which introduces other dimensions of Daoism, especially the religious movements that developed and derived from this indigenous philosophical heritage, as well as other traditional practices and beliefs. Here we will discuss the differences and the association between Daoist philosophy and religion, and introduce briefly the origins and transformations of Daoist religion, its religious doctrines and practices, as well as its major masters and scriptures. We will focus on the movement from ancient thought or philosophy to early religious beliefs and convention. Due to our theme and limitations of space, we must omit the later history of Daoist religion, which continues to be a lived system of belief and

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practice in Chinese communities all over the world.[1] We will however take up the complicated and often misunderstood relation between Daoist religion and *fengshui* 風水 (geomancy) in a separate Appendix.

As we mentioned in the Introduction of this volume, the word "Daoism" is not a translation of a Chinese term, but a word coined in the 1830s by Western scholars.[2] It encapsulates certain complicated and divergent strains of thought, teachings, beliefs, and ritual activities that are indigenous to China and have been developing for over two millennia. These include various movements under different names or titles, which were classified as either *Daojia* 道家 or *Daojiao* 道教 in pre-modern Chinese. Having accepted Western academic conventions, modern Chinese scholars began to distinguish thought or philosophy from religion; thus, *Daojia* has been translated as "Daoist philosophy" or "Daoist schools," while *Daojiao* is rendered "Daoist religion." Although these are popular and generally workable terms, "philosophy," "religion," and "school" in the Daoist case cannot be understood as strictly comparable to their Western counterparts. If, in constructing a definition for "philosophy," we consider the only teachings of Kant, Hegel, or Wittgenstein, and accept only such teachings as genuine philosophy, then we may say there is no philosophy in China at all. However, if we include Socrates and many other Hellenistic thinkers, then we must realize that Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi also deserve this classification. Similarly, if we take monotheism to be the criterion of "religion," Daoism is no such thing. But if we take "transcendent faith" or Paul Tillich's "ultimate concern" (Tillich 1964: 130–32) as central to the definition of religion, then the Daoist movement certainly qualifies. And when we say Daoist "school," we do not mean that there is a historical institute or a specific group like Plato's academy; instead we refer to a collective that is the culmination of intellectual ideas, interests, and approaches shared by certain groups of scholars and thinkers.

1 General Background to Daoism as a Religion

The term "Daoism" starts at its Chinese root, Dao 道, meaning way, path, or road. Indeed, all Daoist texts, scholars, and theologians accentuate the magnitude, status, and universal consequence of Dao. However, it is noteworthy that most scholars who have written about Dao and different Chinese philosophies, such as Confucian and Legalist thought, have used the word and concept "Dao" in various ways. Even individual Daoists offer different understandings and descriptions of Dao.[3] This is a

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[1]For further discussion and research on later Daoist religion, please see Schipper 1982, Robinet 1997, and Raz 2012.

[2]According *Webster's Dictionary*, the first known use of D[T]aoism is in 1838. See http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/taoism?show=0&t=1348302546.

[3]Thus, Han Yu (768–824), a famous writer of the Tang dynasty, said that while *ren* (仁 humanity) and *yi* (義 righteousness) are *dingming* (定名 substantiated terms), while *Dao* and *de* are *xuwei* (虛位 a void position, i.e., terms without specific meanings).

common phenomenon. The more popular a doctrine is, the more diffuse its meaning, as it is dragged in ever more directions. So we cannot explain this tradition by trying to define the word *dao*, but we can say that the concept "Dao" does assume a higher position in the Daoist system than in other philosophical or religious systems. We can also say that Dao is the most significant concept in the philosophical systems of the originating Daoist thinkers, Laozi and Zhuangzi. Finally, the centrality of Dao in Daoist systems means that this philosophy and the religious doctrines associated with it place unique emphasis on this source and foundation of the universe in Chinese culture; that is, they share a special metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical perspective, as we shall see.[4]

Some philosophical terms refer to purely theoretical matters, designed without regard for facts or events, while others pertain more directly to complicated phenomena or events in the world. Thus, the former could be defined logically and accurately, and the latter seem to be somewhat indefinite and confused. Daoism is one of the latter. In the surviving Chinese classical literature, the term Daoism/Daoist (*daojia*) first appears in the *Historical Records* (*Shiji*), the first official history, written by SIMA Qian (145–86? BCE), about 400 years after Laozi is said to have lived. According to Sima, "Daoism" meant the Huang-Lao school, named after Huangdi (Emperor Huang), the earliest legendary king and common ancestor of the Chinese peoples, and Laozi. The Huang-Lao school actually emerged in the fourth to the third century BCE, in the middle–Warring States period, and it became fashionable in the second century BCE, in the former Han dynasty. At this point, Daoism represented a political philosophy embraced by many in the elite ranks of Chinese society. However, after the *Historical Records* account, the meaning of Daoism would grow increasingly complicated. By the third century, another Daoist branch, Arcane or Mystical Learning (*xuanxue* 玄學) was in full flower, and Daoism became associated with Laozi and Zhuangzi rather than the Yellow Emperor. This indicated that the Daoist school had moved from social and political theory to an individual and spiritual teaching. The word Daoism also began to be used to refer to religious movements that claimed Laozi as their founder.

While Daoist philosophy competed with Confucianism and Legalism from the fifth through the second century BCE, Daoist religion is the unique indigenous movement that, together with Buddhism and Confucianism, came to be revered as one of the "three teachings" (*san jiao*) after the third century CE. Most Chinese scholars understand Confucianism to have played an important religious role in premodern China, but Daoist religion was more like what we would recognize as an institutionalized religion, with its own temples and clergy.

[4]The term metaphysics in the Western tradition means studies and issues beyond and above the physical and phenomenal world and presumes the separation of physical and metaphysical kingdoms. However, Dao penetrates and is embodied in the world or myriad things, thus it is different from metaphysics in its original sense. The term "quasi-metaphysics" is used to remind us of this divergence between Chinese and Western philosophical traditions and practices. Nevertheless, as long as we aware of this difference, the prefix "quasi" is not always necessary.

Chinese counterparts of the English words “religion” and “philosophy” did not exist until the early twentieth century, the distinction of Daoist philosophy from Daoist religion does not really register in premodern China studies. Moreover, because the term “Daoism” was coined in the early nineteenth century, it cannot adequately convey the differences between religious and philosophical Daoism identified by later scholarship. Prior to 1950 most sinologists believed that philosophical and religious Daoism were incompatible. Since 1950, chiefly due to the work of the French scholars Marcel Granet and Henri Maspero and their students, scholars have come to realize that these two groups may be viewed as belonging to movements of a common tradition (Yu 1989: 738). Nonetheless, Chinese scholars continue to divide the two so clearly that few study their relationship.[5]

Certain connections between Daoist philosophy and religion should be noted, however. For example, Daoist philosophers were both thought of as the founders of Daoist religion and revered as gods in its polytheistic system. The earliest Daoist religious work, the *Classic of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing* 太平經), and other classics were claimed to have been originally handed down by the deified Laozi. To compete with Buddhism, later Daoists claimed that Laozi had been Śākyamuni’s teacher, though Buddhists had different accounts of their putative relationship. Laozi acquired many noble titles, such as “Sainted Ancestor Great Dao Mysterious Primary Emperor,” and he was clearly considered a divinity by the Daoist religious community, as were other Daoist philosophers such as Zhuangzi and Liezi.

The works of these philosophers were also revered as sacred texts among Daoist religionists, and special honorific titles were conferred on them. The *Daode jing* (the *Laozi*) was known as “True Classic of the Great Upper Mysterious Primary Emperor Daode,” the *Zhuangzi* was honored as the “True Classic of the Southern Chinese,” the *Liezi* as the “True Classic of Vacant Empty Ultimate Virtue,” and the *Wenzi* as the “True Classic of Mastering the Mystery.” Daoist religion also borrowed many key concepts and ideas from Daoist philosophy: Dao, material or vital energy (*qi*), heaven (*tian*), individual power (*de*), naturalness or spontaneity (*ziran*), nonaction (*wuwei*), nonconceptual meditation, literally “sitting and oblivion” (*zuowang* 坐忘), and the true man (*zhenren* 真人). Also, Daoist religious texts frequently cite passages or ideas from the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*.

Still, a thorough investigation of Daoist religion reveals that it is possible to overemphasize its connections to Daoist philosophy. Some religious Daoists do not regard the philosophers as the most important thinkers or gods. Equally important are many historical figures, legendary heroes, ancient and contemporary emperors, scholars, and generals who have been woven into the polytheistic Daoist system. As Daoism matured as a religion, in fact, the position given to Daoist philosophers in the pantheon slipped ever lower. In the first century CE, before the formal

[5]In the conclusion part of Chap. 15 of this volume, Lynn also discussed the relationship between Daoist philosophy and religion. According to Western or modern academic convention, the distinction between the two concepts seems necessary, but there was no such clear byfurcation of Daoism in history, especially in early period.

establishment of the religion, sacrifices were offered to Laozi, together with the Yellow Emperor and the Buddha. By the sixth century, the scripture *Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈位業圖 (*Genealogy of Genuine Spirits*) ranked Laozi on the fourth level among gods classified into seven levels. Later still, he was regarded as the third among Daoism's "three pure gods" (*sanqing* 三清). When the *Daoist Canon* 道藏 was divided into three main parts according to their relative significance, all of the philosophers' works were classified as belonging to the third and last part.

There is a reason why religious Daoists no longer regarded philosophical Daoists as important in their system: Where Daoist philosophers concentrated on spiritual transcendence, for centuries religious Daoists sought physical immortality. From this perspective, religious Daoism moves in a direction quite different from that of philosophical Daoism. Daoist philosophers did not think it necessary for people to pursue a long life. According to the *Laozi* (Chapter 13): "The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body. When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I?" (Lau 1987: 69). And in Chapter 75: "It is only those who do not cling to life who are wiser in valuing life" (ibid.: 137). The *Zhuangzi* puts it this way: "The true man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death" (Watson 1968: 78). "Life and death are fated—constant as the succession of dark and dawn. . . . Man can do nothing about it" (ibid.: 80). Clearly, the founders of philosophical Daoism held that people cannot and should not choose between life and death. Rather, instead of having a desire for either, people should transcend the difference between them. No Daoist philosopher focuses on longevity and immortality, although there are vague references to long life in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* texts. The transcendent attitude of Daoist philosophy toward life and death is simply a reflection of philosophical Daoism's main principle: One should follow a natural course and take no unnatural action. By contrast, Daoist religion takes as its cardinal principle the possibility, and importance, of achieving immortality.

Philosophical and religious Daoism also are different in their attitudes toward states rulers. Philosophical Daoism is nontraditional and rises above commonly held values. Both the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* criticize rulers as well as the political and moral theories of Confucianism. Both texts claim that society and the state would be much better off managed by a sage who practices *wuwei* or non-action, or even, according to some of the *Zhuangzi*'s outer chapters, without any rulers, laws, or systems of morality at all. Religious Daoists, however, respected their sovereigns and Confucianism.[6] For example, the religious Daoist GE Hong 葛洪 (283–343 CE) wrote in his treatise, *Baopuzi* 抱朴子 (*The Master Who Embraces Simplicity*), "People who want to be immortals must feel loyalty for their ruler and filial piety for parents . . . as the basic principle" (Wang 1980: 47). In a separate section of this work (Outer Chapters), he contributed ideas to the development of Confucian thought. He also wrote an essay refuting the position taken by the "anarchists," a group of

[6]In its formative period, the Daoist religion was associated with a number of rebellions, and some later rebellions borrowed the Daoist banner. This, however, was not a feature of mature Daoist religion.

Zhuangzi's followers who attacked any kind of ruler,[7] whether benevolent or cruel. KO Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448 CE), another important religious thinker, held that a Daoist should also learn Confucianism and help the emperor govern the world. Because Daoist religious thinkers paid much more attention to the present and to practical interests than Daoist philosophers they were sure to give the terms they employed from Daoist philosophy—Dao, *de*, and *wuwei*, for example—their own new meanings.

From this general comparison of Daoist religion and philosophy, let us turn to some basic information about Daoist religion. Religious Daoism possesses specific features that originated in the second century CE, during the later Han dynasty, and have continued into contemporary times. Although Daoism and Buddhism from earliest times influenced each other, Daoism represents the most truly indigenous faith among the religions of modern China—which include Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Daoism is polytheistic, presenting a pantheon of gods, spirits, and ghosts; it has absorbed the traditional religious practices of the Chinese people, including offering sacrifices to ancestors, praying for favorable weather, and dispelling evil spirits (MacInnis 1989: 205). Unlike other religions, Daoism is not concerned with life after death. In fact Daoism is unique among the religions of China in that it focuses on pursuing longevity, and in its early period, this included the possibility of attaining physical immortality. Hence, Daoism possesses many "secular" characteristics. In Chinese folk stories Daoist deities—especially female immortals—descend to the mortal world to communicate with laypeople and, occasionally, to marry and live a worldly life. Rather than strictly separating life and death or the realms of people and gods, Daoists believe these are mutually permeable.

Contemporary China has two main sects of religious Daoism: The first is the Orthodox Unity (Zhengyi 正一) sect, which originated in the Five Pecks of Rice (Wudoumi 五斗米) movement that later became known as the Celestial Masters (Tianshi 天師); the Celestial Masters was founded by ZHANG Daoling 張道陵 in the later Han dynasty (25–220 CE). The second is the Complete Perfection (Quanzhen 全真) sect, founded by WANG Zhe 王嚞 (WANG Chungyang 王重陽, 1113–1169), a reform Daoist of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) and his apprentice QIU Zhuji 丘處機 (1148–1227). The former sect was prominent in Taiwan and the latter in mainland China in late twentieth century. Like Buddhist monks, Complete Perfection clergy live in monasteries and convents and follow a restricted diet; they wear the robe and leggings of ancient times and leave their hair long and tied in a knot. They also wear special caps and shoes. Priests of the Orthodox Unity sect may eat a regular diet, are not forced to cover their hair or live in monasteries; they are commonly known as "Daoist priests living at home." To understand the Daoist religion, a brief review of its history is helpful.

[7]See Chap. 8 of this volume on the three groups of Outer and Miscellaneous chapters of the *Zhuangzi*.

2 Origination and Transformation of Early Religious Daoism

Religious Daoism started with indigenous Chinese ideas and religious practices. By the second millennium BCE, the Chinese had begun to believe in a Heaven that was like a powerful God, and in other gods with lesser powers as well. They also worshiped ghosts and ancestors, and performed ceremonies to communicate with them. During the Western Zhou 周 dynasty (eleventh–eighth century BCE), the Zhou king's court included officers whose charge was to make regular sacrificial offerings to the three systems of gods, namely, heavenly gods, earth gods, and human ghosts. All of these were sources of Daoist polytheism. Early Daoist religionists believed in physical immortality, a belief that spread inland from the east coast of China in the mid–Warring States period (after the fourth century BCE). Specialists called *fangshi* 方士 (prescription masters) were active in the occult sciences and propagated theories about how to reach and realize immortality. So compelling was the immortality quest that various rulers, including the most famous First Emperor of Qin, sent their famous *fangshi* to search for the legendary Isle of the Immortals in the eastern sea. This is an indigenous cultural source of the Daoist religious belief in immortality.

Another source that exerted great influence on Daoism is *chenwei* 讖緯 (prognostication and apocrypha), a school of the science of prophecy prevalent during the later Han dynasty (25–220 CE). *Chenwei* practicioners identified prognostic and enigmatic words, which they used to re-interpret both the Confucian classics and works about them. Such words were often turned to prophecies that were manipulated by sovereigns in their struggles for power. *Chenwei* theories were based on the belief that spirits, ghosts, and gods could show their will and power over human beings via natural phenomena and disasters, and in turn the *chenwei* masters could respond and counter those influences with certain rituals. Although *chenwei* was prohibited after the second century, its elements were absorbed into Daoist religious theology and the ceremonial system.

2.1 The Way of Great Peace

To help us understand early Daoist beliefs and society at the end of the latter Han, the *Classic of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing* 太平經) is a valuable resource. The title literally means "highest peace," which expresses an ancient Chinese social ideal. The authors of this early scripture clearly adopted some basic ideas from Confucianism. They wrote that a peaceful world demanded sagacious sovereigns, virtuous subjects, and a yielding populace.

Unlike Zhuangzi's indifference toward life and death, the *Classic of Great Peace* promotes longevity and states that it is possible for everyone to reach immorality.

In order to achieve these goals, the authors developed a theory of life from early Daoist philosophical ideas. They explained that the way to preserve life was to keep one's spirit (*shen* 神) and material force (*qi*) in harmony through "meditation on the One" (*shouyi* 守一). The One represents the heart, mind, and will, and meditation on the One means focusing the mind on one's spirit to prevent its dissipation.

Another important idea of the time is the theory of retribution, which is distinct from those of other philosophical schools or religions. Religious Daoists claim that retribution may either affect peoples' own life spans or be passed on to their descendants. According to the *Classic of Great Peace*, Heaven sends gods to record a person's behavior, both sins and merits, and the results will lengthen or shorten the life of that person or his or her descendents (Wang 1960: 525–26). *Chengfu* 承負 is a related concept. *Cheng* means receiving and *fu* means owing. This idea is that people experience the positive and negative consequences of the behavior of their parents and in turn pass on the consequences of their own conduct to their children. Practically, of course, the transmission of consequences emphasizes passing on the negative as a warning for people to behave themselves. Thus *chengfu* is translated as the transmission of burdens or inherited guilt. This idea may be contrasted with the Buddhist concept of karma and rebirth; that is, in *chengfu*, the merits and demerits accrued by individuals are manifested not in their own future lives but are passed on to immediate descendants (Ch'en 1973: 476).

The ideas in the *Classic of Great Peace* precipitated a popular religious movement in eastern China under the leadership of ZHANG Jiao 張角 (d. 184) and his brothers. Zhang called himself the Master of Great Wisdom and Virtue and taught many disciples. There are records that attest to his curing many people by having them kneel to confess and by using magic formulas and incantations; thus he came to have many followers. He divided his some-hundred thousand believers into 36 armies, each one headed by a general. Zhang and his brothers called themselves the General of Heaven, the General of Earth, and the General of Humanity, divisions culled from ideas in the *Classic of Great Peace* about the harmony of heaven, earth, and human beings. Zhang's religion, known as the "Way of Great Peace," as well as the "Way of Huang-Lao," was in fact a military-religious organization. In 184, Zhang and his armies, wearing yellow turbans to signal their belief that a "yellow heaven" would be replacing the "blue heaven" representing the Han throne, carried out the Yellow Turban Rebellion. This was the largest of many rebellions related to religious sects similar to Daoism at the end of the Han dynasty.

2.2 Five Pecks of Rice Movement

The "Way of Five Pecks of Rice" (*Wudoumi Dao* 五斗米道) was another influential Daoist religious movement that developed in southwest China in 191 CE. The legendary founder of this sect, ZHANG Daoling 張道陵 (34–156?), is considered

the father of Daoist religion. Converts had to contribute five Chinese pecks of rice, from which the religion received its nickname. Its formal name was the "Way of the Celestial Masters" (*Tianshi Dao* 天師道) because preachers of the Daoist religion, according to the *Classic of Great Peace*, were celestial masters. This sect was officially named Orthodox Unity Way (*Zhengyi Dao* 正一道) by the imperial court in the fourteenth century. This name might have derived from the legend that ZHANG Daoling had received a holy and authoritative title "Dao of Orthodox Unity Covenant of Authority" (*Zhengyi Mengwei Dao* 正一盟威道) in a revelation. This name suggests that the movement Zhang headed was retrospectively recognized as the formal beginning of the Daoist religion.

ZHANG Daoling is said to have been taught Orthodox Unity Dao by no less than the Venerable Lord Lao (Taishang Laojun 太上老君), the deified Laozi. After receiving this visitor, he could treat illness by asking sick people to perform virtuous deeds or by using spells and talismans. He promoted the idea that cultivating virtue was important for achieving longevity and that only the most virtuous people would become immortal.

After Daoling died, his grandson, ZHANG Lu 張魯 (?–216 CE), was sent to attack and occupy the Hanzhong 漢中 commandery in 191. He established an independent religio-political organization with authority throughout the district, combining temporal and spiritual powers. For ceremonial and administrative purposes, he set up 24 parishes. Each one was headed by a libationer (*jijiu* 祭酒), who acted as both priest and chief. He also advocated the establishment of communal facilities to provide free food for the needy. In 215, Zhang surrendered to the late Han emperor CAO Cao 曹操 and for doing so he was conferred the titles of general and marquis. This resulted in the official recognition of the sect by contemporary and later dynasties.

Apart from drawing on the ideas of the *Classic of Great Peace*, the Celestial Masters sect also had its own scripture, the *Laozi Xiang'er Zhu* 老子想爾注 (a commentary on the *Laozi* by Xiang'er). The work interpreted Laozi's ideas from a religious perspective. While Laozi exalted the Dao from which oneness is born, the religious texts treat Laozi himself as a god, and thus the commentary declares the Laozi himself is the very Dao. It argues that Dao is just oneness, and oneness becomes *qi* or material force when it disappears, and in turn becomes the Venerable Lao when *qi* is re-concentrated (Rao 1956: 13). Hence Dao is sometimes impersonal, as described in early Daoist philosophy, and sometimes it is a personal god for religious worship. The scripture also gives a new interpretation of "meditation on the One"; it no longer refers to personal cultivation, but instead promotes obedience to Daoist commandments. Both sovereigns and subjects were encouraged to observe the disciplines of the Dao to realize the Great Peace and immortal life. Clearly the author wished to engage the political and the religious, the scared and the secular in the practice of Daoist religion. This key feature of religious Daoism is manifest in most Daoist scriptures.

