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YUAN DAO: TRACING *DAO* TO ITS SOURCE

Translated by
D. C. Lau
and
Roger T. Ames

With an introduction by
Roger T. Ames

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D. C. Lau (Hong Kong)
Roger T. Ames (Hawai'i)

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

duced that came to dominate his court and to animate the intellectual life of the dynasty.

The historical context is important to our understanding of the *Huainanzi*.[1] With the collapse of the short-lived Qin dynasty in the last decade of the third century BCE, the empire sank into a protracted period of civil war. As Liu Bang 劉邦, the founding father of the Han dynasty, rose to emperor against the competing confederation of Xiang Yu, he expediently allowed the self-proclaimed kings who had supported him in his campaign to retain control over their lands. Thus, his "empire" in 202 BCE was a tenuous lamination of fourteen commanderies in the west over which he exercised direct control, and ten kingdoms to the east under the command of vassal kings. At the same time, the entire empire was under constant threat from incursions of Xiongnu tribes on the borderlands. Over the century that followed, it became a central task of the Han court to disenfranchise these vassal kings and consolidate its own power at their expense.

The first stage was for the emperor to replace the vassal kings with family members loyal to his blood line. This happened quickly, but was by no means effective. By 196 BCE, nine of the ten kingdoms had been placed under the control of an imperial relative. However, the passage of time together with contention among family members for the imperial throne served to dilute the loyalty expected by the central court, and to fuel the forces of separatism and disintegration. Further measures were necessary to reduce the threat of rebellion.

Over a period of decades, a conscious strategy was implemented to reduce the size and strength of these kingdoms, and to take advantage of any and all reasons available to the emperor to first divide them up into smaller kingdoms, and then ultimately to redefine them into imperial commanderies. In fact, in 154 BCE, some ten years after Liu An came to power in Huainan, seven of his fellow kings joined in a revolt against the imperial court, but succeeded only in providing it with a pretext for accelerating its process of centralization.

It was under these circumstances that Liu An ruled the kingdom of Huainan, already much diminished from the original polity that had flourished as a major power in the early days of the Han empire. It was with the specter of imminent annexation hanging over his court that he went about the business of the day.

Thus, there is a great personal tragedy that is remembered in this gift to Emperor Wu. When Emperor Wu was first embarking on his reign of "all under the heavens," Liu An was a favorite uncle of the young emperor, and was widely respected as a patron of learning by the imperial family and the existing academy. The central message of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, and the *Huainanzi* broadly, is philosophical. It advocates inclusivity—an appreciation of the contribution that each and every thing can make to the well-being of the whole when orchestrated by able leadership into a productive harmony. Practically speaking, the text is a political statement of this same pluralistic idea. While *Huainanzi* taken as a whole is syncretic, *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* is a cloaked but compelling Daoistic argument against political centralism, expansionism, and the zero-sum consolidation of power that was driving the imperial court during this first century of the Han dynasty.

Intellectually, the vassal court of Liu An can, in retrospect, be seen as a feudal bastion of pluralistic shamanism and "Daoistic" culture holding out against the gradual ascendancy of a state Confucianism which was to become the central ideology under the growing influence of scholar-statesmen such as Jia Yi (200–169 BCE), Chao Cuo (d. 154 BCE), and Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE). While Jia Yi and particularly Chao Cuo can hardly be described as undiluted advocates of Confucian values, their main message to the throne—curtail the power of the kings—did serve the interests of political centralism. In fact, it was this message that, in the swim of court politics, cost both of them their lives. It was thus left to Dong Zhongshu to make the argument for the Confucian alternative to more stringent legalistic policies.

INTRODUCTION

THE *HUAINANZI* AND THE COURT OF EMPEROR WU

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* (*yuandao* 原道) is the opening treatise of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. The *Huainanzi* is an early-Han-dynasty (late-second-century BCE) compendium of knowledge which covers every subject from astronomy and calendrics to government and the art of warfare. The early part of the Han dynasty was a formative period in what we might call "Han thinking"—a syncretic way of thinking and living that came, and continues, to be characteristically "Chinese." And *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* is among the earliest and most seminal of the documents that illustrate how Han thinkers came to see their world.

With some confidence, the *Huainanzi* can be dated to about 139 BCE and the central court of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) of the Han dynasty 漢武帝. This compendium was probably presented to Emperor Wu by his vassal and paternal uncle, Liu An 劉安, the king of Huainan, as a gift to celebrate Emperor Wu's succession to the dragon throne of the recently unified Chinese empire. But there was a purpose to this gift: to teach the young emperor how to understand the world around him. Liu An was celebrated as a man of letters whose stature was established by gathering at his own court ranking philosophes of his age to reflect upon all matters great and small as they shaped the world of his time. Out of these reflections a library of texts was pro-

Less than two decades after taking the throne in 141 BCE, the now supremely powerful Emperor Wu, whose posthumous title of "martial emperor (*wudi* 武帝)" he so richly deserved, was inextricably caught up in the drive toward centralized empire. In 122 BCE, accusing Liu An of lèse-majesté, he demanded that his uncle appear before him to answer the charge of inciting rebellion. It is possible that Liu An in desperation tried to launch a preemptive strike against the inevitable eclipse of his kingdom, or even more likely that such accusations were fabricated in order to lay claim to one of the final political pieces that might resist the emperor's authority. In any case, Liu An was forced into his final move. Liu An's suicide (or execution) allowed Emperor Wu to arrest his family members and loyal retainers at the Shouchun 壽春 capital of Huainan, and to rid this world of any would-be successors. To this end, the central court conducted speedy hearings on the charge of treason followed predictably by mass executions, and in the process, laid its own claim to the remaining lands of Huainan. Liu An's name was stricken from the family register of the imperial house, thus ostensibly erasing him from the official lineage.