2.3 GE Hong, The Theologian Who Embraces Simplicity

GE Hong (283–363?) played a key role in Daoism's maturing from a folk religion into a sect favored by social elites.[8] As a scholar, Ge paid more attention to theology and writing than to serving as a priest. He authored a work named after his own sobriquet, the Master Who Embraces Simplicity (*Baopuzi* 抱朴子), which survives in two sections: the Outer Chapters, which concerns Confucianism, and the Inner Chapters, which contain his thinking about religious Daoism.

Ge asserted that for religious Daoists nothing is more important than following the way to longevity. He believed that anything can become strong and durable with appropriate treatment,[9] and even common medicines and the paltry arts of physicians can cure illnesses and revive those who have just died. He argued that people die because of their desires, old age, illness, poisons, miasmas and chills; therefore if they can avoid these baneful things, they will achieve longevity. If they can discover the secret miraculous medicine for longevity, they should be able to become immortal.

An encyclopedic Daoist scholar, Ge wrote about many approaches to attaining longevity and immortality. He claimed that to attain longevity, "accumulating merit" (*li gongde* 立功德), being kind and affectionate to others, and practicing the Golden Rule are all necessary (Wang 1980: 47). These Daoist injunctions originated in Confucianism and traditional morality, yet were used as a means of achieving longevity. In addition, Ge offered instructions on breathing exercises that could extend one's life span. He believed that by practicing the circulation of breath (*xingqi* 行氣), a particular way to control exhalations and inhalations, the aged can eventually become younger (Wang 1980: 103). Ge also suggested that to prolong life one must know appropriate methods of sexual intercourse, otherwise energy will be frequently lost and breathing exercises will not reach their peak effectiveness. The art of the bedchamber (*fangzhong shu* 房中術) is an important element in Ge's theories of longevity and immortality.

Ge also emphasized "meditation on the One," but for him the meaning of "the One" was changed. In Ge's meditative practice, the One is an internal god who possesses names, shapes, and colors. It can take on either a feminine (yin 陰) form or masculine (yang 陽) form; it can bring on cold and heat, and can protect people (Wang 1980: 296).

However, since Ge also remarked that by doing breathing exercises, calisthenics, and taking herbal medicines, one may be able to extend one's life but not ultimately prevent death, he went to considerable lengths to experiment with the use of gold and cinnabar, to practice alchemy in pursuit of the elixir of immortality. Even though he did not succeed in that aim, he is considered a contributor to the history of Chinese chemical science.

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[8] A different historical record gives 343 as the year of Ge's death. Both are questionable.

[9] See Wang 1960: chapter 14 and p. 101. Translation altered from Ware 1966: 226.

3 The Institutionalization of Religious Daoism

3.1 Celestial Master Daoism

KOU Qianzhi 寇謙之 (365–448) was a reformer who contributed to the institutionalization of religious Daoism. Kou reformulated the theology of the Celestial Masters and led a new movement, the Northern Celestial Masters. Claiming that he had been visited by the Venerable Lao and his grandson, LI Puwen 李譜文, Kou assumed the title of Celestial Master and received Daoist scriptures in connection with those visitations. In 424, Kou brought these scriptures to the court of the Northern Wei 魏 dynasty (386–534), where the rulers put these works into practice, and Kou became the Celestial Master of the Daoist theocracy of the Northern Wei. Supported by the state, Kou instituted the first form of Daoist state religion, and established the first Daoist monasteries.

Kou announced that he had been delegated by the Venerable Lao to purify and reorganize the Daoist community by clearing away the false regulations and practices of the three Zhangs (ZHANG Daoling, his son, and grandson). For example, Kou attacked the hereditary transmission of religious offices within the Zhang family. To undermine the Zhangs' religio-political power, he prohibited the policy of imposing rice and money contributions on the faithful to prevent the formation of subgovernmental enclaves within the state. Kou gave the Daoist religion a strong political and Confucian color, and the most important things became rites and morality. Religion should assist in maintaining the political system and social order, and it should not be appropriated by rebels and their enclaves. This political stand for Daoists naturally was applauded by the Wei court. Kou also attacked the art of the bedchamber, the traditional practices geared to preserve health and longevity, because he found that some of its sexual practices threatened public morals.

The most important contribution in Kou's reformation was the institutionalization of commandments and rites that drew on Buddhism in form and Confucianism in substance. Kou's commandments included loyalty to the court, filial piety, humanity, righteousness, as well as the prohibition of rebellion, betrayal and disobedience to parents or masters. These rules are listed in detail in the scriptures he received from the deities.

While Kou was reforming Daoism in northern China, LU Xiujing 陸修靜 (406–477) was engaged in a similar endeavor in the south. They both wanted to establish a new religion that could be accepted by their sovereigns. As he traveled to visit senior masters in famous mountains, Lu collected Daoist scriptures and searched for traces of immortals. He bested Buddhists and Confucians in public debates with his forceful arguments and enjoyed close connections with the Court of Liu Song dynasty (420–479). He wrote more than thirty Daoist scriptures, but only a few have survived.

Lu contributed to every major Daoist sect of his day. He referred to himself as the Disciple of the Three Caverns (Sandong Dizi 三洞弟子) to show that he was not partial to only one sect and that his scholarship covered every branch

of Daoism. He taught for the Supreme Purity (Shangqing 上清) sect and wrote many scriptures for the Numinous Treasure (Lingbao 靈寶) sect. He reformed the Celestial Masters, carried on GE Hong's doctrines, and transmitted the Three Sovereigns (*san huang* 三皇) scriptures. In 471, he finished the *Catalogue of the Scriptures of the Three Caverns* (*Sandong Jingshu Mulu* 三洞經書目錄), which was the first comprehensive listing of all Daoist texts.

In view of the decline of the Celestial Masters in his day, Lu attempted to strengthen ties between the religious hierarchy and Daoist believers by strictly enforcing observance of the "three meeting days" (*sanhui ri* 三會日) activities. He required all Daoist people (*daomin* 道民) to attend the three largest Daoist services in their communities each year to report faults and merits, to get new orders and laws from the Daoist officer (*Daoguan* 道官), and to update their household registration.

In addition, Lu formalized the role of liturgies to restrain the mind, mouth, and body (*san ye* 三業), which are all believed to be source of sin. Drawing upon Confucian morals and Buddhist ideas, Lu refined and introduced new Daoist liturgies, as well as the "nine rites and twelve practices" (*jiu ji shier fa* 九祭十二法). These greatly expanded Daoist ritual by combining those of different sects. For Lu nothing was better than Daoist rituals, which were the essential approach to Dao, and by following them everything would succeed. Master Lu's work in these several areas gave the Daoist church a clearer institutional presence.

Another influential scholar who endeavored to develop the Daoist religion is TAO Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536). Tao made tremendous contributions to the Supreme Purity sect and also founded the Maoshan sect 茅山宗, which grew to be the most important school of religious Daoism during the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907). After his resignation from the Tang court, Tao pursued a hermitic life on Mount Mao. His prominent scholarship as well as his political skills won him fame and the moniker "Premier of the Mountains." He attracted the emperor's patronage and enjoyed favored treatment at court even after the emperor officially converted to Buddhism and forbade Daoism in 504.

Tao's encyclopedic work, the *Records of Preserving Nature and Prolonging Life* (*Yangxing yanming lu* 養性延命錄), summarizes his theories regarding immortality. It assembles many stories and longevity doctrines, and quotes more than 30 ancient books. Unlike Zhuangzi's thought, Tao believed that our destiny depends on ourselves and not on the Heaven, though he also believe that human life is made by nature or Heaven. The Dao of the Heaven is spontaneous, but the way of human beings is decided by themselves. To preserve spirit and body, he emphasized the significance of moderation in desires and emotion. For health, he advocated the revival of traditional Daoist arts, such as the circulation of breath, guiding the breath (*daoyin* 導引), calisthenics, the art of the bedchamber, and alchemy. Tao also spent considerable effort compiling and publishing many traditional medical classics. For example, his *Collected Commentaries on Medicinal Herbs* (*Bencao jizhu* 本草集註), which also includes 67 inorganic substances, gives us some sense of his scientific bent and accounts of his alchemical experiments. Tao wrote many books about alchemy, too, most of which, unfortunately, have been lost.

To organize the many Daoist deities, Tao wrote the *Outline of the Ranks of True Deities* (*Zhenling weiye tu* 真靈位業圖). More than 400 deities are presented in seven gradations, and each gradation has one main god with many gods in different supporting positions.

Tao's thoughts on religion were greatly influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism. He quoted Confucian classics to explain Daoist theories and adapted Buddhist doctrine to develop Daoist theology. He insisted that these "three teachings" are all good and should be kept in harmony. His thought opened a path for the development of new Daoist sects.

3.2 Complete Perfection Daoism and Later Developments in Daoist Religion

After the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–581), Daoism matured into a fully institutionalized religion. In the Tang dynasty, it enjoyed the patronage of the ruling house. Emperors of both the Northern and Southern Song 宋 (960–1279) were also enthusiastic believers and patrons of Daoism. New schools and texts developed, and some scholars, for example, CHENG Xuanying 成玄英 (mid-seventh century), SIMA Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (655–735), DU Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933), and ZHANG Boduan 張伯端 (987–1082) contributed to Daoist literature from the seventh to the eleventh centuries. The most important school in late Daoist history was Complete Perfection (Quanzhen 全真) Daoism founded by WANG Zhe 王嚞 (1113–1169).

WANG Zhe, also known by his clerical name, WANG Chong Yang 王重陽, claimed to have met Daoist sages who imparted to him secret oral teachings. Thereafter he left home for Mount Zhongnan 終南山, where he took up an ascetic's life. Eight years later he burned his hermitage and journeyed alone to Shandong 山東 Province where he formally established the Complete Perfection sect and received seven disciples who were later called the Seven Perfected Ones of Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen qi zi* 全真七子).

After Wang's death, these seven leading disciples continued their self-cultivation and did successful missionary work in Shaanxi 陝西, Hebei 河北, Shangdong 山東 and Henan 河南 provinces. Among them, the youngest, QIU Chuji 丘處機 (1148–1227), was crucial to the popularization of Complete Perfection Daoism. In 1219, in response to a summons from Genghis Khan (1162?–1227), Qiu trekked more than 10,000 miles with 18 disciples to visit the ruler of the Mongol Empire in central Asia. The ruler referred to him as "Immortal Qiu" and put him in charge of monks and nuns all over the country. This was how the Complete Perfection sect achieved its popularity and prevalence.

Complete Perfection Daoism is characterized by monasticism, asceticism, and self-cultivation. It is the Complete Perfection sect that began to base itself in monasteries, although the practice of celibacy to maintain and purify one's powers had been embraced by some adepts earlier. Qiu taught that femininity can destroy

masculinity as water extinguishes fire. Therefore, to practice the Way one must first avoid sexual desire and activity. Following WANG Zhe's teaching in the *Fifteen Statements on the Establishment of the Complete Perfection Religion* (*Chongyang lijiao shiwu lun* 重陽立教十五論), early Complete Perfection masters emphasized the importance of an ascetic life. Later Daoist priests modified many of the conventions of asceticism, but the essential spirit of Complete Perfection Daoism still resides the practice of a simple life.

Self-cultivation is also an essential element of Complete Perfection teaching. Nature (*xing* 性) and life (*ming* 命) are the two basic concepts, and the cultivation of one's nature is more important than life itself. To realize one's true nature, one has to keep the mind tranquil and refined, and strive to be empty of all perceptions, cognition, and feelings; in this state one will have no afflictions. A way to achieve tranquility and a purified mind is by sitting still, which shuts off the four gates—the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose—and not letting external things get inside. By purifying the mind and returning to nothingness, one can directly reach immortality (Cleary 1991: 133).

In fact, this method of self-cultivation was developed from theories of inner alchemy (*neidan* 内丹), which are generally based on Daoist cosmology. Daoists believe that Dao generated the One, the One generated the two, the two generated the three, and the three developed into myriad things; while the practice of inner alchemy operates conversely. To uplift and combine the three inherent elements—vitality (*jing* 精), life energy (*qi* 氣), and spirit (*shen* 神)—in the human body so they become the elixir of immortality, one has to tame the thought process of the mind. The sect claimed that its methods of cultivation were the Supreme Way (*Shang dao* 上道), and by these means Complete Perfection Daoists pursue a spiritual immortality instead of the physical.

Complete Perfection Daoists advocated the integration of Daoism with Buddhism and Confucianism. They also practiced them in combination. Both the language and ideas of Buddhism and Confucianism are adopted in its doctrine of purifying the mind and envisioning nature (*mingxin jianxing* 明心見性). The Complete Perfection sect is representative of the trend to integrate the three traditions.

Over the course of its long history, religious Daoism has generated many kinds of works including scriptures, temples, and sculptures. Its contributions have enriched the cultural treasury of Daoist religion. Its influence reaches not only the fields of philosophy and religion but has also permeated every realm of life in China—ethics, politics, economy, literature, art, music, chemistry, medicine, calisthenics, health cultivation, and social customs.[10]

[10]The work described in this paper was partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China. (Project no.CUHK447909)

4 Appendix: Between *Fengshui* and Religious Daoism

In traditional China, religious activities were not confined to theology and rituals; they encompassed as well a series of folk ceremonies, sacrifices, witchcraft, and even taboos. Chinese religion has all along responded to a number of secular concerns, and this gave rise to the development of *fengshui*. The Chinese word *fengshui* 風水 is comprised of the two characters, wind and water, the most important elements that contain and spread vital force. *Fengshui* involves divining topographical features—location, direction, and terrain—for locating and orienting a tomb or residence. It is much more complicated, popular, and important in China than geomancy in other civilizations.

This eclectic blend of Chinese traditions constitutes a body of flexible practice that promotes a sense of spiritual balance in human dealings with the earth and heaven. It is a mixture of religious sentiment, superstition, and observational science. Its impact on the man-made environments of the Chinese mainland has been great and, with the overseas migration of Chinese people, its influence is becoming more widespread (He 1998:10).

Despite there being no direct record of the origins of *fengshui*, written sources from antiquity suggest that the kernel of the tradition can be traced back to divination methods used to locate living spaces (*puzhai* 卜宅 and *xiangzhai* 相宅), which were practiced during the Shang 商 (sixteenth–eleventh BCE) and Zhou 周 (eleventh century–770 BCE) dynasties. From the Former and Later Han 漢 dynasties (207 BCE–220), the name for the discipline was *kanyu* 堪輿, which originally meant heaven and earth or the Dao of heaven and earth, but was conventionally used as a term for geomancy, synonymous with *fengshui*.

The word *fengshui* first appeared as a technical term in a guide to funeral rituals called the *Book of the Tomb* 葬书, which is regarded as one of the most important classical works in *fengshui* history, and was attributed to GUO Pu 郭璞 (276–324 CE), a poet and scholar of the Jin dynasty (265–420). In a frequently quoted passage, the author writes: "Concerning the tomb, let it ride upon the living breath (*shengqi* 生氣, vital force). The Classics say that *qi* (vital force) is dispersed when it rides on the wind, and is halted when it is bounded by a watercourse; (thus,) the ancients were able to accumulate it and prevent it from dispersing. . . . And so it was called *fengshui*."[11] But what is the relation between *fengshui* and Daoism?

First of all, *fengshui* and the Daoist religion share a common background and certain ideas, such as using magic, believing in legends of immortals, abiding by the principles of yin and yang, the Five Elements, and the Eight Trigrams. *The Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) is a strong link between them, highlighting their similarities: both emphasize vital and material force (*qi* 氣), correlative thinking (correspondences to cosmological patterns rather than causal logics),

[11] The text of the *Book of the Tomb* has different visions. This quotation is a translation based on Dr. HE Xiaoxin's research (He 1998).

special treatment by color, orientation and number, and simple abstractions based on the structure of the human body. One of the classic *fengshui* manuals, *The House Canon* 宅經—sometimes referred to as *The Yellow Emperor's House Canon* 黃帝宅經—was also collected in Daoist canon. The four spiritual animals (blue dragon, white tiger, red phoenix, and black tortoise), which are idealized models used by *fengshui* to represent the configuration of landscapes, are also the protective gods of the Daoist religion.

A well-known phenomenon is the shared employment of magic. Daoist talismans and charms are also popular in *fengshui* practice. It can be said that the magic used in *fengshui* is the same as that employed by Daoist priests. Both bestow sacred power to an object or a person, who is protected by apotropaic symbols. For example, both *fengshui* and Daoism focus on the use of a mirror. Daoists assign mirrors with special powers so that a mirror is almost always included in the "million treasures bag" carried by Daoist priests. A mirror should be worn during alchemy practice or ritual performance. Some priests even wrote books about how to use mirrors. *Fengshui* also attributes to mirrors strange powers. Called demon detectors or "monster-revealing mirrors" 照妖鏡, they are often hung on the front door of a house to deflect evil. No wonder, with these kinds of overlap, that f*engshui* masters are called Daoist priests in some areas, while real Daoist priests may also employ the above methods to help people improve their *fengshui*. Certain ceremonies around the construction of buildings should not proceed without the presence of a Daoist priest.

Still, we should not confuse *fengshui* with Daoism or insist that *fengshui* originated from Daoism, or vice versa. In fact, they developed in parallel, almost like twins. While borrowing each other's ideas, both have maintained their own identity. This can be seen in the following distinctions:

A different purpose. Daoist religion aims to cultivate individual spiritual longevity, while *fengshui* protects family life in the secular world. With *fenghsui*, the eternal prosperity of the clan can be ensured through reproduction from generation to generation. In this sense, the construction of a family house is not meant to last forever; the expectation is that it will be reconstructed every sixty years. This is called "continuing the vital force."

A different way of thinking. Daoists regard Dao as the highest universal force, highlighting its absolutely transcendent and miraclulous nature. Dao is always abstract in form, with unlimited properties. *Fengshui*, on the other hand, always tries to translate abstract concepts into specific shapes. *Fengshui* specialists may go about this in different ways. For example, one *fengshui* school always examines the shapes in the actual topography, while another school uses a compass, a specific tool, to come to decisions.

A different focus. Daoists pay much attention to maintaining a healthy body as a way to their goal of achieving long life, even immortality. Therefore, they focus on the human body as microcosm, which shares in the principles of life across the universe. Theoretically and conventionally, the major task of religious Daoism is promoting and guiding individual self-cultivation and teaching exercises to help people become immortal. *Fengshui*, however, focuses on ordinary people's

mundane life and environment. By studying people's surroundings, *fengshui* tries to establish good relations with the natural world to ensure humans' physical and psychological health, as well as general security and prosperity.

To sum up, the relation between Daoist religion and *fengshui* is intriguing: on one hand, religious Daoism is close to *fengshui* in many respects; on the other hand, it may override *fengshui* recommendations. When Daoist priests want to locate a site for certain purpose, they may employ *fengshui*'s "four spiritual animals" model, yet may chose a site at the top of a famous mountain, which goes against *fengshui* principles. *Fenghsui* masters may make use of Daoism's sacred influence in social life, and borrow most of the talismans, charms, and even altars used by Daoist priests, but in the end they will insists on the principles of their art. *Fengshui* masters would never advise people to build a house (or tomb) on a mountaintop. To them, the ideal location is neither the top nor the foot of a mountain but at mid-mountain, at the mountain's heart.

Throughout history, *fengshui* practice has been strongly criticized for its apparent superstition and absurdity. But this practice is nonetheless deeply rooted in common people's everyday life. The principles of *fengshui* have been widely applied to settlement design, to architecture, and to the living spaces of Chinese housing, villages, cities, and temples. There is a firmly held folk belief among Chinese people that the orientation and layout of a structure, and the performance of appropriate actions at the proper time will ensure health, good fortune, well-being, and prosperity. Because of its enduring and wide influence, more and more scholars are paying attention to this special technology and its place in the culture. Many have noted how *fengshui* connects folk beliefs, Chinese religions and philosophy, and Chinese science and cosmology.[12]

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[12] See Eitel 1979; Feuchtwang 1974; Lee 1986; Ruitenbeek 1993; and He 1998.

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Chapter 21
Daoism and Confucianism

Karyn Lai

This chapter relies on a distinction between Confucianism and Daoism made during the Han dynasty (漢朝: 206 BCE–220 CE) and further perpetuated in Chinese intellectual history. It examines the connections between pre-Qin (秦朝: 221–206 BCE) Daoist and Confucian philosophies, focusing on their differences as well as similarities. While it has been traditionally accepted that there are many tensions, and even antagonism, between concepts and approaches in Daoist and Confucian thought, the discussion here also focuses on the historical linkages and philosophical continuities that at times blur the distinction between the two. The primary comparison here will be conducted at three levels: the individual within its environment, the socio-political world, and the cultivation of the self. These three levels of analysis are organized in three sections, from the more inclusive to the more specific. However, the sections are only theoretical divisions, since both Daoist and Confucian philosophies emphasize a concept of selfhood that focuses on an individual's relationships with others, within a larger natural and cosmic environment. To more fully understand these comparisons, it is important also to examine the intellectual climate within which interactions between so-called Daoism and Confucianism took place. These details, including information gleaned from relatively recently discovered texts, are not merely tangential to our understanding of both philosophies. Representations of the two philosophical traditions by thinkers and in texts through history are central to how we understand the relation between them. Due to restrictions of length, my discussion here will concentrate on the foundational period in Chinese intellectual history.[1]

[1]It is important to note here that the relation between Daoism and Confucianism fluctuated through different periods. For example, during the Song dynasty (Song Chao 宋朝: 960–1279 CE),

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1 Introduction

How do we make sense of Daoism and Confucianism in the pre-Qin and Han periods? The most influential early narrative of their relationship appears in the *Shiji* (史記, Records of the Grand Historian), which relates an account of the meeting between Kongzi (孔子) and Laozi (老子).[2,3] There, Kongzi is overawed by Laozi's insights on the rites (*li* 禮), and he pays tribute to Laozi by characterizing him as a dragon. This theme is given play in a number of texts of around the same period, including in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子)[4] and the *Liji* (禮記, Record of Rites).[5]

Although these accounts do not explicitly mention hostility between Laozi (Lao Dan) and Kongzi, there is an implicit suggestion that these key figures belong to different traditions. To appreciate the implications of this narrative, we need to understand that the *Shiji* was written in a period when historiographers (*taishi* 太史) held office in the imperial administration. Two significant histories of the Han period, the *Shiji* itself, and the *Qian Hanshu* (前漢書, History of the Former Han), did not simply "recount" the events and people of the past. They used the past as illustrations of examples to follow, behaviors to avoid, exemplars of benevolent rule, and so on.[6] Thus ideas were brought into the service of political and administrative enterprise (see Schwartz 1985: 237–54; Graham 1989: 374–6; 379–80; De Bary and Bloom 1999: 298–9).

In this regard, the antagonism between Daoism and Confucianism is at least partly a creation of historiographers to justify their ideologies and secure their positions (refer to Loewe 1999; and G.E.R. Lloyd 2002: 126–147). Still, the theme

Confucians such as Cheng Hao (程顥: 1032–1085) and his brother Cheng Yi (程頤: 1033–1107), as well as Zhu Xi (朱熹: 1130–1200), were fierce critics of Daoist thought.

[2]In the *Shiji*, there are two references to encounters between the two men. The first occurs in a chapter on the details of Kongzi (*Shiji* 47; "Kongzi Shijia" 〈孔子世家〉) and the second in a chapter relating to the details of Laozi and Han Fei (*Shiji* 63; "Laozi Han Fei Liezhuan" 〈老子韓非列傳〉).

[3]Angus Graham believes that the earliest reference to Kongzi's learning experience with Lao Dan is from the *Lüshi Chunqiu* (*Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* 《吕氏春秋》), a text dated to around 240 BCE. It mentions three people Kongzi has learnt from: Lao Dan (老聃), Meng Su Kui (孟蘇夔) and Jing Su (靖叔) (Graham 1998: 27).

[4]In the fifth chapter of the *Zhuangzi* ("De Chong Fu" 〈德充符〉), Kongzi does not speak directly with Lao Dan. However, Lao Dan comments that Kongzi has not acquired complete freedom from a number of worldly concerns. In the fourteenth chapter of *Zhuangzi* ("Tianyun" 〈天運〉), there is an account of the meeting between Kongzi and Lao Dan that resembles the *Shiji* account. It is unclear whether the *Zhuangzi* account may have been the source of the *Shiji* account (refer to Graham 1998: 25).

[5]In the *Liji*, a work of the last century BCE, Lao Dan, a senior, addresses Kongzi by his name Qiu (Graham 1998: 26).

[6]Burton Watson discusses the nature of these writings: "The function of history . . . is twofold: to impart tradition and to provide edifying moral examples as embodied in the classics. These two traditions, one recording the words and deeds of history, the other illustrating moral principles through historical incidents, run through all Chinese historiography" (1999: 368).

of antagonism between the traditions continues to be a subject of study into the present. While many scholars believe that the encounter story between Laozi and Kongzi was perpetuated by those of Daoist persuasion to assert the superiority of Daoist thought, in an interesting twist, Angus Graham has argued that the Confucians were responsible for promoting these encounters because they were keen to establish Kongzi's flexibility in his willingness to learn from others (1998: 27, 36).[7]

It is important also to note that not all thinkers during the Han advocated either a Confucian or a Daoist doctrine. Some of them synthesized and integrated themes and ideas from different traditions. For example, although DONG Zhongshu was of Confucian persuasion, he drew upon the concepts *yin-yang* (陰陽), *qi* (氣), and the Daoist notion of passivity to explicate the (Confucian) triadic relation between Heaven, earth and humanity (Queen, in De Bary and Bloom 1999: 295–310).

A good example of a text that brings together Confucian and Daoist themes is the *Huainanzi* (淮南子, The Masters of Huainan), written around the middle of the second century BCE, either by LIU An (劉安, 180?–122? BCE), the king of Huainan, or under his patronage (Major 1993: 3–5). The text quotes extensively from a range of sources including the *Zhuangzi*, the Laozi (老子), the *Hanfeizi* (韓非子) and the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. It integrates seemingly conflicting views, such as those of Zhuangzi and HAN Fei. It also combines the Daoist themes of quiescence (*jing* 靜) and non-action (*wuwei* 無為) with the Confucian concept of human nature (*xing* 性), which is grounded in Heaven's way (*tiandao* 天道). The 21 chapters of the *Huainanzi* embody the spirit of Chinese philosophy during the Han period, with its tendency to combine concepts and themes from different strands of thought.[8]

The *Yijing* (易經, Classic of Change) also played a prominent role in shaping the debates of this period. Although its earliest sections are dated to around the ninth century BCE, later additions date perhaps from the late Zhou dynasty (周朝, 1122–256 BCE). These additions were called the "ten appendices" (*Shi Yi* 十翼 or *Yi Zhuan* 易傳). The commentaries are philosophically significant for their explorations of the rationale for using hexagrams in divination and their focus on

[7]Graham also argues that the identification of Lao Dan with Laozi, the founder of Daoism, was not current with the story but established in stages: (a) Confucians promote the story about the willingness of Kongzi to learn from Lao Dan, probably an archivist. This story was current in around the 4th century BCE. (b) The adoption of Lao Dan as a spokesperson for "Chuangism" in the "Neipian" (〈內篇〉) of the *Zhuangzi*, by about 300 BCE. (c) Lao Dan is identified with Laozi; this helps to mark out "Laoism" as a distinctive doctrinal stream. (d) In order to render the *Laozi* acceptable to the Qin, various stories were promoted. These include Lao Dan as the Grand Historiographer who in 374 BCE predicted the rise of Qin, journeyed to the west and wrote the book of 5,000 characters for the gatekeeper, Yin Xi (尹喜). This stage and the previous one were completed by about 240 BCE. (e) Existing schools of thought were classified, as for instance, into the six doctrinal groups in the *Shiji*. According to this classification, both "Laoism" and "Chuangism" came under one doctrine, "*Dao*-ism" (Daojia). Since Lao Dan's dates are prior to those of Zhuangzi's, Lao Dan was identified as the founder of Daoism (Graham 1998: 36–7).

[8]Refer to Charles Le Blanc 1985, John Major 1993, Roger Ames 1994, and Paul Goldin 1999 for discussions of synthesis and/or syncretism in the *Huainanzi*.

the underlying worldviews of the *Yijing*. During the Han dynasty, themes from the *Yijing*, especially those of interdependency, change and transformation, were applied to a wide range of issues in cosmology, astronomy, politics, society and its institutions, ethics, health and personal well-being.

Other texts from the late Warring States (*Zhanguo* 戰國) and Han periods, including the *Guanzi* (管子, Writings of Master Guan) and the *Huangdi Neijing* (黃帝內經, The Inner Canon of Huangdi), also incorporate syntheses of ideas from different doctrinal groups.[9]

While the close examination of these texts lies beyond our discussion, the issue of synthesis is important to our understanding of Confucian and Daoist philosophies. It underlies questions including: Did thinkers of this time consider Confucianism and Daoism antithetical? If there were distinctions between Confucianism and Daoism at different points in Chinese intellectual history, what were they, and what were the key characteristics of each of these philosophies?

A set of texts discovered in 1993 at Guodian (郭店), Hubei (湖北) Province, were published in 1998 as a collection, the *Guodian Chumu zhujian* (郭店楚墓竹简, *The Bamboo Slips from the Chu Tomb at Guodian*). More than 800 bamboo slips were found in the tomb, and from these, fourteen Confucian texts and two Daoist texts, including portions of the *Laozi*, were identified. Robert Henricks suggests that these slips could have belonged to a teacher's philosophical library (2000: 5). The texts are believed to date from no later than 278 BCE, and perhaps even before 300 BCE (Liu 2003a: 149).

This collection presents numerous instances where Confucian texts seem to have "borrowed" from Daoist ideas. These discussions obfuscate precise distinctions between Confucianism and Daoism (Liu 2003a: 150–1). Recent work on the Guodian texts focus on their significance for philological issues, intellectual history and philosophical matters. While the literature is too vast to list here, it is important to note that the discussions in the texts draw from ideas and vocabulary of what had previously been thought of as distinct, Confucian and Daoist, traditions (Holloway 2008; Meyer 2008: 309–16). One example of this is the Guodian *Laozi* which, dated earlier than received versions of the *Laozi*, does not on the whole seem to disagree with Confucian values and concepts as the received versions do. For example, received versions of *Laozi* 19 are critical of Confucian concepts such as sageliness (*sheng* 聖), wisdom (*zhi* 智), benevolence (*ren* 仁), and rightness (*yi* 義), while

[9] An issue of philosophical interest concerns the nature of these syntheses: were those who articulated the various views successful in integrating concepts and themes from different strands of thought? Or were the attempts at synthesis only partially successful, resulting in views that incorporated inconsistent mixes of concepts and themes? It has been suggested that earlier attempts (during the late Warring States and early in the Han period) at drawing together strands from different traditions had limited success; these attempts and their resultant philosophies are often labeled 'syncretic'. In contrast, the method of synthesis—drawing together different concepts and themes in a more or less coherent unity—is thought to be a characteristic of Chinese thought of the (later) Han period. See, for example, the chapter divisions and titles in De Bary and Bloom's *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. Chapter 9, "Syncretic Visions of State, Society, and Cosmos," cover texts from the late Warring States to the early Han period (pp. 235–282). Chapter 10, "The Imperial Order and Han Synthesis," discusses texts of the Han period (pp. 283–352).

the same passage in the Guodian *Laozi* takes issue with intelligence (*zhi* 知) and disputation (*bian* 辯) (Liu 2003b: 231). According to Liu, the Guodian texts prompt us to rethink the relationship between pre-Qin Confucianism and Daoism (Liu 2003a: 151). This is an important challenge to the view that antagonism between these traditions rests only on deep-seated philosophical and axiological differences, rather than historical circumstance as well.

Let us now turn to a comparison of Confucian and Daoist philosophies at three different but interrelated levels: the individual within the environment, the socio-political world, and cultivation of the self.

2 The Individual Within the Environment

Both Confucianism and Daoism uphold a notion of self that is understood in terms of its relationships and its place within a broader environment. Daoist texts such as the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* express this awareness at a number of levels. They emphasize natural events as well as human interdependence with other life-forms. They also consider the effects of the social and political environment on the individual. Discussions within the Confucian tradition show similar awareness of the individual's embeddedness within a larger environmental context. There is, however, an important difference between Daoist and Confucian conceptions of self-in-environment as the latter highlights the exclusive capacities and achievements of humanity. We will examine this and other comparisons in the following discussion.

In Confucian thought, awareness of the environment is articulated first in terms of the contexts within which human interactions occur. The family context, neighborhoods, and communities are critical to the development of individuals (*Lunyu* 論語 2.5–8, 4.1, 2.20, 12.19, 13.11 and 13.13). The right kinds of contexts and interactions with paradigmatic people will facilitate the inculcation of relational values such as *xiao* (孝 filial piety) and *ren*. Where the leaders of society are not guided by a vision of collective human good, individuals cannot thrive. This theme occupies a central position in the Confucian vision of good government (*renzheng* 仁政). This vision is articulated in different ways by different Confucian thinkers. For example, Xunzi (荀子 310?–219? BCE) argues that a regulatory socio-political framework comprised by *li* (rites, social ritual), *yi* (rightness) and *fa* (法 standards, penal laws) is necessary for the establishment of orderly society (*Xunzi* 荀子, "Xing E" 性惡). In Mengzi's (孟子: 385?–312? BCE) philosophy, a compassionate society is a natural extension of inherent human goodness:

> Mencius said, "The ability possessed by humans without having been acquired by learning is intuitive ability [人之所不學而能者, 其良能也]. The knowledge possessed by them without the exercise of further thought is their intuitive knowledge. Children carried in the arms all know to love their parents [孩提之童, 無不知愛其親者]. When they are grown a little, they all know to respect their elder brothers. Filial affection for parents is a manifestation of benevolence. Respect for elders is a manifestation of righteousness. That is all; these belong to all under heaven." (*Mengzi* 7A.15, trans. adapted from the translation by Legge 1981: 943–4)

In the *Mengzi* and later Confucian texts, the concept "heaven" (*tian* 天) is the source or ground of human morality (although we need to note that *tian* is not an absolute or transcendent basis of morality). In the *Xunzi*, *tian* is not only associated with human morality, it also encapsulates the idea of the natural world within which humans are situated. The *Zhongyong* (中庸, Doctrine of the Mean), a Confucian text dating from around the third century BCE,[10] places humanity within a broader cosmological context. It emphasizes the partnership of humanity with heaven and earth (*di* 地):

唯天下至誠, 為能盡其性, 能盡其性, 則能盡人之性, 能盡人之性, 則能盡物之性, 能盡物之性, 則可以贊天地之化育, 可以贊天地之化育, 則可以與天地參矣. (*Zhongyong* 22, Legge 1981: 92–93)

Of all under Heaven, only the person of complete sincerity can realize his nature to the greatest extent. Given that he is able to do this, he can help others realize their natures to the greatest extent. Given that he is able to do this, he can help the realization of the natures of animals and things to the fullest extent. Given that he is able to do this, he can assist in the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a trinity. (Adapted from the translation by Legge, *ibid.*)

This doctrine of the human partnership with Heaven and Earth situates the Confucian concept of humanity, as well as human achievements and human well-being, in a larger cosmological perspective. At the same time, it amplifies the status of humanity. In contrast, Daoist philosophy tends not to elevate the status of humanity but rather to emphasize the intertwined circumstances of humans with other beings and aspects of the environment. While the *Zhongyong* passage above stresses the heightened role and responsibilities of humanity, *Laozi* 5 draws attention to the relative equality of all things (*wanwu* 萬物: lit. ten thousand things):

天地不仁, 以萬物為芻狗;
聖人不仁, 以百姓為芻狗. (WANG Bi version, Liu 2006: 129)

Heaven and Earth are not centrally focused on humaneness. They regard the ten thousand things as straw dogs.[11]

The sage is not centrally focused on humaneness. He regards all people as straw dogs. (Author's translation)

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[10] The *Zhongyong* was originally thought to have been written by Kongzi's grandson, Zisi (子思) as part of the text *Zisizi* (《子思子》). Contemporary scholars doubt this on the basis of extensive examination of its intellectual content (An 2003).

[11] The notion of "straw dogs" is philosophically interesting. Wang Bi interprets the phrase to mean "straw and dogs," referring to the different categories in the natural world and how they are interdependent (Rump 1979: 17). D.C. Lau notes in his translation that "[i]n the *T'ien yun* chapter in the *Chuang tzu* it is said that straw dogs were treated with the greatest deference before they were used as an offering, only to be discarded and trampled upon as soon as they had served their purpose." (1963: 61). According to Lau's analysis, the straw dog is central to the sacrifice. However, taken out of that context, the straw dog loses its significance. If all things are as straw dogs, they are significant only within particular contexts. Furthermore, all things, including humanity, must pass on when the 'sacrifice' is over. Ames and Hall note: "There is nothing in nature, high or low, that is revered in perpetuity" (2003: 85). Could this passage also be understood as an ominous warning about attempts to elevate humanity?

The suggestion that Heaven and earth are "not humane" (*bu ren*) can be interpreted in a number of ways. It may be understood as a firm denial of the key Confucian concept, *ren*. Secondly, it may be taken in a more neutral manner to suggest that Heaven and Earth are not circumscribed by humanly-constructed notions of morality, especially as encapsulated in the concept *ren*. Third, there is a more positive understanding of this phrase, where *tian di bu ren* is taken to mean that Heaven and Earth are impartial and bring positive benefit to all things, not just humanity alone.[12] All interpretations of the phrase *bu ren* involve, at some level, rejection of the artificial elevation of humanity as a singularly select group.

Daoist attention to the environment is most prominent in the concept *ziran* (自然), which may be understood in terms of naturalness or "unadorned simplicity" (Liu 1999: 229). While the concept *ziran* may refer to physical aspects of the natural environment, it most appropriately refers to *processes* rather than the *substance* of nature. Chung-ying Cheng expresses this succinctly:

> . . . *tzu-jan* [*ziran*] is not something beyond and above the Tao [Dao]. It is the movement of the Tao as the Tao, namely as the underlying unity of all things as well as the underlying source of the life of all things. One important aspect of *tzu-jan* is that the movement of things must come from the internal life of things and never results from engineering or conditioning by an external power. (1986: 356)

Two important aspects of *ziran* are evoked in this analysis. First, its approach is oppositional to that which seeks to regulate and coordinate. In this regard, *ziran* is associated with the concepts of simplicity (*pu* 樸) and stillness (*jing* 靜) (*Laozi* 37). Second, the approach is articulated in conjunction with a philosophical framework that upholds the spontaneous and mutual transformation of all things:

> Tao [Dao] invariably takes no action [*wuwei*], and yet there is nothing left undone [道常無為, 而無不為].
> If kings and barons can keep it, all things will transform spontaneously [侯王若能守之, 萬物將自化] . . . . (*Laozi* 37, trans. Chan 1963: 166)

The concept *ziran* expresses a commitment to a more inclusive view of life than that articulated in Confucian philosophy, which is, as we have seen, fundamentally grounded in human relationships (*qin qin* 親親) (Liu 2006: 61). Even though these personal relationships gradually flourish into general compassion for everyone (*fan ai zhong* 汎愛衆), the concept *ziran* is resolutely inclusive. It incorporates a broader concern for all life without preferring the human.

Appreciation of other species and awareness of the natural environment are also expressed in the *Zhuangzi*. While the text does not single out human-centeredness

[12] Wang Bi's analysis of this passage presents the positive rendition of "*tian di bu ren*": "Heaven and Earth leave what is natural (Tzu-jan [*ziran*], Self-so) alone. They do nothing and create nothing. The myriad things manage and order themselves. Therefore they are not benevolent. One who is benevolent will create things, set things up, bestow benefits on them and influence them. He gives favors and does something. When he creates, sets things up, bestows benefits on things and influences them, then things will lose their true being . . . If nothing is done to the myriad things, each will accord with its function, and everything is then self-sufficient" (trans. Rump 1979: 17).

for criticism, it offers accounts from the perspective of many other different beings, hence implicitly challenging the human perspective as the only valid and authoritative one. The *Zhuangzi* is concerned more broadly with those who claim exclusivity and, in the allegory that compares (human) speech with the cheeping of chickens, the text rejects those whose views claim to be singularly correct (*Zhuangzi,* "Qi Wu Lun" 齊物論). To facilitate these discussions, the *Zhuangzi* sets out arguments from the perspectives of birds, fish, crickets and monkeys, which parody the confined nature of particular doctrines and their attendant conceptions of human good.

Notwithstanding the subtle differences in Daoist and Confucian conceptions of selfhood, both philosophies share a view of the individual-in-environment. An interesting expression of this idea is presented by David Hall and Roger Ames. They articulate the idea of embeddedness with reference to the concepts of field and focus. According to this view, an individual, a focus or focal point, is necessarily situated within a field, its context. It is only with respect to an individual's place in the field that we can fully understand its actions, commitments, achievements, and the like:

> A particular is a focus that is both defined by and defines a context—a field. The field is hologrammatic; that is, it is so constituted that each discriminate "part" contains the adumbrated whole. (Hall and Ames 1987: 238)

According to Hall and Ames, the theme of embeddedness is present in both Daoism and Confucianism; they suggest that the schema of focus and field best captures the distinctiveness of this theme.[13] As we will see later, the conception of individual-in-environment has many important implications for Chinese philosophy. Not only does it support a distinctive conception of selfhood, it also generates a practical approach to matters by focusing on contextual factors.[14]

With respect to our increasing awareness of the natural environment and the urgency of the environmental crisis in the present, we should draw on conceptual resources in Confucian and Daoist philosophies to enlighten our debates.

[13]Hall and Ames state that "Our basic claim is that the early Confucians and Taoists in large measure share a common process cosmology defined in terms of "focus" and "field."" (1987: 238–9). See also Ames and Hall 2003: 11–29. According to Hall and Ames, the criteria for assessing the focus-field self are based on the appropriate or most fitting action given the circumstances of that particular situation. This aesthetic mode of evaluation, which in Confucianism "permits the mutual interdependence of all things to be assessed in terms of particular contexts defined by social roles and functions" (Hall and Ames 1987: 248), is called '*ars contextualis*'—the art of contextualization. Ames explains how *ars contextualis* works in practical terms: "[The Classical Chinese] expressed a "this-worldly" concern for the concrete details of immediate existence as a basis for exercising their minds in the direction of generalities and ideals. They began from an acknowledgement of the uniqueness and importance of the particular person and the particular historical event to the world, while at the same time, stressing the interrelatedness of this person or event with the immediate context" (Ames 1986: 320).

[14]Naturally, we would expect many insightful comparisons between Chinese and Western philosophy in their conceptions of selfhood and views of embeddedness. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine the comparisons.

For example, the idea of self-in-environment casts doubt on adversarial conceptions of humans, nonhumans and the natural environment. More specifically, it focuses on relationships, interactions and processes; these are aspects of the environment that are overlooked in a simplistic understanding of the natural world in purely physicalist terms. To make the most of resources available in Chinese philosophy, contemporary scholarship might undertake more substantive explorations in this area.[15]

3 The Socio-political World

In the unstable political climate of the Chunqiu period (春秋, 722–476 BCE), Kongzi believed that social rectification was necessary to restore the ethico-political order that had prevailed in the earlier part of the Zhou dynasty (*Lunyu* 3.14, 7.5). The Confucians placed the onus on those in power, urging them to live ethically-cultivated lives and, through that, to provide standards the common people could follow (*Lunyu* 12.17–19). The leader is visible and unshakable, like the North Polar Star (*Lunyu* 2.1). He implements institutions and practices such as *zhengming* (正名, rectification of behaviors to accord with titles), *li* and *yi* (*Lunyu* 13.3, 2.3, 16.10). These practices are grounded in the ideal of humaneness (*ren*), a distinguishing characteristic of humanity that must be nurtured in order that all may thrive in their shared environment.

While some aspects of this vision of moral leadership are desirable, there is concern about elements of paternalism and authoritarianism in the Confucian model of ideal government. Debates on these issues are complicated by the fact that the Confucian texts seem to express a range of views on the subject matter. The *Lunyu* itself supports different pictures of the roles and responsibilities of those in government and, correspondingly, of the people. Some passages in the *Lunyu* (especially in the "Zi Lu" 子路 chapter) express a view of compassionate government, while others such as 8.9 seem to deny initiative to ordinary people.[16] A well-known passage, *Lunyu* 12.19, may be interpreted to support either of these views. That passage reads:

> Chi K'ang Tzu [Ji Kangzi] asked Confucius about government, saying, "What would you think if, in order to move closer to those who possess the Way, I were to kill those who do not follow the Way?"
>
> Confucius answered, "In administering your government, what need is there for you to kill? Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is like wind; the virtue of the small man is like grass. [君子之德風. 小人之德草.] Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend. [草上之風必偃.]" (trans. Lau 1979: 115–6)

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[15]Lauren Pfister raises some thoughtful questions about the gaps in scholarship in this area; refer to his "Environmental Ethics and Some Probing Questions for Traditional Chinese Philosophy."

[16]"The common people may be made to follow a path, but not to understand it." "民可使由之, 不可使知之." An interesting discussion of the tension between the complementary roles—or competing roles, as the case may be—is provided by William De Bary 1991.

On the one hand, this passage seems to emphasize the moral influence of the ruler who uses nonviolent measures to bring about social stability. On the other, there is an element of unequal power: the grass must (*bi* 必) bend when the wind is upon it.

Among the early Confucians, Mengzi's view of the government and the populace is considered the most compassionate, since he emphasized the centrality of benevolence to ideal government (*Mengzi* 2A.3–6, 1A.7). In contrast, Xunzi's view of government is often criticized for its authoritarian overtones, especially as he also emphasized *fa* (penal laws) as an instrument of governance. The issue of how we are to understand the Confucian theory of leadership cannot be resolved here (see Angle 2002). However, below we will revisit some aspects of Confucian government as we compare the roles of government and the people in Daoist and Confucian thought.

The Daoist view of government is often explained in terms of the concept *wuwei* (non-action or non-conditional action) (e.g., *Laozi* 3, 37, 57, 64). The meaning of *wuwei* varies across the passages in the *Laozi* and it is not possible to spell out a definitive Daoist vision of government from the text alone. One possible way to understand Daoist *wuwei* government is to emphasize its non-coercive nature and democratic approach:

聖人無常心,
以百姓心為心 . . .
聖人在天下歙歙,
為天下渾其心 . . . (*Laozi* 49, WANG Bi version, Liu 2006: 486).
The sage does not have an inflexible mind-heart
He takes on the people's mind-heart as his own . . .
In the world, the sage regards all without conscious judgment (like breathing in and out).
He merges his mind-heart with those of the people . . . .(Author's translation)

Unlike the paradigmatic Confucian leader who stands apart from the common people, as visible as the North Polar star (*Lunyu* 2.1), the Daoist sage does not establish standards on behalf of the people in order to regulate their lives. Benjamin Schwartz describes this as a "laissez-faire" approach to government (1985: 213). Yet, on the other hand, there are passages in the *Laozi* that seem to suggest methods of statecraft—such as the strategy of "stooping to conquer" (*Laozi* 36, 66)—and military strategy (*Laozi* 30) (*ibid*. 213–4).[17]

The *Laozi* rejects attempts by government to (over-)regulate the lives of the people: "The more proscriptions there are in the world, the more impoverished the people's lives will be . . . The more laws and orders are pronounced, the more thieves there will be." [天下多忌諱, 而民彌貧; . . . 法令滋彰, 盜賊多有.] (*Laozi* 57, author's translation; Chinese text from WANG Bi version, Liu 2006: 552–3). The *Laozi* challenges conventional values and pursuits:

為學日益, 為道日損。
損之又損,
以至於無為. . . (*Laozi* 48, Wang Bi version, Liu 2006: 480)

[17]Schwartz suggests that these passages on methods of statecraft and military strategy are aligned with the Huang-Lao tradition (1985: 213–4).

> Pursue learning and one increases daily, pursue *dao* and one decreases daily. One decreases and further decreases until one is no longer conditioned [in one's thoughts and actions]. . . . (Author's translation. See also *Laozi* 2, 10, 63)

In this regard, if we understand Confucianism simply to be promoting a conventional set of values and practices,[18] then Daoist philosophy would be antagonistic to Confucianism. Yet, as we have seen in our discussions about the interactions between Confucianism and Daoism, this is only one way of understanding the relationship between the two.

The few references to *wuwei* in the *Zhuangzi* "Neipian" refer directly to the comportment and inner tranquility of the Daoist sage. The most significant reference to *wuwei* appears in connection with the perfect man who applies his mind-heart (*xin* 心) like a mirror[19]:

> 無為名尸, 無為謀府, 無為事任, 無為知主. . . . 至人之用心若鏡, 不將不迎, 應而不藏, 故能勝物而不傷. (*Zhuangzi ji shi*, "*Ying Di Wang*" 應帝王 1961: 307)

> Do not attempt to be the owner of fame, do not act only according to plans, do not be burdened with affairs, do not be the master of wisdom. . . . The perfect man employs his heart-mind like a mirror; he does not support things or receive them, he responds but does not store. Hence, he deals successfully with things and does not injure them. (Author's translation)

This passage must be understood in connection with the text's disquiet about the nature of the sage's political involvement. More specifically, it is cautious about tensions arising from the enlightened sage's engagement with the concerns of society.[20] Despite differences in the two views of political involvement, Confucianism also emphasizes the equanimity of the leader (*Lunyu* 9.29), especially when he deals with different and new situations (*Lunyu* 2.11).

A number of questions concerning the concept *wuwei* will illuminate our discussion of Daoist and Confucian conceptions of government. The first concerns the level of regulative activity: just how much regulation is enough or optimal? Should there be *no* regulation at all such that people live in a primitivist society of the kind evoked in *Laozi* 81? Or, if there are optimal levels of regulation, what are their criteria? While Confucian philosophy upholds particular measures and institutions as prerequisites of good government, Daoist *wuwei* is notoriously ambiguous. This could be because *wuwei* is incompatible with the promotion of standards in the way other thinkers, including the Confucians, have proposed. To steer clear of imposing measures that serve only to restrict the lives of the people, Daoist government might have to refrain from being prescriptivist. However, if

[18]Refer to the discussion by Hourdequin 2004 on understanding Confucian thought primarily in terms of the institutionalization of convention within society.

[19]Graham argues that the mirror metaphor is not associated with a 'surrender to passions' but rather 'impersonal calm which mirrors the situation with utmost clarity' (2001: 14; 16).

[20]Four of the seven "Neipian" of the *Zhuangzi* are preoccupied with this question ("*Ren Jian Shi*" 〈人間世〉; "*De Chong Fu*" 〈德充符〉; "*Da Zong Shi*" 〈大宗師〉 and "*Ying Di Wang*" 〈應帝王〉.

Daoist philosophy cannot supply clear answers regarding regulative activity, the Confucian might say to the Daoist:

> All very well for the Daoists who relish philosophical activity and who encourage directionless wandering. This promotes the free, individual human spirit. But we need to find the *best* way—the most effective in achieving social harmony through human attachment. And it must be the best way for us all, not just the best from where each of us sits. *Collectively* we must explore paths that lead to better conditions for humanity than what we now have. (Lai 2006: 148–9)

A second and related question probes further: to what extent does the government control or regulate the life of society? Might we understand *wuwei* as a *passive* form of government, in contrast to Confucian government that *actively* sets out standards for the common people? Or is the contrast along these lines too simplistic? Perhaps important differences lie not in the *level* of activity but in the *type* of activity undertaken by the government.[21] *Laozi* 17 presents a description of different governmental styles:

太上, 下知有之。
其次, 親而譽之。
其次, 畏之。其次, 侮之。
信不足, 焉有不信焉。
悠兮其貴言。
功成事遂, 百姓皆謂我自然。 (WANG Bi version, Liu 2006: 205)

With the most excellent rulers, their subjects only know that they are there,
The next best are the rulers they love and praise,
Next are the rulers they hold in awe,
And the worst are the rulers they disparage.
Where there is a lack of credibility,
There is a lack of trust.
Vigilant, they are careful in what they say.
With all things accomplished and the work complete
The common people say, "We are spontaneously like this." (trans. Ames and Hall 2003: 101–3)

The Confucian sage is held in high moral regard by the people (*Lunyu* 12.7, 2.1) and hence it cannot be said that his existence is barely known. However, like the Daoist leader, he is neither despised nor feared. Furthermore, the interdependence between the ruler and the people in the Confucian ideal society may also be described in terms of *wuwei*: if the ruler is capable in facilitating the institutions of *li* and *yi*, social order will eventuate as if naturally. *Lunyu* 15.5 states that the sage-king Shun (舜) adopted a *wuwei* approach to government. Although this is an isolated occurrence of *wuwei* in the *Lunyu*, the *Zhongyong*, a later Confucian text, picks up on the theme of the subtle effectiveness of the Confucian sage: "[Zhong Ni, Confucius] handed down the doctrines of Yao and Shun . . . taking them as his model . . . He may be compared to heaven and earth in their supporting and containing, their

[21]For extended discussions of *wuwei* in the *Laozi*, refer to Ames 1994: 33–46, Lai 2007: 332–4, Schwartz 1985: 210–5 and Slingerland 2003: 107–17.

overshadowing and curtaining, all things. He may be compared to the four seasons in their alternating progress, and to the sun and moon in their successive shining. All things are nourished together without their injuring one another" (*Zhongyong* 30, trans. Legge 1981: 110–1).

Although the Confucian leader is by comparison more actively involved in leading the people and coordinating the institutions and social processes, like the Daoist leader, he avoids coercion. The Confucian leader seeks to transform society through example rather than coercion (e.g., *Lunyu* 13.6; *Mengzi* 2A.3). We see elements of this model of leadership in Kongzi's own behavior toward his students: he does not coerce students into sharing his views (e.g., *Lunyu* 17.21, 7.8; see Liu 2006: 211–3).

A further similarity in both philosophies is that the sage-ruler creates or facilitates situations and environments that benefit the people. In Daoism, the image of water is used to represent the beneficence of the sage's government (*Laozi* 8). Confucian government seeks also to benefit the people: "wishing to establish himself, he also establishes others; wishing to extend himself, he also helps others extend themselves." (己欲立而立人, 己欲達而達人, from *Lunyu* 6:30, author's translation). In *Mengzi* 1A:7, in conversation with King Xuan (宣王), Mengzi considers certain conditions of life that are a prerequisite (本 *ben*) for the cultivation of morality. He advises the King to ensure that these conditions are met so that people have time to develop and practice commitment to propriety (*li*) and rightness (*yi*). Households should have five *mu*[22] of land on which mulberry trees are planted for silk. There should be chickens, pigs and dogs, and labor to work the fields. Finally, it is important to provide for education in village schools. These details are not merely of anecdotal worth. Rather, they demonstrate a level of thoughtfulness in Mengzi's vision of good government. We should also note the remarkable comment made by Mengzi that "The people are of supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler" (*Mengzi* 7B.14, trans. Lau 1979: 315).

While Confucian and Daoist views of government differ in regard to their idea of regulative activity, they both emphasize government that benefits the people. In this sense, both philosophies stand in contrast to Legalist philosophy that conceives of political power in terms of the tension between the ruler and the people.[23]

In the final comparison, we turn to the nature of harmony in Daoist and Confucian philosophies. The Confucian conception of ideal society is grounded in reciprocal (*shu* 恕) and complementary relationships. Relationships are complementary in that they embody specific responsibilities and obligations of particular relational positions (e.g., *Lunyu* 1.2, 13.18). The *Mengzi* highlights three relationships in particular: father and son, sovereign and minister, and husband and wife (3A.4). While these are unequal relationships, they should not be construed simply in terms of a power-hierarchy. Confucian thought emphasizes the responsibilities of

[22]Measure of land area.

[23]See for example the discussions in Schwartz 1985: 321–49 and Graham 1989: 267–92.

each person in a relationship to attend to the needs of the other. For example, the filiality of children is a fitting response to parental care and nurturing through the years (e.g., *Lunyu* 2.6–8). A main task of the Confucian leader is to ensure that people understand their responsibilities and obligations in specific relationships so that interactions can occur smoothly; this is a basic requirement of social order (*Lunyu* 13.3). On one occasion, Kongzi comments that a youth had overstepped boundaries:

> A youth from the Que village would carry messages for the Master. Someone asked Confucius, "Is he making any progress?" The Master replied, "I have seen him sitting in places reserved for his seniors, and have seen him walking side by side with his elders. This is someone intent on growing up quickly rather than on making progress." (*Lunyu* 14.44; trans. Ames and Rosemont 1998: 183)

The youth's attempts to assume equal status with people more senior were inappropriate: "... such violations have the potential to undermine the finely tuned harmony in Confucian society" (Lai 2006a: 61–5).

Daoist conceptions of complementarity and harmony are more philosophically complex. In the *Laozi*, opposites are not the antitheses of each other. Although one polarity is emphasized (non-assertiveness [*buzheng* 不爭], softness [*rou* 柔], tranquility [*jing* 靜]), both polarities are embraced (*Laozi* 36, 66, 78). Instead of potential conflict between opposites, the *Laozi* upholds flux: first one polarity gains precedence, then the other, almost as if in cyclical turn-taking (Lau 1963: 27).

The *Zhuangzi's* stance on contrast and difference was another unusual one for its day. Most other thinkers believed that a common standard would bring about social cohesion. To that end, the Confucians emphasized *zhengming* and *li*, and Mohists and Legalists both upheld *fa* explicitly in recognition of the importance of standards. For the Mohists, *fa* would regulate many areas of life, ranging from carpentry to human behavior. For the Legalists, however, *fa* was a standard for behavior backed by the threat of penal law. In his response to the oppositional verbal wrangling, Zhuangzi celebrates the diversity of perspectives as they reflect the plurality in the natural world:

> When a human sleeps in the damp his waist hurts and he gets stiff in the joints; is that so of the loach? When he sits in a tree he shivers and shakes; is that so of the ape? Which of these three knows the right place to live? (*Zhuangzi*, "Qiwulun," trans. Graham 2001: 58)

Both the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* seem to suggest that a cacophony of different voices or views is the optimal condition for society. While some *Laozi* passages advocate non-conformism (*Laozi* 20, 48, 58, 64), the *Zhuangzi* goes further to highlight the importance of having different criteria for assessing different situations (especially in the "Qiwulun" chapter). Here, we may again draw on the concept *ziran*. In addition to its other inflections, *ziran* may also be understood in terms of spontaneity, in other words, "what-is-so-of-itself" (Waley 1934: 174). This aspect of *ziran* refers to the spontaneity of individuals uncompromised by conformism. In this sense, *ziran* is the fitting corollary of the concept *wuwei*: if spontaneity is to be encouraged, *wuwei* must be the *modus operandi* of Daoist government (Lai 2007: 332–7). To put it in negative terms, a government that seeks to instill standard

practices and patterns of behavior is not allowing people to express initiative and spontaneity. Hence, the concepts *ziran* and *wuwei* may be understood to have important ethical implications both in the political realm and in personal life:

> From the Daoist point of view, the common people under the Confucian, Moist, and Legalist schemes will not possess the flexibility to respond in a way that expresses their spontaneity—either because they are constrained . . . or they have not been encouraged to do so. At the socio-political level, non-coercive measures include avoidance of inflexible, absolutist ideals, and unilateral and dictatorial methodologies, as well as promotion of those that engender a measure of individual self-determination. These are fundamental elements of a government that encourages participation of its people in its governing processes. At a personal level, an individual moral agent embraces *wuwei* by recognizing the distinctness, separateness, and spontaneity of the other. (Lai 2007: 334)

In summary, we have seen that both Daoist and Confucian visions of government incorporate the welfare of the people as an important objective. However, while Daoism supports plurality, Confucianism emphasizes unity. From a Confucian perspective, harmony is the result of careful orchestration. The government (or the Confucian paradigmatic person, the *junzi*, 君子) may be likened to a conductor of an orchestra. He is in charge of how the orchestra performs, setting the pace and the tone of the "performance" (Lai 2006b). In contrast, Daoist society may be likened to an ensemble of skilled musicians who are attuned to, and respond spontaneously to, each other. If one of these musicians is also the leader of the ensemble, his or her presence *qua leader* is barely felt; perhaps he or she only cues the ensemble in and thereafter does not dominate in their performance.

The idea of spontaneity and responsiveness is emphasized in Zhuangzi's many examples of skill—like those of Butcher Ding (丁) or the hunchback cicada catcher. In the following section, we extend our discussion of spontaneity and skill in Daoist philosophy, and compare them with models of self-cultivation in Confucian philosophy.

4 Cultivation of the Self

The Confucian and Daoist conceptions of self-in-environment draw attention to the vulnerabilities, as well as the potential, of the individual. Changes in the environment may impact on the individual, just as an individual's actions may have far-reaching effects on others and its environment. According to this view of the self, a plausible conception of the good life must include consideration of an individual's character, relationships, circumstances, adaptability and so on. To this end, Confucian philosophy focuses on self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身), while Daoist philosophy discusses methods such as *wuwei* for navigating through situations and optimizing one's benefits. Naturally, we would expect that these conceptions of self-in-environment are associated with accounts of ethics that differ significantly from those derived in abstraction from the vicissitudes of lived practical life.

In Confucian philosophy, the paradigmatic person assists in the processes and institutions of society to bring about a better life for all (e.g., *Lunyu* 6.30; *The Great*

Learning (*Daxue*) 大學). The deliberations in Confucian texts from pre-Qin and Han periods, as well as later Neo-Confucian discussions, attempt to work through the details of the cultivation of such a person. *Xiushen* in Confucianism involves the gradual attunement of the individual to the broader, more inclusive concerns of humanity, and, finally, to those of *tian*. *Lunyu* 2:4 sets out the developmental path of Kongzi:

> The Master said: "From fifteen, my [heart-mind] was set upon learning; from thirty I took my stance; from forty I was no longer doubtful; from fifty I realized the propensities of *tian* (*tianming* 天命); from sixty my ear was attuned; from seventy I could give my [heart-mind] free rein without overstepping the boundaries." (Trans. Ames and Rosemont, Jr. 1998: 76–7)

Xiushen is not mere behavioral compliance. It refers to a deeper moral commitment to the orientation of *ren* and *tian*. A key Confucian concept, *xin* (心 the heart-mind), is the distinctively human capacity for compassion and empathy (e.g., *Mengzi* 2A.6). Properly developed, it underlies expressions of human affection and concern. In that sense, the concept *xin* brings together the "inner" and "outer" in two important ways. First, it draws attention to the centrality of relationships to the self. Second, it emphasizes the importance of the social environment to the life of an individual. The discussions of *xin* and its cultivation both in primary texts and contemporary debates are too extensive to dwell on here. Suffice to note at this point that Xunzi, whose philosophy has often been criticized for its authoritarian undertone, nevertheless articulates an elegant picture of the cultivated person. Passages like the following establish Xunzi's significance as a Confucian thinker:

> The gentleman, knowing well that learning that is incomplete and impure does not deserve to be called fine, recites and enumerates his studies that he will be familiar with them, ponders over them and searches into them that he will full penetrate their meaning, acts in his person that they will come to dwell within him, and eliminates what is harmful within him that he will hold on to them and be nourished by them. Thereby he causes his eye to be unwilling to see what is contrary to it, his ear unwilling to hear what is contrary to it, his mouth unwilling to speak anything contrary to it, and his mind [心] unwilling to contemplate anything contrary to it. When he has reached the limit of such perfection, he finds delight in it. (*Xunzi*, "Quanxue" 1.15; trans. Knoblock 1999: 21–3)

Xunzi expresses optimism in the ability of individuals to bring about moral transformation. Needless to say, this task is an arduous, lifelong commitment (see also *Lunyu* 1.14–15, 8.7). It involves discipline in all areas of life: looking (見 *jian*: e.g., *Lunyu* 2.18), listening (*wen* 聞: e.g., *Lunyu* 7.28), observing (*guan* 觀: e.g., *Lunyu* 2.10), practicing behavioral propriety (*li* 禮: e.g., *Lunyu* 12.1), learning from others (*xue* 學: e.g., *Lunyu* 6.3), having discussions with others (*yan* 言: e.g., *Lunyu* 1:15), reading and discussing classical texts such as the *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Record of Rites* (*Liji*) (*Lunyu* 16.13), engaging in reflective activities (思 *si*: e.g., *Lunyu* 2.15) and cultivating friendships (*qingren* 親仁) with those who are committed to humaneness (*Lunyu* 1.6).[24]

[24] Refer to Lai (2006a: 109–24) for a detailed discussion of the cultivation of skills in Confucianism.

While a significant portion of Confucian cultivation involves learning from precedent (for example, from the sage-kings), classical texts and tradition (such as behavioral rituals, *li*), Daoist philosophy rejects learning from conventional sources:

> The person who takes conventionally-prescribed action (*wei* 為) fails.
> The person who grasps will lose.
> Therefore the sage takes unconditioned and non-controlling action (無為) and hence does not fail . . .
> He learns (*xue* 學) not to abide by conventional norms (*buxue* 不學) . . . (*Laozi* 64, author's translation. See also *Laozi* 20)

The *Zhuangzi* likewise rejects appeals to received wisdom. Examples of skill there involve people in ordinary occupations—such as the butcher Ding (庖丁 in "Yang Sheng Zhu"), the wheelwright Bian (扁 ["flat"] in "Tian Dao" 天道) and the cicada catcher (in "Da Sheng" 達生). Nevertheless, their command of their respective skills is extraordinary. Although these skills have been variously described by scholars as involving intuition, it is clear that they are not untrained responses (Lai 2008: 112). They have been painstakingly nurtured over long periods of time. The butcher, for instance, has trained in his profession for nineteen years. Unlike the case in Confucianism, however, these skills are not the result of official training but of everyday practice.

The example of the wheelwright is particularly important in setting out contrasts between Confucian and Daoist approaches to cultivation. In a conversation with Huan Gong (桓公), the wheelwright says that his skills cannot be fully expressed in words. In fact, he has failed to teach them to his own son because of their ineffability:

> If I chip at a wheel too slowly, the chisel slides and does not grip; if too fast, it jams and catches in the wood. Not too slow, not too fast; I feel it in the hand and respond from the heart, the mouth cannot put it into words, there is a knack in it somewhere which I cannot convey to my son and which my son cannot learn from me. This is how through my seventy years I have grown old chipping at wheels. The men of old and their untransmittable message are dead. Then what my lord is reading is the dregs of the men of old, isn't it? ("Tian Dao," trans. Graham 2001: 140)

Here, the text turns the tables on aspects of Confucianism: the wheelwright, a tradesperson untutored in the comportment and intellectual accomplishments of courtly life, challenges the wisdom of Huan Gong (who happens to be reading a book). The details of this encounter are remarkable in that they reveal an astute awareness of the subtler differences between Confucian and Daoist commitments. Daoist cultivation focuses on nurturing people who can creatively implement their skills; Confucian cultivation is aimed primarily at those who can lead others to attain various levels of meaningful engagement with others in society. Although both involve mental discipline,[25] Daoist cultivation is more open-ended than Confucian

[25]Here, we only need to imagine the mental discipline of the cicada catcher. The point here is that there is mental discipline as well and practice is not simply thought of in behaviourist terms. Nevertheless, we must be mindful of attempts to characterize the mental in pre-Qin Chinese philosophy as if it were detached from the physiological. Even on its own, the notion of xin (mind-heart) challenges such simplistic dichotomies.

cultivation as the former aims to avoid conventional and normative ways. Daoist philosophy avoids over-reliance on convention and tradition since that may stifle the spontaneity of individuals. Both the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* discuss the extrication of lives from convention (e.g., *Laozi* 48; *Zhuangzi* "Da Zong Shi"). The *Zhuangzi* expresses this in terms of the concept *zuowang* (坐忘 sitting and forgetting). To put it simply, *zuowang* refers to an "un-learning" process whereby a person forgets received values, traditions and practices.[26] In Daoism, the effort to realize *dao* focuses centrally on the individual while in Confucianism the realization of *ren*, *yi*, *li* and *zhi* are coordinated processes (cf., Liu 2006: 492–3, 682–3). In both traditions, however, the emphasis of cultivation is ultimately to nurture people who can effectively implement particular ideals within their contexts. In this regard, both philosophies are committed to "the primacy of practice, the arduous nature of cultivation, the rigor and intensity with which the learner or apprentice approaches his or her tasks, and the impressive fluency and beauty of their execution" (Lai 2008: 112).

Analyses of the spirit of Chinese philosophy and its reasoning strategies have noted its attention to questions concerning how best to live. FENG Youlan (FUNG Yu-lan 馮友蘭, 1895–1990), an influential Chinese thinker of the modern period, suggests that the practical orientation of Chinese philosophy is one of its distinctive characteristics. He expresses this in terms of the theme of *neisheng waiwang* (内聖外王), "inner sageliness and outer kingliness" (Feng 1948: 8–10). This theme emphasizes the continuity between "inner" ethical commitment and "outer" behavior. Feng's purpose is to note that using the terms inner (*nei*) and outer (*wai*) as exclusive categories is an inaccurate way of understanding Chinese philosophy. In Chinese philosophy, a person's ethical commitment will have practical outcomes, just as her behavior and comportment are indicative of her ethical commitment. The cultivation of the self is integral to the good life for both the individual and others around him.

It follows from the attention to individuals, their relationships and contexts in Chinese philosophy, that reasoning and evaluation are not conducted on the basis of a transcendentally- and abstractly-derived logical order. This has important implications for the reasoning style in Chinese philosophy, as noted by Roger Ames:

> [The classical Chinese] expressed a "this-worldly" concern for the concrete details of immediate existence as a basis for exercising their minds in the direction of generalities and ideals. They began from an acknowledgement of the uniqueness and importance of the particular person and the particular historical event to the world, while at the same time, stressing the interrelatedness of this person or event with the immediate context. (1986: 320)

While Feng focuses on the issue from the perspective of personal reflection in moral self cultivation, Ames focuses on the logic that underlies reasoning in

[26] It is important to understand the fuller implications of *zuowang* within the context of the *Zhuangzi*. We must especially focus on Zhuangzi's hesitations about involvement in political life in the terms set out by society then. See footnote 20.

Chinese philosophy. Nevertheless, common to both their analyses is attention to the practical import of reasoning in Chinese thought. Here, reasoning does not involve a top-down imposition of preconceived standards or ideals, but rather careful consideration of relevant aspects of a situation including the individuals involved, their relationships, the complex causalities, outcomes, and existing norms and values. According to this view, morality is not centrally a question of whether correct principles might have been adhered to or transgressed against but rather *how* they have been applied to maximize the outcomes not only for the individual but for others, and for society more generally. Models of cultivation in Confucian and Daoist philosophies can contribute in significant ways to contemporary discussions of morality and personal development. It is especially because the focus in both philosophies is on the methods and processes of cultivation, and not grounded in particular transcendental or normative values, that we may draw on them to enlighten contemporary debates in the globalized context.

5 Conclusion

Important differences as well as similarities exist between Confucian and Daoist philosophies. It is important to understand their subtle differences as these nuances help to deepen our understanding of each of them. The differences covered here include conceptions of individual freedom, the scope of governmental regulation, difference and complementarity, and harmony and social order. The similarities between Confucianism and Daoism are significant, too, as they are often also the distinctive characteristics of Chinese philosophy. This discussion has highlighted their common features such as the conception of the self-in-environment, attention to relationships, and a practical orientation. These are important aspects of the conceptual framework of Chinese thought and they help to establish Chinese philosophy as a unique field in philosophical studies. Our understanding of these comparisons is enhanced by greater awareness of Chinese intellectual history, in particular of cross-influences between the traditions, as well as historical contingencies and circumstances that may have shaped their ideas and reasoning styles. Since this discussion considers Daoism and Confucianism primarily during the pre-Qin period, readers are encouraged to explore the continuing engagements between the two philosophies as they continued to evolve in Chinese intellectual history. The discussions here highlights the need for more detailed comparisons of the concepts, themes, and philosophical frameworks across the Chinese philosophical traditions, as well as those between Chinese philosophies and the philosophies of other cultures.

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Chapter 22
Daoism and Buddhism

Zhihua Yao

1 Introduction: Methodological Considerations

Studying the relationship between Daoism and Buddhism is like entering a family with many offspring. The parents are Daoism of the pre-Qin period and Indian Buddhism. Their marriage produced many "children," which include the Prajña and Chan 禪 schools of Chinese Buddhism, and the Xuan 玄, Chongxuan 重玄, and Quanzhen 全真 schools of Daoist philosophy and religion. Current studies on the topic almost exclusively focus on the relationship between the children or, in some cases, between a certain child and her parents—for instance, between Prajña and Xuan (Luo 2003) or Prajña and pre-Qin Daoism (Cai 2001), between Chan and Xuan (Hong and Wu 1992) or Chan and pre-Qin Daoism (Xu 1992; Li 1996; Wang 2003). Other studies explore more broadly the interaction between Chinese Buddhism and Daoist philosophy and religion (Xiao 1995, 2003; Li 1999; Kohn 1995). Given that most scholars in this field work from Chinese rather than Indic sources, it is understandable that they pursue these issues.

But suppose we were to undertake a genetic study of the family members; in that case, the studies mentioned above can only tell us how closely the brothers or sisters resemble their siblings or parents, but cannot reveal how the parents might be related. My study, in contrast, will explore how the parents—pre-Qin Daoism and Indian Buddhism—fit together. In other words, I am trying to work with the ideas

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of two different, not genetically related, traditions that somehow are comparable.[1] This study will focus on the comparison of key concepts and central issues in the two traditions.

It is sometimes easier to locate key concepts and central issues by examining how traditions are viewed by their rivals. In the eyes of orthodox Confucian scholars, for instance, both Daoism and Buddhism were seen as passive, negative, and even destructive of intellectual and social norms. They therefore condemned them as heresies and were determined to eliminate their influence on the Chinese mind. It is no accident that Confucian scholars came away with a "negative" impression of both traditions. These are two of the very few philosophical strains that have launched themselves into the wonderland of negativity. To give a sense of that landscape, in section two I will consider in detail one pair of negative concepts, "nothingness" (*wu* 無) and "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*). For now, let me locate them in their respective traditions.

In pre-Qin Daoism, nothingness may not have been as central as such concepts as "Dao," but even at this stage it was nonetheless an essential aspect of Dao. Its position was further elevated with the development of Xuan school. The Neo-Confucian scholars, also calling themselves "Dao-scholars," were not necessarily upset by the idea of Dao, but often reacted strongly against nothingness. Nothingness may not be the central concept of Daoist philosophy, but it is surely the most characteristic Daoist concept.

Similarly, the Buddhist concept of emptiness was employed to interpret the foundational Buddhist doctrine of no-self in early and sectarian Buddhism. It became one of the key Buddhist concepts with the rise of Perfection of Wisdom literature and its interpretation by the Mādhyamikas. The orthodox Hindus, who often classified Buddhist philosophy into four major schools, namely, the Sarvāstivāda realism, Sautrāntika indirect realism, Yogācāra idealism, and Madhyamaka nihilism, were especially critical of the last. In their view, emptiness may not have been the central concept of Buddhism, but it was no doubt the most characteristically Buddhist idea. In my consideration of nothingness and emptiness, I will ask: How are the two concepts related to each other? Do they refer to the same reality? If not, are they different types of non-being? And how many types of non-being might there be?

Some may object that taking nothingness or emptiness as key Daoist or Buddhist concepts simply empowers the view of outsiders. If we take more seriously the insiders' view, we should discuss a different pair of key Daoist and Buddhist concepts, i.e., "non-action" (*wuwei* 無為) and "nirvāṇa." Viewing non-action as the central concept of pre-Qin Daoism is not without controversy, but here I rely on Liu (1997: 105–145), who takes non-action as "the principal method" of Laozi's

[1]Hence I am not going to discuss the later Daoist scholars such as Sima Chengzhen who wrote in response to Buddhist metaphysics or the Quanzhen Daoists who absorbed many ideas and practices from Buddhism and integrated them into their own theories and spiritual praxis. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting a further research along the above lines, which could be interesting topics for future studies.

thought, and Slingerland (2003), who views non-action as a "conceptual metaphor" and "spiritual ideal" for Daoist as well as Confucian thinkers. Their observations especially make sense if we view these thinkers not primarily as metaphysicians, but as spiritual or political practitioners.

On the Buddhist side, it is less controversial to take nirvāṇa as a central concept of Buddhism. Being one of the four noble truths as discovered by the Buddha himself, and one of the three dharma seals to distinguish Buddhist from non-Buddhist teachings, nirvāṇa is a central concept that indicates the Buddhist spiritual ideal. Unlike the case of nothingness and emptiness, non-action and nirvāṇa are less easily confused. In the third section, on non-action and nirvāṇa, I will clarify the meanings of these terms in their own traditions and address an issue that concerns Slingerland (2003), namely, whether non-action or nirvāṇa involved a conceptual paradox. If yes, how was that paradox dealt with in these respective traditions?

Whether we consider nothingness or emptiness, non-action or nirvāṇa, these negative concepts bring us to the edge of the ineffable. As a matter of fact, the dialectical interplay between speaking and silence marks a unique feature of both Daoism and Buddhism, in contrast to more "positive" traditions. In the final section, I will discuss briefly how their similar linguistic strategies contribute yet another aspect of their parallelism.

2 Nothingness and Emptiness

According to Pang (1999), the concept of nothingness, as discussed in the rich sources of Chinese philosophy, can be classified as having three different types. These include "nothingness as absence," "absolute nothingness," and "nothingness as being," which are signified, respectively, by the characters *wang* 亡, *wu* 无 and *wu* 無. These three types, interestingly enough, correspond to the three major types of nothingness identified by Western philosophers, namely, privative nothing (*nihil privativum*), negative nothing (*nihil negativum*) and original nothing (*nihil originarium*). The original nothing, in particular, is found in certain of Heidegger's works to signify alternatively his key concept of being (*Sein*).[2] This "nothingness as being" is also one of four types of nothingness articulated by the Neo-Platonist Marius Victorinus.[3] Its traces can be found in many classical German thinkers such as F.H. Jacobi, J.G. Hamann, Schelling, Hegel, and F. von Baader.

Now what types of nothingness were the Daoists talking about? Many contemporary scholars distinguish two senses of nothingness in Laozi.[4] One is the empirical or

[2]For Heidegger's concept of original nothing, see Yao 2010. Part of this section is drawn from this early publication.

[3]Kobusch 1971–: 809. The other three types are negation, mutual relation, and the not-yet-existent (*Noch-nichtsein*).

[4]For instance, Liu 1997: 159, Wang 2001: 155, and Lin 2007: 151.

commonsense usage referring to space. This usage is found especially in chapter 11 of the *Daodejing*, where the nothingness functions inside the hub, a pot, and the dwelling. The other is nothingness in its metaphysical sense, referring to the source or origin of all existents, and found in key passages of the *Daodejing*, e.g., chapters 2 and 40.[5] This distinction, however, becomes irrelevant if we attempt to match Daoist nothingness to one of the above three types. Both space and the origin of all existents are actual existence with real functions. They are called nothingness only because they are formless and imageless. So nothingness for Laozi, either in its empirical or metaphysical sense, is the "nothingness as being" or original nothing.

In the *Daodejing*, there are also a large number of compounds in the form of "non-*x*" or "no-*x*", e.g., non-action (*wuwei*) and no-name (*wuming* 無名), where the word *wu* 無 (non-, no-) functions as a prefix in the compound and cannot act independently as a noun or a philosophical concept. Its meaning comes close to the privative nothing or nothingness as absence. The Daoist classics seem never to mention the absolute or negative nothing, which usually indicates logical impossibility as in the case of late Moist classics.[6]

In any case, the concept of nothingness as discussed in the Daoist philosophical context falls under the category of original nothing or nothingness as being. It is elaborated in two aspects. The first is the cosmogonic or vertical dimension, with the emphasis of nothingness being the source or origin of existents. "The things of the world arise from being. And being arises from the nothingness."[7] It is this ability of giving rise to all existents that makes nothingness the truly original nothing. The same idea is elaborated in the *Zhuangzi*: "The myriad things come forth from non-being. Being cannot bring being into being; it must come forth from non-being, and non-being is singularly non-being."[8] The Xuan school as represented by Wang Bi further developed this line of thinking to take nothingness as the "origin" (*ben* 本) of all. As compared to its Western counterparts, the Daoist nothingness is more "original" by emphasizing its cosmogonical dimension.

The second is the ontological or horizontal dimension that emphasizes "being and nothingness giving rise to each other."[9] The mutual arising of the two illuminates horizontally the identity and transformation between pure being and pure nothing. The formless imageless original nothing, through its identity with

[5]I exclude chapter 1, because I read the relevant sentence there as "the nameless (*wuming* 無名) is the origin of heaven and earth" rather than "nothingness (*wu* 無) is called (*ming* 名) the origin of heaven and earth."

[6]See the *Mojing* and its commentary: 無不必待有, ... 無天陷, 則無之而無. (Non-being does not necessarily presuppose being. . . . In the case of the non-being of the sky's falling down, it is non-being without ever having been.)

[7]*Daodejing*, ch. 40: 天下萬物生於有, 有生於無.

[8]*Zhuangzi*, Gengsangchu chapter: 萬物出乎無有, 有不能以有為有, 必出乎無有, 而無有一無有.

[9]*Daodejing*, ch. 2: 有無相生.

and transformation into being, establishes its ontological position as nothingness as being. This is parallel to its position in the ontologies of Hegel and Heidegger.

Certain tension exists between the two dimensions, however, and many commentators have attempted to explain away their seemingly contradiction. It is generally agreed that Laozi, and classical Chinese philosophy in general, did not distinguish ontology from cosmology or cosmogony, and this contributed to the tension. The admixture of cosmogonical and ontological approaches that dominates classical Chinese philosophy probably owed its existence to the centrality of *sheng* 生 (begetting, generating, giving rise to) in Daoist and Confucian metaphysics. Exactly for the same reason, original nothing in Laozi and Daoist philosophy is realized in its more complete "original" form than in the works of thinkers like Heidegger, who only stress its ontological dimension.

Let us turn to emptiness in Buddhist philosophy and its relationship to nothingness. In the history of Indian philosophy, a few different schemes were developed for classifying nothingness or non-being (*abhāva*). The mainstream Vaiśeṣikas, Naiyāyikas, and Mīmāṃsākas classified nothingness into four types, i.e., prior non-being (*prāgabhāva*), posterior non-being (*dhvaṃsa*), mutual non-being (*anyonyābhāva*), and absolute non-being (*atyantābhāva*). These four types can be subsumed into two more basic types, i.e., absolute non-being and mutual non-being. The latter can cover the first three types, which are its manifestations in temporal and spatial dimensions. The mutual non-being corresponds to nothingness as absence or privation, while absolute non-being is negative nothing in the sense of "the altogether not." This popular scheme, however, does not include emptiness. Among the Indic sources I have encountered, only a Yogācāra Buddhist text adds emptiness to the scheme as the fifth type of non-being. It is called the "ultimate non-being" (*paramārthāsat*) and interpreted as "devoid of intrinsic nature" (*niḥsvabhāva*), which is exactly the definition of emptiness.[10]

In the history of Buddhism, two traditions developed to interpret the idea of emptiness, and they are Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. It is generally agreed that the Perfection of Wisdom literature and its Madhyamaka interpretation, while aiming at criticizing and denying intrinsic nature, made emptiness a central Buddhist concept. Intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) was a key concept in Abhidharma scholasticism that characterized the unanalyzable elements (*dharma*) of all existents. In this understanding, the intrinsic nature of each and every element should be distinctive and consistent, otherwise their distinction will collapse. Meanwhile, their consistent, even permanent, nature does not imply that existents made of elements do not go through change or transformation. All the elements and existents, as long as they are conditioned, must dependently arise and cease.

In the Madhyamaka view, however, the concept of intrinsic nature is incompatible with the foundational Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising. Nāgārjuna argues, "The origination of intrinsic nature from causes and conditions is illogical,

[10]It is found in the encyclopedic *Yogācārabhūmi* (T1579: 362c15-21) and its commentaries (T1828: 416a12-16 and T1829: 97a20-26).

since intrinsic nature originated from causes and conditions would thereby become contingent. How could there be contingent intrinsic nature, for intrinsic nature is not contingent, nor is it dependent on another being."[11] By upholding the doctrine of dependent origination, one must give up and deny intrinsic nature, as Nāgārjuna declares: "Whatever is dependently originated, I claim it is emptiness."[12] He holds that all those in the net of causal arising—either conventional existence or its elements—are devoid of intrinsic nature and empty. For the Ābhidharmikas, such conventional existence as a desk or person are conceptually constructed, and hence lack intrinsic nature, but their building blocks are those elements embedded with intrinsic nature. Nāgārjuna insists that even those building blocks, as long as they arise and cease in the causal network, are also "conceptually constructed."[13]

There are at least two ways of understanding this claim of emptiness. If all existents are conceptually constructed, and in that respect like illusions and hallucinatory objects, then emptiness in this sense is absolute or negative nothing as in the cases of the hair of turtle or the horns of rabbit. This will inevitably lead to a nihilist end, which, as a matter of fact, dominates classical and contemporary interpretations of the Madhyamaka tradition.[14] The other way, however, emphasizes that absolute reality such as dharma-realm (*dharmadhātu*) or thusness (*tathatā*) is revealed through the idea of emptiness that denies intrinsic nature.[15] In this view, emptiness comes close to original nothing or nothingness as being. Nāgārjuna himself seems unwilling to fall into either extreme when he claims that his emptiness is "the middle way,"[16] which is beyond non-being and being. Viewing it from the typology of non-being, emptiness is also beyond negative nothing and original nothing, but then it falls under privative nothing. This observation is supported by the very definition of emptiness as "devoid of intrinsic nature," which is a constant negation and antidote to any reification, even emptiness itself; therefore "emptiness is empty."[17]

In the Yogācāra school, emptiness was not as central as in Madhyamaka, and the Yogācāras understood it very differently. They referred to a passage from an early Buddhist text *Cūḷasuññata-sutta*, which was never cited by the Mādhyamikas in their extensive discussion on emptiness (Nagao 1991: 210). The text says: "One rightly observes that because something does not exist in a given place, [therefore]

[11]*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 15.1-2: *na saṃbhavaḥ svabhāvasya yuktaḥ pratyayahetubhiḥ/ hetupratyayasaṃbhūtaḥ svabhāvaḥ kṛtako bhavet//svabhāvaḥ kṛtako nāma bhaviṣyati punaḥ kathaṃ/akṛtrimaḥ svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ paratra ca/ /.*

[12]*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24.18ab: *yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatāṃ tāṃ pracakṣmahe/.*

[13]*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24. 18c: *sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat.*

[14]Contemporary scholars with this approach are represented by Eugene Burnouf, H. Jacobi, M. Walleser, I. Wach, A.B. Keith, and La Vallée Poussin. See Lin 1999: 183–186.

[15]Contemporary representatives of this approach are St. Schayer, Stcherbatsky, and Murti. See Lin 1999: 186–191.

[16]*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24. 18d: *saiva madhyamā//.*

[17]See Piṅgala's commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, T1564: 33b17.

this [place] is empty of that [thing]. Moreover, one knows in accordance with reality that whatever remains in this place [apart from that thing] still exists, and it is something that exists in this place."[18] Here emptiness is understood in terms of privation or absence, or, in an Indian term, mutual non-being. This type of non-being is always relative to something existent. It is in this sense that emptiness serves as an antidote to intrinsic nature in Madhyamaka. But when emptiness is expanded to negate all existents at the ultimate level, it will cease to be mutual non-being in the sense of absence and become an absolute negative non-being. The Mādhyamikas may not admit this, but their theory inevitably leads to this end.

The Yogācāras understood emptiness along the line of its root meaning of absence, and defined "the characteristic of emptiness as non-being of subject and object and the being of that non-being."[19] The subject and object, in their epistemologically oriented project, was regarded as conceptual constructions on the basis of existent conscious process. The concept of emptiness denies the existence of these conceptual constructions, but meanwhile asserts the existence of consciousness (*vijñāna*), thusness, and dharma-realm. Emptiness, in this sense, equals the so-called wondrous being and therefore comes close to the original nothing or the nothingness as being.

Later Tibetan Buddhists characterized the Yogācāra way of understanding emptiness as "other-emptiness" (*gzhan stong*), in contrast to the "self-emptiness" (*rang stong*) held by the Mādhyamikas, and condemned the former way of understanding as heresy. This understanding of emptiness as wondrous being, however, became dominant in East Asian Buddhism, a development predicated on the influence of the Yogācāra as well as the Daoist sense of original nothing. As a result, Buddhist emptiness and Daoist nothingness became easily confused.[20] Masao Abe (1985: 128–130), for instance, while discussing the superiority of negativity in Eastern philosophy, treated both Daoist nothingness and Buddhist emptiness as equivalent to wondrous being; in his discussion both are understood to be original nothing or nothingness as being.

To summarize, if we distinguish nothingness into three basic types, then the nothingness in Daoist philosophy belongs to original nothing. The unique Daoist cosmogonical-ontological approach makes nothingness more "original" than its parallels in Western philosophy. In contrast, the emptiness in Madhyamaka Buddhism is basically a type of privative nothing, but its tendency to negate all existents at the ultimate level leads to negative nothing. The emptiness in Yogācāra Buddhism is basically nothingness as absence or privation, but its affirmation of ultimate reality leads to original nothing. The latter sense of emptiness was more influential among East Asian Buddhists, and more easily confused with the Daoists' original nothingness.

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[18] *Majjhima-Nikāya* III 104, *Cūḷasuññata-sutta*: *iti yaṃ hi kho tattha na hoti, tena taṃ suññaṃ samanupassati, yaṃ pana tattha avasiṭṭhaṃ hoti, taṃ santaṃ idaṃ atthīti pajānāti.*

[19] *Madhyāntavibhāga* I.13ab: *dvayābhāvo hy abhāvasya bhāvaḥ śūnyasya lakṣaṇaṃ/.*

[20] See the relevant studies of Luo (2003) and Zhao (2007).

3 Non-action and Nirvāṇa

Although nothingness and emptiness are often compared or even confused, to my knowledge, contemporary scholars seldom compare non-action and nirvāṇa. But as a matter of fact, the latter pair of concepts are more comparable, and sometimes they can be confused, too, as when nirvāṇa is classified as an unconditioned factor (*asaṃskṛta-dharma*), which in Chinese translation is *wuwei fa* 無為法—literally, the non-active factor.

Nirvāṇa is not only the central concept and spiritual ideal of Buddhism; it enjoys a more or less equal status among other Indian spiritual communities such as the Jains, Ājīvikas, and certain Hindu strands. Non-action, according to Ames (1983) and Slingerland (2003), is not simply a conceptual metaphor and spiritual ideal for Daoists and Confucians, it was also a principle of government pursued by Legalists and discussed in the syncretist text the *Huainanzi*.

Nirvāṇa is one of the few Buddhist concepts that caused great controversy among its Western interpreters. Welbon (1968) discusses various views on the concept proposed by eminent Buddhologists since the nineteenth century—the likes of Eugene Burnouf, F. Max Müller, James D'Alwis, Robert Caesar Childers, Hermann Oldenberg, T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, La Vallée Poussin, and Stcherbatsky, as well as a handful of philosophers influenced by Indian and Buddhist thought, e.g., Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche. In particular, the controversy between La Vallée Poussin and Stcherbatsky on the interpretation of nirvāṇa suggests at least two different, even contradictory, aspects of this concept: first as a negative conception, second as a happy state.

The Sanskrit term *nirvāṇa*, consisting of a negative prefix *nis*-, the verbal root √*vā* (to blow) and a verbal noun ending -*na*, literally means ceasing to blow, blown out, or extinction. In the Buddhist tradition, descriptions of nirvāṇa are for the most part posed in negative terms such as cessation (*nirodha*), the absence of craving (*tṛṣṇākṣaya*), detachment, the absence of delusion, the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*). Therefore, to attain nirvāṇa means primarily the pure and simple annihilation that is devoid of the active craving, delusion, or conditioned factors.

Like nirvāṇa, *wuwei* (non-action) consists of a negative prefix *wu*- and the verb *wei* (to act), and it literally means non-action, or more specifically, no artificial or intentional action. In the Daoist tradition, non-action is also usually described in negative terms. The *Daodejing*, for instance, presents a series of negatives that can be classified into two groups. One group expresses the spiritual ideal with an emphasis on no-desire (chs. 3, 37, 58, 64), non-attachment (chs. 2, 10, 51, 77), no-knowledge (chs. 3, 10, 64), no-speech (chs. 2, 56), and even no-mind (ch. 49) or no-body (ch. 13). The other group points to ethical, social, and political ideals that emphasize no-virtue, no-benevolence (chs. 5, 38), no courage (chs. 64, 73), not promoting superior character (chs. 3, 77), non-striving (chs. 3, 8, 22, 66, 68, 73, 81), no-business (chs. 48, 57, 63), and non-violence (chs. 30, 68, 69).[21]

[21] For a fuller list, see Liu 1997: 111.

The ethical, social, and political relevance of non-action reveals its positive implications, which are explicitly manifested in conjunction with "doing non-action" (*wei wuwei* 為無為, chs. 3, 63) and "nothing goes undone through non-action" (*wuwei er wu bu wei* 無為而無不為, chs. 37, 48). In these seemingly paradoxical expressions, the positive "action" or "doing" appeals to a higher-order value as the guiding principle for the sage. In this sense, *wuwei* can be interpreted or translated alternatively as "natural conduct" (Ames), "effortless action" (Slingerland), or more loosely "refraining from activity contrary to Nature" (Needham).

The positive implication of non-action reminds us of the positive aspect of nirvāṇa. Derived from its root meaning of "blown out," the term also signifies the process and outcome of cooling down, calming down, and taming. A passage from the *Saṃyuttanikāya* gives a rather lengthy string of mostly positive equivalents to nirvāṇa, including terms that mean "truth," "the farther shore," "the stable," "peace," "security," "purity," and so forth (Kasukis 2005: 6634). Elsewhere we can find such positive characterizations of it as "happiness," "bliss," "the island," "the endless," "the immortal," and "the *summum bonum* (*naiḥśreyasa*)" (La Vallée Poussin 1908–1926: 376). Its combination of negative and positive aspects have created great controversy: One of the focal issues is whether nirvāṇa entails a transcendental mystical state of consciousness, whether it is some inconceivable state or a simple cessation of craving and delusion. Most Buddhist sources take an agnostic attitude towards this issue, we are left with a mystery. Still, disputes in the Buddhist tradition over the attainment of nirvāṇa may help us understand the conceptual paradox of non-action.

According to Slingerland (2003), the conceptual paradox present by non-action was clearly felt to be a genuine problem by writers and practitioners in the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions, and it is this conceptual tension that produced repeated sectarian schisms between, for instance, the Southern and Northern schools of Chan, the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang traditions in Neo-Confucianism, and the Rinzai and Soto schools of Japanese Zen. In Slingerland's formulation, the paradox of non-action "arises from the fact that the state of effortlessness and perfected action represented by *wuwei* is portrayed as a state that needs to be achieved: we are currently *not* practicing *wuwei*, and ... various soteriological paths [are] designed to bring us from our current state of 'effort-full' action into the ideal state of effortless action. The question that inevitably arises is this: how is it possible to *try* not to try?" (Slingerland 2003: 6) He compared the problem with the cultivation of virtue in Confucianism and Aristotle, and the so-called Meno problem on learning in Plato.

In my view, however, the full force of this paradox is brought out in the project of attaining nirvāṇa. It is true that any sort of learning will involve the tension between things to be learned and those already learned; one cannot learn utterly new things. But this tension becomes intriguing only when we try to achieve something in a negative characteristic: to learn non-learning, to act on non-action, to achieve cessation.[22] The Buddhist sources formulate the paradox of attaining nirvāṇa in the

[22]In his critical book review of Slingerland 2003, Fraser (2007:101) proposed a similar view.

following way. First of all, nirvāṇa is understood to be an unconditioned factor, which, although real, is always lacking activity, has no cause to produce it, and itself produces no effects. Now if nirvāṇa cannot be produced by any cause, how can we achieve it through the spiritual practices that constitute a path (*mārga*), which is necessarily a chain of causes and effects? The tension here is enhanced by the characterization of nirvāṇa as unconditioned. It is not an effect produced by certain causes or conditions; rather it lies beyond the realm of causality, and is always already there. But on the other hand, one has not attained it must strive for it. As we see, this is the basic conceptual structure underlying the gradual-sudden debate around the attainment of enlightenment or Buddha-nature among Chan or Zen followers in China and Japan, and to some extent it colored debates between the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools of Neo-Confucianism.

Slingerland (2003: 266) has summarized traditional Chinese approaches to the paradox of non-action as two poles, that is, an internalist approach that views self-cultivation as agriculture and an externalist approach that views self-cultivation as craft. Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Mengzi fall into the former, according to which, external instructions are not necessary, and innate seedlings spontaneously tend to grow at the urging of their potential. Xunzi and, to a certain extent, Confucius, take the latter approach by emphasizing that human behavior is something that needs to be guided by the standards supplied by external measures. As we see, the paradox that Daoist and Confucian thinkers encounter is basically a tension between spontaneous, natural, and therefore individual tendencies and social, interpersonal norms.

Compared to the above approaches, the Buddhist attainment of nirvāṇa is entirely an individualistic spiritual practice, involving no degree of social concern. The paradox of non-action may be explained away if non-action is understood to be the higher-order value of the sage,[23] but the paradox of nirvāṇa seems to run deeper than this. Since nirvāṇa by definition transcends causality, it has nothing to do with the gradual causal chains of practice and learning, rather it involves a metaphysically transcendental dimension. A solution to its paradox is provided by the Ābhidharmikas who take advantage of both the internalist and externalist approaches. Vasubandhu says in his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*: "The efficacy of the path is different with regard to obtaining (*prāpti*) and disconnection (*visaṃyoga*). What is the efficacy of the path with regard to obtaining? The path produces obtaining. What is the efficacy of the path with regard to disconnection? The path makes one to obtain disconnection. Hence, although the path is in no way the cause of disconnection, disconnection is the result of the path."[24] Here Vasubandhu identifies a separate factor, "obtaining," which is causally relevant and must be accumulated through practice, instructions, and the path. It is through this obtaining

[23]Lu (2007) made this point in his critical book review of Slingerland 2003.

[24]*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* II.55d: *anyathā hy asya prāptau sāmarthyam anyathā visaṃyoge/ katham asya prāptau sāmarthyam/utpādanāt/kathaṃ visaṃyoge/prāpaṇāt/tasmān na tāvad asya mārgaḥ kathaṃcid api hetuḥ/phalaṃ cāsya visaṃyogaḥ/.*

that we are connected to the state of disconnection or nirvāṇa that always already lies there. If we understand non-action more literally in its sense of negation rather than a positive value of the sage, and appreciate such sayings as "doing non-action" in a more metaphysical rather than rhetorical sense, then we may have to develop an approach similar to that of Vasubandhu to deal with the paradox of non-action.

By examining another set of parallel concepts in Daoism and Buddhism, we find that non-action not only provides us a spiritual ideal, but also a social and political value. In contrast, nirvāṇa, the spiritual ideal for Buddhists, is concerned primarily with a metaphysically transcendental dimension. The so-called paradox of non-action may be explained away if non-action is understood more positively as a higher-order value of the sage. But the paradox with regard to nirvāṇa involves attaining the metaphysical state of negativity that lies beyond causal chains. This Buddhist conceptual structure may have contributed more than indigenous Chinese philosophy to the underlying tension between practice and spiritual attainment among various East Asian religious schools.

4 Conclusion: Speaking of the Ineffable

It is a well-known fact that the Buddha kept silent when he was asked a list of questions. These questions included:

1. Is the world eternal (*sassato loko*)?
2. Is the world not eternal (*asassato loko*)?
3. Is the world finite (*antavā loko*)?
4. Is the world infinite (*anantavā loko*)?
5. Is the soul the same as the body (*taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ*)?
6. Is the soul different from the body (*aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ*)?
7. Does the *tathāgata* exist after death (*hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*)?
8. Does the *tathāgata* not exist after death (*na hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*)?
9. Does the *tathāgata* both exist and non-exist after death (*hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*)?
10. Does the *tathāgata* neither exist nor non-exist after death (*n'eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato paraṃ maraṇā*)?[25]

As to the reason behind the Buddha's silence, Buddhist scholars throughout history had various speculations. They generally believe that the Buddha himself, or the early Buddhism in general, was not interested in such metaphysical themes as the world (*loka*) or the soul (*jīva*), and his silence was meant to indicate this

[25] According to the Pāli sources. In the Sanskrit and Chinese sources the list is extended to fourteen to include the following questions: (1) Is the would both eternal and non-eternal? (2) Is the world neither eternal nor non-eternal? (3) Is the world both finite and infinite? (4) Is the world neither finite nor infinite?

attitude. This theory of disinterest may help us understand the golden silence of the Buddha, but to a certain extent it underestimates him, as if he were not qualified to be a philosopher. He did not discuss these basic themes in Indian philosophy at the time, but rather was concerned with more practical issues such as liberation from suffering.

For later Buddhist philosophers who would develop much of the philosophical and metaphysical discourse in the Buddhist tradition, disinterest in these questions was apparently not the true meaning of the Buddha's silence. In their view, the Buddha did not keep silent passively; rather he meant to imply an insight by the means of silence. The insight was that this list of questions are meaningless, neither true nor false, and cannot be answered with "yes" or "no," therefore can only be met with silence. Understood this way, the Buddha's attitude towards these metaphysical questions comes close to the Wittgensteinian silence, which rejects the meaningless metaphysical discourse.

As a matter of fact, the Buddha did not keep silent all the time. He preached his teachings for about 49 years, teachings subsequently recorded in extensive sūtras. For those followers who really understood him, however, he never spoke a single word in his 49 years of preaching. So even when he was speaking, he said nothing.

Similarly paradoxical expressions may be found in the very first chapter of the *Daodejing*, "The Dao that can put into words is not the real Dao, and the name that can assign reference to things is not a real name."[26] While this statement has generated numerous exegeses and often controversial interpretations, it is agreed that it indicates Laozi's linguistic strategy to approach the ineffable ultimate reality Dao. Zhuangzi describes more vividly this sort of paradoxical situation with regard to his union with heaven and earth. He says: "Heaven and earth were born together with me and the myriad things are one with me. Since all things are one, how can there be anything to talk about? But since I have already said that all things are one, how can there be nothing to talk about?"[27]

For the Daoist and Buddhist philosophers who realize the ultimate reality, the dilemma between speaking and not speaking is unavoidable.[28] Because both these traditions, among all the major philosophical schools East and West, have adventured into the domain of negativity, ultimate reality—be it Dao or nothingness, nirvāṇa or emptiness—has to be expressed in negative terms. Moreover, this reality is negative in its very nature, in the sense of withdrawing from our approach and retreating to itself. To that end, we have to keep silent.[29]

[26] *Daodejing*, ch. 1: 道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。

[27] *Zhuangzi*, "Qiwulun": 天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一。既已為一矣，且得有言乎?既已謂之一矣，且得無言乎?

[28] For a comparative study on the Daoist and Buddhist approaches on this issue, see Wang 2003: 81–122 and Lin 2007: 23–73.

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Chapter 23
Daoism and Greek Philosophy

Lisa Raphals

The project of comparing the classics of ancient China with the philosophic classics of ancient Greece has a long history. Much shorter is the history of their rigorous, informed, and evenhanded comparison. There are several reasons for this. One is that, on the Chinese side, such comparisons have been dominated by Confucianism and based on ethics. I begin here by reviewing what has been compared and how. I then survey three areas of comparison between Daoist and Greek philosophy—explicit concepts, epistemological methods, and recommendations for how to live in the original sense of *philosophia*. An important body of Chinese-language scholarship not treated here warrants mention: nineteenth and twentieth-century Chinese scholars who translated Greek philosophical works into Chinese and whose views were deeply influenced by that engagement. Most important are YAN Fu (1854–1921) and ZHOU Zuoren (1885–1967).

1 Comparisons of Chinese and Greek Philosophy

Initial studies of Chinese philosophy were implicitly comparative by virtue of the classical training of most Western exegetes. Several of the important major twentieth-century studies of China by HU Shi, Joseph Needham, and Benjamin Schwartz also contain comparative elements, as well as references to the "axial age" theories of Karl Jaspers. Many of the early comparisons were anecdotal in the sense that they reflected the circumstantial observations or intellectual temperaments

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of their authors. As the field of comparative philosophy developed, comparisons between Chinese and Greek philosophy came to center on Confucianism, either as a "school" of Chinese philosophy, or as a metonym for it in entirety.

Especially influential are F.C.S. Northrop's *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding* (1946) and the elaboration of Northrop's ideas by Roger Ames and David Hall. Northrop attempted to generalize broad distinctions between "Eastern" and "Western" cultures, based on an "aesthetic" or "intuitive" East and a theoretical West. Hall and Ames elaborated this distinction, following Northrop's method of comparing broad cultural tendencies. *Thinking Through Confucius* (1978) uses the *Analects* to contrast a Chinese "aesthetic" with a Western "theoretical" sense of order. *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (1995) draws on a distinction between chaos and cosmos (order). *Thinking from the Han. Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (1998) contrasts Chinese correlative thinking with Western preferences for transcendence. These various "Wests" all originate with the Greeks. The Chinese philosophy to which they are consistently compared is Confucian.

Another group of comparative philosophers use ancient texts (Chinese and Greek) to address issues in contemporary philosophy through the perspective of virtue ethics. Virtue ethics, originally derived from Aristotle, focuses on the character or virtue of the agent, and what sort of person we should endeavor to be. Interest in comparative ethics has taken on a life of its own, in a dedicated issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* edited by YU Jiyuan in 2002, and in a recent conference in 2007 on ethics in China and Greece in Munich, Germany (King and Schilling 2011).

But comparative virtue ethicists tend to employ specifically Confucian notions of virtue. As YU Jiyuan puts it in his guest editor's introduction to the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* issue on Chinese and Greek ethics:

> Daoism is well known for its amorality and rejection of the Confucian theory of *ren*. Nevertheless, the title of the most important Daoist classic is the *Daodejing*, which is usually translated as "the Classic of the Way and Its Virtue." Laozi has a different understanding of *de* (virtue) from Confucianism, but the ideal life he advocates is a life of *de* (virtue). Zhuangzi also seeks to show a life of *de*, which he understands as the spontaneous life that follows one's nature. Accordingly, Daoism can be regarded as a version of virtue ethics (2002b: 314).

Still, comparisons grounded in virtue ethics tend toward Aristotle and Confucius, and in some cases Xunzi,[1] and philosophical comparisons specific to Daoism are

[1] Aristotle is compared with Confucius (Yu 2007; Sim 2007), Mencius (Yu 2001), Xunzi (Hutton 2002; Cua 2003), the *Zhongyong* or "Doctrine of the Mean" (Plaks 2002), Chinese philosophy (Yu 1999), feminism (Li 1994) and Neo-Confucian ethics (Jiang 2000). By contrast Dorter (2002) compares notions of the mean in Confucius and Plato, and Anthony Yu (2002a) compares Xunzi with Plato's *Cratylus* on naming.

surprisingly few. Although several other studies, edited volumes, and journal issues have addressed comparison (not always philosophical) between Greece and China, none of these specifically treat Daoism.[2]

How, then, does Daoism fit into this picture? I begin with Daoist-Greek comparisons based on (presumably universal) concepts, such as truth. Next I turn to modes of knowledge, since epistemology (and especially skepticism and relativism) has been a focus of Daoist-Greek comparisons. The third section addresses ethics through Daoist and Greek recommendations for how to live.

2 Explicit Concepts

Several important comparative studies of Daoist texts address conceptual categories, comparative linguistics, grammar, and rhetoric. They begin with a series of papers by A.C. Graham, published between 1959 and 1989, on problems of epistemology and language, with particular interest in the *Zhuangzi*. Graham began by attempting to refute generalizations about classical Chinese that disregarded its distinctive grammar and used antiquated assumptions. His study of verbs for "being" in Chinese and Greek explored some of the ramifications of language for ontology (1959). Graham also tried to use Chinese interrogative particles to elucidate Chinese categories of thought, drawing on Émile Benveniste's appropriation of Aristotle's *Categories*. Jean-Paul Reding (1986, 2004) further explored the question of linguistic determinism, and how and whether language and grammar influence thought.

Chad Hansen's *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* (1992) attempted a unified interpretive theory of Chinese classical philosophy, based on an analysis of the social role of language as a structuring principle of society. In his view, the central problem of early Chinese thought was how society used language pragmatically to guide behavior. This perspective offered a philosophically powerful account of Daoist philosophy, often at the expense of traditional interpretations of early Confucianism. Key to Hansen's approach is the theory, explored in *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (1983), that Chinese differs from Greek and other Indo-European languages in having a "part/whole" rather than "one/many" structure. Thus Chinese nouns refer to parts of a mass, rather than individuals of a type (1983a: 31–34). In this account, skill in using names in ancient China consisted in making correct "cuts" in the mass or "stuff" of reality. The corresponding Greek skill would be to classify individuals correctly as to their "type." Hansen ascribes this "mass noun" structure to the classical Chinese, rather than to Daoism in particular. It would rule out any notion of classes or universals, including anything like a

[2] Reding 1985 and 2004; Shankman and Durrant, ed. 2002, Raphals 2002a, b and 2005.

Platonic "form." For purposes of the present discussion, the point is that Hansen rejects interpretive theories of Chinese thought influenced by Buddhism or Neo-Confucianism. Both, he argues, tacitly apply Indo-European theories of language and mind.

Hansen's book focuses on arguments about correct use of language (names) as a key focus in all early Chinese thought. He marks the doctrinal beginning of Daoism as the point at which Dao becomes an object of second-order reflection. Such reflection reached its maturity in the *Zhuangzi*, the philosophical center of Hansen's book.

A very different research agenda has focused on the Greek "inquiry into nature" (*historia peri phuseôs*) and its Chinese counterparts. Joseph Needham and others (Needham 1956: 32) have ascribed a central role to Daoist thinkers in the history of science in China. More recent comparisons of Chinese and Greek cosmology and medicine do not focus on Daoist texts per se. In particular, the collaborative research of Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin on the comparative history of science has deliberately steered away from any focus on "schools of thought" (Lloyd 1996; Lloyd and Sivin 2002).[3] Nonetheless, core Daoist texts, especially the *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*, are central to that comparative history.

What elements of Chinese and Greek philosophy are comparable, and how should comparanda be established? The question of what is comparable has been an object of major debate among intellectual historians in recent years, especially in France, where Jean-Pierre Vernant initiated a comparativist seminar between historians and anthropologists over 40 years ago.[4] It emerged as a major center for comparative study of the ancient world in the 1960s, only to eventually revert back to the study of ancient Greece and Rome.

Lloyd and Sivin argue that it is less fruitful to compare isolated concepts or factors than to compare contexts (Lloyd 1996) or "cultural manifolds" (Lloyd and Sivin 2002): the sum of experience, education, and livelihood in which ideas take shape. They note a specific advantage of comparison: that it is easier to *see* such a manifold when compared against another that is very different. In this sense, comparison is both possible and useful. Their form of philosophical comparison asks who were the "philosophers" of China and Greece, and in what contexts and forms did they engage in debate. They argue the importance of differences between Greek and Chinese argumentation: Greek debate was aggressive and egalitarian while Chinese argumentation attempted to persuade a hierarchical superior (Lloyd 1996, 2004).

[3]The evidence of recently excavated texts has also brought these categories into serious question. See essay by Yates and Allan in this volume.

[4]It was originally hosted by the Center for Marxist Research and Studies. In 1965 Vernant established his own research center, the Center for Comparative Research on Ancient Societies in the sixth section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Detienne 2000, 2001).

Here an important difference of method emerges. Vernant, Lloyd and Sivin differ from their predecessors in that they ground their comparativism in history and anthropology. They always ask how philosophers functioned in society: who were their patrons and students, how did they earn their livelihoods, with whom did they debate, and how the language they used affected and was affected by broader social practices.

3 Methods of Knowing

A second area of comparison has addressed how Daoist and Greek philosophers *know*: What are their methods of reasoning or inquiry? Distinctively Chinese (and distinctively Daoist) ideas of efficacy and strategy enter here. François Jullien depicts a contest between two mutually exclusive models of efficacy by “moralists” and “realists,” as a significant dimension of Warring States philosophical thought. For realists, among whom he includes Zhuangzi, efficacy arose not from the capacities of individuals, but from power relations (1995: 39). Other studies have analyzed modes of “skill” knowledge based on the efficacious use of foresight and cunning, the “cunning intelligence” the Greeks called *mêtis*, both in Greek culture and society (Detienne and Vernant 1978) and in China (Raphals 1992). Daoist texts portray wisdom as a “skill” or “knack” that could be developed but not described (Ivanhoe 1991; Raphals 1992, 1994).

The status of rationality is an area of considerable debate, in both comparative terms and within Chinese philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle make rationality central to what makes us human (*Republic* 353d, Nicomachean *Ethics* 1.7). But the status of rationality, especially in Daoism, is much debated. As recently as 2008, Yu Jiyuan wrote: “Whereas the dominant Greek position is to ground happiness in rationality, Daoism holds instead that one should repudiate rationality” (2008: 612). However, the *Zhuangzi* defines the authentic nature (*qing*) of humans as the ability to make discriminative judgments: “Judging it so and not so” [right and wrong]

is what I mean by *qing* [of humans] (是非吾所謂情也: chap. 5).

Daoist attitudes toward rationality have also been hotly debated. A.C. Graham viewed the *Zhuangzi* as anti-rationalist (1986, 1989, 1992: 99). This view was in turn strongly criticized by Chad Hansen (1991), along with Graham’s responses (Rosemont 1991). Hansen argues that Zhuangzi carefully avoids taking the anti-language position of the *Daodejing* and does not reject discrimination (*bian* 辯). He recognizes that names are not constant and so adopts a more skeptical perspective, shifting emphasis from the regulation of society to problems of knowledge. Hansen argues that while the Western paradigm for skepticism is experience or sensation, Chinese skepticism is linguistic.

4 Skepticism and Relativism

Probably the most important area of Daoist comparative philosophy is the comparative treatment of skepticism. Skepticism has been constitutive in the development of modern philosophy, originally through sixteenth-century studies of Pyrrhonian skepticism, and through the responses of Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant to the challenges posed by skepticism.

One edited volume has been entirely devoted to Zhuangzi and skepticism (Ivanhoe and Kjellberg 1996), and several of its essays take up the theme of skepticism directly. Paul Kjellberg (1996) compares the skepticism of Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus. Lisa Raphals (1994) distinguishes between skepticism as a doctrine, as a recommendation for life, and as an epistemological method, and argues that the *Zhuangzi* (in particular, the second chapter or *Qiwulun*) uses skeptical methods rather than skeptical doctrines. Eric Schwitzgebel (1996), by contrast, emphasized skeptical doctrines. In a very different approach from the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* volume, Richard Bosley (2002) starts from Greek philosophy in his comparative discussion of skepticism and dogmatism. According to Bosley, the difference between the (Western) skeptic and the Daoist is that the skeptic invites you to a statement of appearances. The appearances conflict and keep you at a distance from Nature. By contrast, the Daoist shifts according to both discourse and Dao, and is correspondingly close to Dao. (2002: 411). Bosley argues for a complementary dualism (especially to interpret the *Daodejing*) that can "disarm both extreme skepticism and extreme dogmatism" (2002: 412).

A related issue to the question of skepticism in whether the *Zhuangzi* espouses moral relativism. (The general view that it does often leads to the charge that it is "amoral.") A key work here is David B. Wong's *Moral Relativism* (1984), whose final chapter takes the *Zhuangzi* as a premodern antecedent to the kind of moral relativism Wong argues for. Wong asserts that a major Daoist theme is the fact that our moral evaluation categories are social creations; they are not "written into the nature of things" (1984: 206). He reads key passages from the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* as expressions of ethical relativism.[5] But as Joel Kupperman points out, ethical relativism is not the only kind of relativism, and these passages can also be read as "conceptually" rather than ethically relativist (1986: 174–175).

P.J. Ivanhoe argues that the *Zhuangzi's* Dao is more subtle, and Zhuangzi is "neither a strong skeptic nor a strong relativist" (1992: 640). According to Ivanhoe, Zhuangzi believed that one could not describe Dao directly, but he could and did describe sages acting in accord with it. Ivanhoe returns to the relativism question in the skepticism volume. He argues against Chad Hansen's (1983b) view of Zhuangzi as amoral and meta-ethical. Ivanhoe insists that Zhuangzi was a "language skeptic," but not a strong moral relativist (1996: 202), and asserts that Zhuangzi only uses an

[5] E.g., *Daodejing* 18: When the great Dao fell into disuse benevolence and rectitude appeared. *Zhuangzi* 2: When judgments of right and wrong appeared, the Dao was injured.

apparently amoral "god's-eye point of view" as "a kind of therapy to free us from the confines of our cramped and narrow perspective and give us a greater and more accurate appreciation of our true place in the world" (209–210). The point is, this corrective will allow us to regain a natural spontaneity and intuition. For Ivanhoe, this means that Zhuangzi views human nature as basically benign.

5 Recommendations for Life

A third comparative perspective on Daoism and Greek philosophy is the role of philosophy as a recommendation for how to conduct one's life. Pierre Hadot attempts to describe the phenomenon of *philosophia* and the traits shared by "philosophers" in Greco-Roman antiquity, including a kind of "strangeness." As Hadot puts it, the practice of *philosophia* implies a rupture with what the skeptics called *bios* or everyday life. They criticized other philosophers for not observing "the common conduct of life, the usual manner of seeing and acting." For the skeptics this consisted in respecting law and custom, practicing a craft or trade, satisfying basic needs, and "having faith in appearances indispensable to action." But though the skeptics conformed to the common conduct of everyday life, they remained philosophers,

> since they practiced an exercise demanding something rather strange, the suspension of judgment, and aiming at a goal, uninterrupted tranquility and serenity of the soul, that the common conduct of life hardly knew (Hadot 1990: 491–492).

According to Hadot, what characterizes the philosopher is the love of wisdom, which is foreign to the world, and makes the philosopher a stranger in it. Each school of Hellenistic philosophy had its own version of what wisdom consisted in, and of the "sage" who exemplified it. Schools differed over whether any such sages had ever existed, or whether wisdom was a fleeting state that could only be attained during rare moments. Each school expressed its own vision of the world, ideal style of life, and version of a perfected individual (1990: 292–293).

Several comparative philosophers have written on this aspect of Daoism, again, with emphasis on the *Zhuangzi*. Although A.C. Graham probably is best known for *Disputers of the* Dao (1989) and his translation of the inner chapters of the *Zhuangzi* (1986), he develops a specifically comparative theory of ethics and moral philosophy in *Reason and Spontaneity* (1985). He uses the *Zhuangzi* as the basis for a new inquiry into the problem of fact and value. His comparandum here is not Greek philosophy, but rather the fact-value problem in nineteenth-century British moral philosophy.

Joel Kupperman (1996) argues that the focus of the *Zhuangzi* is not moral improvement per se, but rather on improving the quality of one's life. The *Zhuangzi* recommends a "carefree" spontaneity and a deliberate detachment from the more conventional goals of reward and reputation. This, according to Kupperman, is more fulfilling than (though not necessarily morally superior to) a life directed toward

adherence to fixed moral norms. Where Kupperman focuses on spontaneity as a recommendation for life, other treatments of the *Zhuangzi* focus on the behavior of sages whose skill embodies, but does not describe, Dao (Ivanhoe 1991), or on accounts of the nature of skilled action (Eno 1996; Yearley 1996).

A very different comparison has been to consider Daoism, or the *Zhuangzi*, alongside the Stoics. Earle Coleman approaches Stoic and Daoist ethics from the perspective of aesthetics, on grounds that the moral and the aesthetic often coincide (2002: 385). He points out that both Stoics and Daoists employ literary devices such as dialogues, stories, paradoxes or poetry to teach us how to live. He focuses on similarities of doctrine between Daoists and Stoics, noting that both enjoin avoidance of extremes, emphasize the importance of self-realization, recommend a simple life, and attempt to live in conformity with Dao or Logos (sometimes by seeming to "do nothing"). Further, both affirm the metaphysical continuity and unity of nature, a unity that involves the "interchange" of opposites, whether yin and yang or *poioun* and *paskhon* (2002: 387). Finally, both are deeply concerned with death and the proper response to it. The one difference Coleman notes is their "seemingly antithetical approaches of discursive reason and intuition" (2002: 394), a contrast that several authors surveyed here might well challenge.

A more recent study by David Wong addresses the nature of detachment, rather than a comparison of Daoism and Stoicism per se. Wong posits two "models" for what detachment might be like. One, which he ascribes to the Stoics as described by Martha Nussbaum, consists of "extirpation" of attachment by refusing to attach intrinsic value to anything that depends on the external world (including family, friends, loves, and life itself). For the Stoics, the only thing that has intrinsic value and complete independence is virtue, in which the soul is at home within itself and dependent on nothing external (Nussbaum 1996: 362–364). Wong argues that a preferable model for detachment is that found in the *Zhuangzi*. The problem, as Wong sees it, is that "extirpating" attachments or special feelings for others removes too much value from human life and deprives life of too much of its humanity. A better course would be to combine the ability to have special feeling for others with an equilibrium that can tolerate, and accept, their loss (Wong 2006: 208).[6] Wong, following David Nivison (1991), argues that detachment does not require disengagement. He cites passages in the *Zhuangzi* such as the story of Zhuangzi's mourning for his dead wife (chap. 18) and a passage which advises:

> in the service of parents there is no higher degree of filial conduct than to live contentedly wherever they may dwell, in the service of a lord no fuller measure of loyalty than to perform his tasks contentedly whatever they may be, without joy and sorrow ever alternating before it (chap. 4, Graham 70).

[6]A missing term here is the view of Lawrence Becker, that special feelings for others have a place in a Stoic good life. In this Becker follows Posidonius rather than Chrysippus. Becker argues that strong and deep attachments can be "encapsulated," so that they will withstand loss (Wong 2006: 211; Becker 1998: 131).

Wong argues that being "without joy and sorrow ever alternating" does not recommend the extirpation of emotions such as filiality or loyalty to a lord. Rather, one is enjoined to fully accept these emotions, but at the same time to cultivate a contentedness that allows for the inevitability of change and the possibility of their loss. Wong further argues that the comparison of Daoist and Stoic (as well as Buddhist) attitudes toward detachment shows the advantages of a "resilience interpretation" of what detachment means over the competing idea of extirpating all feelings or attachments (Wong 2006: 213–216). In this way, the comparison adds to our understanding of how best to practice detachment.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief account raises what I believe are two important points for the ongoing comparative study of Daoism and Greek philosophy. The core of both is the need for rigorous, informed, and clearly specified attention to both comparanda. For this reason, studies that compare a specific element in Greek philosophy to a vaguely defined "Daoist" concept (such as yin and yang, or "Eastern philosophy") are not discussed or cited here. For similar reasons, I have deliberately avoided comparisons of genuinely Daoist texts (in particular, the *Daodejing*) with the work of philosophers who use Greek philosophy for their own hermeneutic purposes (in particular, Nietzsche and Heidegger). Such informed comparative discussions are available for Confucian texts, in part thanks to the influence of virtue ethics. This essay has attempted to delineate several areas apt for comparison between Daoist and Greek philosophical texts and their contexts. This field deserves more attention that it has received, and is a fruitful area for future research.

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Chapter 24
Daoism and Science

Lisa Raphals

At first glance, there may appear to be little connection between early Daoist philosophy and science. This essay tackles the problem of teasing out their relationship, on three fronts. The first concerns what we mean by Daoism and what we mean by science. The second addresses Daoist approaches to health and well-being in the broadest possible sense, including self-cultivation practices, medicine, and longevity techniques. The third turns to the association of early Daoism with various technical disciplines such as astronomy, mathematics, and cosmology.

Part of the problem is a tendency to associate Daoism with the *Daodejing* (also known as the *Laozi*), and to read that text anachronistically as a work of quasi-Buddhist mysticism. The *Daodejing* is a profound philosophical and mystical work of antiquity that uniquely combines poetry, aphorism, practical advice, and features a diversity of subject matter. Indeed its subject matter is so diverse that it is not easy to characterize, still, it consistently seems to criticize "knowledge," craft, and cleverness. The "sage" who rules the people:

> empties their minds, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, strengthens their bones. He always keeps the people without knowledge and without desires, and ensures that the wise dare not act (chap. 3).
>
> When the great Dao diminished, cleverness emerged, and there was great hypocrisy (chap. 18).
>
> Eliminate sages; get rid of the wise and the people will benefit a hundredfold .... Eliminate ingenuity; get rid of profit and there will be no more thieves and bandits (chap. 19).

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> The more people have crafts and cleverness, the more there will be anomalous events (chap. 57).

> The ancients who were skilled at Dao used it not to enlighten the people but to stupefy them. The reason people are difficult to govern is that they are too clever (chap. 65).

What are we to make of these statements? One explanation is epistemological. The *Daodejing* rejects the Confucian emphasis on the regulation of human society and focuses on the natural world and cosmos. It describes its brand of "meta-knowledge" as *abandoning* knowledge. But the *Daodejing* is also famous for its description of the sage who "acts without acting" (*wuwei* 無為). If that "action" is also applied to political control; our "Daoist" may also be a totalitarian ruler who controls his state by keeping his people ignorant or innocent of knowledge, wisdom, cleverness, craft, and ingenuity. Whichever interpretation we prefer, despite its apparent interest in the natural world, the *Daodejing* does not seem to encourage anything like an interest in science (Liu 2005).

A very different picture emerges when we turn to the other major texts from the received tradition of early Daoist thought. In immediate contrast, many passages in the *Zhuangzi* extoll the abilities of specialized craftsmen who possess highly technical skills. These stories liken mastery of the Way to mastery of a craft. They also emphasize the technical skills of commoners. Commoners, rather than rulers, are presented as sage-like figures. These technical experts include arrow makers, bell-stand carvers, boatmen, butchers, cicada catchers, potters, sword makers, and wheelwrights (Raphals 2005).

Most detailed is the exegesis of the skillful butcher PAO Ding, (cf. 135–36) who describes the process of mastering his skill. His method is initially analytic; he begins by studying oxen as wholes, next as parts, and finally with faculties beyond ordinary vision (chap. 3). The story of Wheelwright BIAN makes the general claim that skill is not teachable. Bian himself has the knack of chipping wheels at precisely the right speed, but he cannot explain it or teach it to his son (ch. 13). The *Zhuangzi* also contains references to the nature of *qi* and yin and yang, and their relation to health and longevity.

Other passages of scientific interest appear in the "Daoist" chapters of the *Guanzi*, as well as the *Huainan Annals* (*Huainanzi*), which includes technical treatises on astronomy, calendrics, and mathematics.

1 Which Sciences? Which Daoism?

The question of the relation of Daoist philosophy and science is complicated by several factors. What do we mean by science in the context of early China and early Daoist philosophy? Should we be looking at "science" or at "technology"? Which sciences, and where in the hierarchy of value is that knowledge? An ongoing debate on the nature of Chinese science, initially arising from the pioneering work of Joseph Needham, focuses on the question of why (or whether) the revolution

that transformed scientific disciplines in Europe did not take place in China. That debate has focused on the mathematization of science and on the activities of court astronomical officials (Needham 1956, 1979). But are these areas the right places to look to understand the relation of early Daoism to the origins of science?

In particular, which sciences are relevant to Daoist philosophy? As Nathan Sivin (1990) has argued, Chinese accounts focused on specific sciences, rather than a unified notion of science. These sciences were both quantitative and qualitative. Most important for our purposes are the qualitative fields of astronomy or astrology (*tianwen* 天文) and medicine (*yi* 醫). *Tianwen* included the observation of celestial and meteorological events whose proper reading could be used to rectify the political order. Medicine included "nurturing life" (*yangsheng* 養生), what Needham termed "macrobiotics." This broad category included a wide range of self-cultivation techniques. In later periods it also included *materia medica* (*bencao* 本草) and internal (*neidan* 内丹) and external (*waidan* 外丹) alchemy.[1]

Medicine, astronomy, and cosmology appear in the last two sections of the Bibliographic Treatise of the *Han Dynastic History* (*Han shu* 30).[2] The fifth section, "Numbers and Techniques" (*shushu* 數術), includes *tianwen*, as well as calendars and chronologies (*lipu* 歷譜), Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行), divination by turtle shells and yarrow stalks (*shigui* 蓍龜), miscellaneous divination (*zazhan* 雜占), and morphoscopy (*xingfa* 刑法). The sixth section, "Recipes and Methods," includes works on medicine and longevity, including medical classics (*yijing* 醫經), classical recipes (*jingfang* 經方), sexual arts (*fangzhong* 房中), and immortality practices (*shenxian* 神仙). The bibliographic treatises of some later dynastic histories combine these two sections into "Arts and Techniques" (s*huyi* 術藝) or "Skills and Techniques" (s*huji* 術技).[3] These chapters reflect the concerns and expertise of the technical and ritual specialists closely associated with the "Recipe Masters" (*fangshi* 方士) associated with the Han court. But their concerns also appear in early Daoist philosophical texts, and the separation of Daoist philosophy from the categories of religion and science is artificial and problematic (Harper 1998, 1999; Kalinowski 2004).

Another initial problem is the anachronistic understandings of the nature of early Daoism. These include an oversimplified emphasis on the schools and legendary authors of Daoist texts. There is also a problematic distinction between the "philosophical" Daoism (*Daojia* 道家) of the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi* and the "religious" Daoism (*Daojiao* 道教) of longevity practices, popular religion,

[1]Quantitative sciences included Mathematics (*suan* 算), Mathematical harmonics or acoustics (*lü* 律 or *lü lü* 律呂) and Mathematical astronomy (*li* 歷 or *li fa* 歷法), in relation to harmonics.

[2]The six sections of the *Han shu* Bibliographic Treatise are: (1) the Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝) or Classics (*liujing* 六經), (2) Masters (*zhuzi* 諸子) texts of Warring States philosophy, (3) Poetry (*shifu* 詩賦), (4) Military works (*bingshu* 兵書), (5) Numbers and Techniques (*shushu* 數術), and (6) Recipes and Methods (*fangji* 方技).

[3]S*ong shu* 宋書, "Benji" 本紀 9 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1987), 180; *Sui shu* 隋書, "Zhi" 志 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1987): 32, 903–909.

and organized Daoist churches. As Nathan Sivin (1978) pointed out in an article 30 years ago, simplistic stereotypes of Daoism as mystical or naturalistic obscure understanding of the relations between Daoism and science. Other scholars have identified the Daoists as scientists of early China. Joseph Needham described Daoism as "religious and poetical, yes; but it was also at least as strongly magical, scientific, democratic, and politically revolutionary" (1956: 32). The *Daoist Canon* (5,305 volumes, completed in 1445) attests to Daoist expertise in astronomy and cosmology, biology and botany, medicine and pharmacology, chemistry and mineralogy, and mathematics and physics. Ancient Daoists were active observers of the natural world, but they were not professionalized in the manner of contemporary scientists. Their own interests, questions, and priorities fell in the areas of medicine, longevity, and literal physical immortality, rather than scientific demonstration or abstract knowledge for its own sake.

Much of the Daoist engagement with science after the Han dynasty is relegated to *Daojiao*, and often in ways that obscure the relation between Daoist philosophy and science in early China. The following discussion concentrates on intersections between early Daoist philosophy and science in medicine, cosmology, astronomy, and early Chinese traditions of technical expertise.

2 Qi, Medicine, and Longevity

Early Daoist texts express the need to preserve one's person, self, or essential nature, beginning with the *Daodejing*:

> Therefore the sage puts his person last and it comes first,
> Treats it as extraneous and it is preserved. (chap. 7)

One way to do this was to maintain health by nurturing life (*yangsheng*), an area of common ground for Daoists and practitioners of traditional medical arts. The term *yangsheng* first appears in the *Zhuangzi* and then throughout a range of second (BCE) century medical literature. In the Han dynasty, "Nurturing Life" techniques became a major concern of the Recipe Masters of the Han court (Ngo 1976). Texts on Nourishing Life include methods for absorbing and circulating *qi* in the body—for example, breathing and meditation exercises, diet, drugs and sexual techniques. Discussions of the cultivation of *qi* for health, longevity, and literal physical immortality appear in a wide spectrum of texts that in fact link the Daoist philosophical classics to other traditions of technical expertise and religious self-cultivation.

In the third chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, "Nourishing the Ruler of Life" (*Yang sheng zhu* 養生主), the expert butcher Pao Ding instructs Duke Hui of Liang, who responds that Pao Ding has taught him how to nurture life (*yangsheng*). Another passage in the Outer Chapters refers to some of these exercises. It contrasts "real sages" who follow the way of heaven and earth with (among others) practitioners of "nourishing life" traditions who:

> blow out, breathe in, old out, new in, dormant like the bear, neck-stretched like the bird, their only care for longevity; these are the practitioners of “guide-and-pull” and “nourishing the body” who desire the longevity of Pengzu (ch. 15).

The passage continues. Real sages:

> cultivate [their persons] without benevolence and righteousness, govern without merit or fame, are at ease without needing rivers and seas, attain longevity without “guiding and pulling,” forget everything but lack for nothing, placid without limit, things of value follow upon them (ch. 15, cf. Graham 1986a: 265).

Since the whole point of the *Zhuangzi* passage is to oppose “guiding and pulling” and other longevity techniques to true sagehood, it does not dwell on their details. We can get a better idea of what he might have been talking about from other sources. Some of these ideas are elaborated in a chapter of the *Guanzi* titled “Inner Cultivation” (*Nei ye*), which describes the cultivation of *qi*, as well as vital essence (*jing*), and spirit (*shen*). It describes Dao as literally pervading the body or the person of a sage:

> When the wellspring is not drained, you can freely circulate throughout the nine borders. You can then exhaust Heaven and Earth, and spread over the four seas. (*Guanzi* 16.3a8–3b1; Roth 1999, chap. 15).

The *Zhuangzi* and other texts refer to the figure of the numinous person or *shen ren* 神人 as someone who has effectively transformed the physical body, and the *qi* that constitutes it. The *Zhuangzi* describes the *shen ren* of Guye, who concentrates his *shen*, avoids the five grains, rides the clouds, and, through the concentration of his *shen* “protects creatures from sickness and epidemic and makes the yearly harvest ripen” (1: 28; cf. Graham 46). This passage suggests that a sage can have a nurturing effect on the world by acting at a distance, possibly as an unintended by-product of self-cultivation practices. The *Zhuangzi* clearly identifies *qi* as the basis of the physical constitution of the body: “Human birth is caused by the gathering together of *qi*” (22: 733). The Z*huangz*i also describes harmonizing or taking charge of the six *qi*.

> The *qi* of heaven is not in harmony, the *qi* of earth is tangled and snarled. The six *qi* are maladjusted, the four seasons are disordered. Now I want to harmonize the essences of the six *qi* in order to nurture life (11: 386).

Similarly, the *Springs and Autumns of Master Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu*) describes sages as making their numinous essences (*jingshen*) tranquil, and preserving and increasing their longevity (3.2, pp. 3b–4a).

In all these texts a sage or numinous person achieves that status through both meta-physical and physical means. This is the focus of Daoist “Nurturing Life” techniques.

Medical and divinatory texts excavated from tombs make it clear that a wide range of longevity techniques had been developed before the Han dynasty (Harper 1998: 33). Most important is a corpus of medical manuscripts excavated from Mawangdui 馬王堆 (Changsha, Hubei), dated to 169 BCE. This tomb is best known for its two versions of the *Daodejing*, but it is meaningful to locate those texts among other texts of a scientific provenance found in the tomb (Zhou and Xiao 1987; Harper 1998, 1999; Ma 1992; Zhou 1994).

Six of the medical manuscripts are concerned with nourishing life in various ways. “Harmonizing Yin and Yang” (*He yin yang* 合陰陽) and “Discussion of the Realized Way of All Under Heaven” (*Tianxia zhidao tan* 天下至道談) are concerned with sexual cultivation. They refer to the movements and postures of animals as whole-body metaphors for sexual techniques. An example is the description of ten postures in “Harmonizing Yin and Yang”:

> The ten postures: the first is “tiger roving”; the second is “cicada clinging”; the third is “measuring worm”; the fourth is “river deer butting”; the fifth is “locust splayed”; the sixth is “gibbon grabbing”; the seventh is “toad”; the eighth is “rabbit bolting”; the ninth is “dragonfly”; the tenth is “fish gobbling.” (Harper 1998: 418)

These texts emphasize that sexual activity is a natural process, but one that must be regulated. As the “Realized Way of All Under Heaven” puts it, people know by nature how to breathe and how to eat, but everything else is a matter of learning and habit. “What assists life is eating; what injures life is lust. Therefore the sage when conjoining male and female invariably possesses a model.” (Zhou and Xiao 1987: 431; Harper 1998: 432).

“Recipes for Nurturing Life” (*Yang sheng fang* 養生方) consists of 87 recipes, including food, drugs, and beverages, along with several sexual cultivation exercises. “Eliminating Grain and Eating Vapor” (*Quegu shiqi* 卻穀食氣) specifies diet and breathing exercises to be performed in the morning and evening, and a seasonal regimen of breath cultivation through consuming six *qi* and avoiding another five (Harper 1998: 25–30). Another text, the “Ten Questions” (Shi wen 十問) gives advice on techniques for nurturing life (Harper 1998: 22–30), for example:

> Yao asked Shun: “In Under-heaven what is most valuable?”
> Shun replied: “Life is most valuable.”
> Yao said: “How can life be cultivated?”
> Shun said: “Investigate yin and yang.” (Zhou and Xiao 1989: 379; Harper 1998: 399)

Finally, the “Drawings of Guiding and Pulling” (*Daoyin tu* 導引圖) is a series of 44 drawings of human figures performing exercises, some with captions. Some are described in another excavated text from tomb no. 247, Zhangjiashan 張家山 (Jiangling, Hubei). The “Pulling Book” (*Yinshu shiwen* 引書釋文) from Zhangjiashan describes exercises that refer to or are named after animals, including inchworms, snakes, mantises, wild ducks, owls, tigers, chickens, bears, frogs, deer, and dragons. Both exemplify a tradition of exercise for both therapy and health known as *daoyin* (pulling and guiding).

The “*yangsheng* culture” of these texts emphasized control over physiological and mental processes, both understood as self-cultivation, through the transformation of *qi*. “Self-cultivation” in this context included moral excellence, health, and longevity (Lo 2001).

We can get a broader notion of what these techniques were like if we turn to the list of titles from the Recipes and Methods section of the *Han shu* bibliographic treatise. It includes the well known *Internal Classic of the Yellow Lord* (*Huangdi neijing*) and titles of medical works on nurturing life, health, and longevity. The classical recipes (*jingfang*) section includes titles such as “Recipes for Married Women and Infants” (*Furen yinger fang* 婦人嬰兒方) and “Food Prohibitions of

Shen Nong and Huang Di" (*Shennong Huangdi shi jin* 神農黃帝食禁). The sexual arts section includes "Recipes of Huang Di and the Three Sage-Kings for Nurturing Yang" (*Huangdi Sanwang yang yang fang* 黃帝三王養陽方) and "Inner Chamber Recipes of the Three Schools for Having Children" (*Sanjia neiju youzi* fang 三家內房有子方). Other sections describe physical exercises and therapeutic techniques, such as the "Stepping and Pulling Book of Huang Di and Other Masters" (*Huangdi zazi bu yin* 黃帝雜子步引 (*Han shu* 30).

Another medical text from Mawangdui is a recipe (*fang* 方) manual titled *Recipes for Fifty-Two Ailments* (*Wushier bingfang* 五十二病方, translated and discussed in Harper 1998). Recipe texts also have been excavated from Zhangjiashan (Li 1993, 2000). In addition, the Mawangdui tombs also contained hexagram divination texts and charts and diagrams on cloud divination and physiognomy, including the oldest known representation of a comet (Li 1993).

In summary, most of the above texts can be described as part of a *yangsheng* culture, which offered and emphasized control over physiological processes of the body and mind that were understood as transformations of *qi*. What is the relation of these detailed technical texts to Daoist philosophy? These technical arts form a continuum with Daoist philosophy because their transformations were understood as self-cultivation in the coterminous senses of moral excellence, health, and longevity (rather than medical pathology), and physiological transformation through the manipulation of *qi* (Lo 2001).

We can go further. Mark Csikszentmihalyi (2004) describes them as part of an "embodied virtue" tradition of self-cultivation practices that are not restricted to Daoism. These practices and the concepts behind them structured much of early Daoist philosophy and medical theory, and also had profound effects on early Chinese ethics and metaphysics (Lo 2005). Such "material virtue" traditions held that the body-mind was constructed of *qi* and that embodied self-cultivation practices could transform *qi*. These views informed Warring States accounts of dietary practices, exercise regimens, breath meditation, sexual cultivation techniques, and other technical traditions associated with *fangshi*. Material virtue traditions also had important links with Daoist texts, southern schools, and the "moralization" of health in traditions that culminated in the *Huangdi neijing*. Accounts of these practices appear in passing in the texts of the received tradition. Many more come from texts excavated from tombs.

3 Daoism, Cosmology, and Astronomy

It is almost impossible to separate Chinese ideas of body, state, cosmos and "nature."[4] Over the course of the last three centuries BCE, Chinese understandings of the physical world developed to reflect, and mirror, political consolidation

[4]Nathan Sivin (1995: 3n1) points out that there is no indigenous term for "nature" in China before the nineteenth century.

(Sivin 1995). These new ideas of cosmic order—correspondence between microcosm (the body) and macrocosm (the cosmos)—appeared in new representations of the body, the state, and the cosmos that were based on systematic applications and correlations of the ideas of yin and yang and of the Five Phases (*wuxing*). They appear in medical texts such as the *Huangdi neijing*, in calendrics, in observational astronomy and the study of astronomical portents with political implications, and in the "correlative cosmologies" of many Han dynasty texts. Where did Daoism fit into this picture?

Theories of *qi* and yin and yang are not uniquely Daoist, but they are importantly pursued in early Daoist texts. New systematic medical theories based on these ideas were systematized in a cosmological framework in the *Huangdi neijing* (Veith 1972; Yamada 1979; Unschuld 2003). This complex and multilayered text, probably compiled in the first century BCE, presents a systematic cosmology that analogizes the body, the state, and the cosmos in complex systems of "correlative cosmology" (Graham 1986b; Sivin 1995; Lloyd and Sivin 2002). It describes relations and analogies between the body (including the emotions), the state and the cosmos, all expressed in terms of yin and yang and the Five Phases. For example, the *Huangdi neijing* describes correspondence between the articulations of the body and the cosmos, specifically between heaven and earth and the upper and lower parts of the body.

> Heaven is round, earth is square; people's heads are round, their feet are square and thereby correspond to them. Heaven has the sun and moon, people have two eyes; Earth has nine regions, people have nine orifices. Heaven has wind and rain, people have joy and anger; Heaven has thunder and lightening, people have the notes and sounds. Heaven has four seasons, people have four limbs. Heaven has five tones, people have the five depots; Heaven has six pitches, people have six palaces. Heaven has winter and summer, people have cold and hot [ailments]. Heaven has ten days, people have the hands' ten fingers ... Heaven has yin and yang; people have man and wife. The year has 365 days; the body has 360 joints (*Huangdi neijing lingshu* ch. 71).

The apocryphal "founder" of scientific thought in China was ZOU Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 BCE), who is associated with the Yin-Yang school (*Yinyang jia*). ZOU Yan is credited with combining and systematizing yin-yang and Five-Phase theory (Needham 1956: 231–34), but none of his works survive. SIMA Qian's biography of him (*Shiji* 76) describes ZOU Yan as a member of the Jixia 稷下 Academy, originally from the state of Qi (in present day Shandong):

> he examined deeply into the phenomena of the increase and decrease of yin and yang, and wrote essays totaling more than 100,000 words about their strange permutations, and about the cycles of the great sages from beginning to end. His sayings were vast and far-reaching, and not in accord with the accepted beliefs of the classics. First he had to examine small objects, and from these he drew conclusions about large ones, until he reached what was without limit. First he spoke about modern times, and from this he went back to the time of Huang Di. The scholars all studied his arts. Moreover he followed the great events in the rise and fall of ages, and by means of their omens and (an examination into their systems), extended his survey (still further) backwards to the time when the heavens and the earth had not yet been born, (in fact) to what was profound and abstruse and impossible to investigate.

> He began by classifying China's notable mountains, great rivers and connecting valleys; its birds and beasts; the fruitfulness of its water and soils, and its rare products; and from this extended his survey to what is beyond the seas, and men are unable to observe. Then starting from the time of the separation of the Heavens and the Earth, and coming down, he made citations of the revolutions and transmutations of the Five Powers (Virtues), arranging them until each found its proper place and was confirmed (by history). (*Shiji* ch 76, slightly modified from Needham 1956: 232–33).

The *Han shu* describes ZOU Yan as a *fangshi* or Recipe Master. This term was applied to a wide range of practitioners of mantic and technical arts (the *shushu* and *fangji* sections of the *Han shu* Bibliographic Treatise). *Fangshi* practiced divination and claimed to possess secret texts and formulae. They gained great influence during the earlier part of the Han dynasty, though their influence waned by the later Han. The *fangshi* used yin-yang and Five-Phase cosmology. They seem to have originated from the Shandong peninsula. They were particularly associated with the mantic arts, including the use of the sexagenary cycle of stems and branches, the *Yijing*, and divination by stars, dreams, physiognomy, the winds, and by the use of pitch pipes (Li 1993, 2000).

Another important aspect of cosmological interest is observational astronomy or astrology (*tianwen*). Specifically Daoist interest in the heavens, like so many things, first appears in the *Zhuangzi*, which raises questions about the natural world and its movements:

> How heaven wheels! How earth abides! Do the sun and the moon contend over their placements? Who plays chief and directs? Who binds them and connects? ... How does a cloud become rain, or rain become clouds? (14: 493)

Within a Daoist context, questions about the nature of the heavens were pursued by the *fangshi. Fang* expertise also included divination by the heavens, both by the stars, and by interpreting subcelestial phenomena, including weather, clouds, mists, and winds (Ngo 1976; Li 1993). These activities were not invented by the *fangshi*. Evidence of royal interest in stars and winds dates back to the Shang oracle bone inscriptions. The *Han shu* Bibliographic Treatise also provides evidence of *fang* activity through the titles of lost books. Other evidence comes from late Warring States and Han texts such as the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*. The *Huainanzi* contains several chapters of astronomical interest. One passage describes the technical interests of the sage emperor Yu, who ordered his officials to measure the distances to the ends of the earth:

> Emperor Yu ordered Taizhang to walk from the eastern extremity to the western extremity: 233,500 *li* and 75 steps; after this he ordered SHU Hai to walk from the northern extremity to the southern extremity: 233,500 *li* and 75 steps (chap. 4:56, Raphals 2002).[5]

The third chapter of the *Huainanzi* ends with a section on the use of the measurements cast by shadows (gnomons) to calculate distances. This passage is

[5]The "step" was a double stride, conventionally reckoned at about 2 m. There were 360 steps per *li*. A *li* was roughly equivalent to a mile.

probably a later addition, but for our purposes, its inclusion in the *Huainanzi* is indicative of the scientific concerns of the text. It gives directions for a series of measurements, including how to determine the directions of sunrise, sunset, and the cardinal directions. It also explains how to measure the "breadth and length of east, west, north, and south":

> If you wish to know the figures for the breadth and length of east, west, north, and south set up four gnomons to make a right-angled figure one *li* square. More than ten days before the spring or autumn equinox sight along the northern gnomons of the square on the sun from its first appearance to its rise above the horizon. Wait for [the day when] they coincide. When they coincide they are in line with the sun. Each time take a sight on it [the sun] with the southern gnomons, and take the amount by which it is within the forward gnomons as the divisor. Divide the whole width and divide the length [between] the standing gnomons in order to know the measurements east and west from here (*Huainanzi* 3:53–54, translation slightly modified from Cullen 1976: 116).

Another area of Daoist interest in astronomy as calendrics, based on detailed observation of seasonal changes. One example is the Monthly Ordinance (*Yueling* 月令) calendars of the *Huainanzi*. Monthly Ordinances use Five-Phase correlations to specify the correct social, ritual, and agricultural activities for each season. Rulers could use these texts to regulate state ritual activities over the course of the year. The ordinances cover such topics as state activities (fortification, planting, etc.) and the consequences of performing activities at incorrect times. These are the first texts in the received tradition to link the 28 lodges to the months of the year, associating each month with a lodge, which indicates the position of the sun among the stars for that month.[6] The calendric tables list the days of the year in stem-branch sexagenary order, with annotations on the nature of different kinds of days, and which days were auspicious or inauspicious for particular activities.[7] They also included monthly and seasonal correlates. For example, the lodges were associated with the position of the sun, and dusk and dawn correlated to the five pentatonic tones, pitchpipe notes, numbers, tastes, smells, color of the emperor's clothing, presiding deity, and yin and yang sacrificial organs, all described in terms of the Five Phases (chap. 5, Major 1993: 220–225).

These correlations seem a far cry from either the free-spirited cosmological speculations of the *Zhuangzi* or empirical science in any modern sense. Between those extremes stand the mostly lost arts of technical traditions described in the *Han shu* Bibliographic Treatise: astronomy, medical, pharmacological, and mantic arts, whose practitioners were the counterparts and potential competitors of Daoist philosophers (Lloyd and Sivin 2002). Expertise initially developed by diviners and technical specialists became part of the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Huainanzi*. It was also incorporated into the systematic cosmology and medicine of the Han.

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[6] Ancient Chinese astronomers divided the celestial equator around the pole star into 28 "lodges" (*xiu* 宿), each named by a star within it and each comprising some 13° (*du* 度) of the circle.

[7] Such calendars also appear in almost identical form as chapters in the *Guanzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu*, and were incorporated into the *Liji* in the Later Han dynasty (*Guanzi* 3.8 and 3.9, Rickett 1985 I:148–192).

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief account addresses important issues in the role of Daoism in the early history of science in China. Instead of turning to the *Daodejing* or Han theories of yin-yang-based "correlative cosmology," I have focused on the relation of Daoism to the qualitative sciences of medicine and astronomy, and their relations with early Chinese philosophy overall. I have deliberately focused on technical traditions, referring to the Bibliographic Treatise of the *Han shu*, which delineates a culture concerned with astrocalendrics, medicine, and techniques for "nurturing life." New research and the evidence of recently excavated texts is transforming our understanding of the scientific aspects of Daoist thought.

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