This tragic end of the literatus Liu An and the treason that came to be associated with his name might be the clue necessary to explain the hotly debated yet still mysterious relationship between the *Huainanzi* and a second Han dynasty text clearly based upon it, the *Wenzi*. The contemporary scholar Ho Che Wah 何志華 has proferred a plausible scenario. The "execution" of the king of Huainan as a traitor to the throne in 122 BCE likely had a rather numbing effect on the circulation of a text that bore his name, at least throughout the long reign of Emperor Wu (d. 87 BCE). For this reason, some of its contents were appropriated and edited into a second volume and circulated under the name of *Wenzi*.[2] In a literary culture in which it was common for one text to borrow freely and liberally from another, the kinship between the suspended *Huainanzi* and its close cousin, the *Wenzi*, would not necessarily draw official condemnation, especially given the conflicted relationship Emperor Wu had with his literary uncle.

As philosophical literature, *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* can be judged against the standard set by the early Daoist classics, the *Daodejing* 道德經 and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In philosophical content and in style, it is to be most immediately identified as a practical extension of these earlier Daoist ("Lao-Zhuang") texts, frequently alluding to them directly, and providing further reflection on their central theme: How are we to understand the dynamic world that gives us context, and how are we to function effectively within our ever changing social, political, cultural, and natural environments? Or perhaps more to the point, how does the world hang together, and how are we to make the most of it? In our translation of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, we have noted direct allusions to the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* to illustrate the intimate relationship to these Daoist texts.

In the *Huainanzi*, Daoism serves as a primary ore, being alloyed with the concerns and perspectives of competing schools to produce a more malleable and practical amalgam. The coherence of the *Huainanzi*, however, is one true to the spirit of Lao-Zhuang in that conflicting and divided opinions are happily juxtaposed as necessary to provide for the fullest summary of China's literary culture. It is richness and intensity, rather than some rationalized order, that are the signature of *Huainanzi*'s version of syncretic Daoism.

The *Summary* postface 要略 at the end of the *Huainanzi*, perhaps written by its compiler, Liu An himself, describes the contents of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* in the following terms:

> *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* takes the measure of the world in all directions, explores the inchoate origins of the myriad things, traces out the lines of its grand continuities, and probes the mysteries of what is hidden and obscure, thereby taking one soaring beyond the carriage crossbar into the realm of nothingness. By investing in what is small it embraces what is great, and by guarding what is concise it brings proper order to what is expansive. It enables a

person to understand the consequences of either taking the lead or following behind, and what is advantageous or at risk in either taking action or remaining still. To master its message is to have access to a grand view of things on a truly panoramic scale. If one wants to capture its message in a phrase, it is to defer to what is natural and to preserve one's genuineness. If one wants to illumine its message with a second phrase, it is to take external things lightly and prize one's own person. If one wants a third phrase that gets to its core, it is to externalize things and to return to one's nature as it really is. Grasping its central message, one harmonizes one's internal organs and nourishes one's flesh and skin. If one accepts and complies with its standards and precepts, and lives by them to the end of one's days, it provides a way to respond to and deal with the world around one, and to observe and match changes as they arise. As easy as turning a ball in the palm of one's hand, it enables one to find personal happiness.

This passage restates the central concern of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* in the language of Daoism itself: What is the most appropriate and efficacious correlation between the particular detail (*de* 德) and the vastness of the cosmos (*dao* 道), between the excellence of this particular person in this specific situation and the sum of all orders, between one's uniquely focused personal narrative and the dynamics of one's field of experience? It is from this same typically Daoist concern for the productive relationship between particular focus and its extended field that the *Daodejing* takes its title: "the classic of *dao* and *de*."

Implicit in this summary of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, there is an immediate philosophical association between Lao–Zhuang Daoism and the *Huainanzi*, with this latter text borrowing large parts of the earlier works. *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* frequently cites specific terms from the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, providing extended elaborations on the key philosophical vocabulary, for example, *tian* 天 ("Heaven"), *ren* 人 ("man"), *wuwei* 無爲 ("doing nothing"), *wubuwei* 無不爲 ("leaving nothing undone"), *zhiruo* 志弱 ("weak of purpose"), *houzhe* 後者 ("coming behind"), *wuxing* 無形 ("the formless"), *yi* 一 ("the one"), *zide* 自得 ("finding it in oneself"), *you tianxia* 有天下 ("possessing the empire").

The second treatise in the *Huainanzi*, *The Beginning Reality* (*chuzhen* 俶眞), draws heavily upon the *Zhuangzi* with fully a third of its content being borrowed from this single source.[3] In fact, and seldom advertised, the expression "Lao–Zhuang" itself occurs for the first time in the postface to the *Huainanzi*:

> The *Responses to Dao* treatise selects out and gathers together the vestiges of past affairs, and traces out and contemplates what remains of bygone times. It investigates the cycles of calamity and good fortune, of benefit and injury. Experimenting with the arts of Laozi and Zhuangzi ("Lao–Zhuang"), it enables one to accommodate the vicissitudes of life.

"HAN THINKING" AND RADIAL ORDER

Just as the Han court's consolidation of empire was to shape the geographical and political order of the enduring "Han" Chinese for the following two millennia, so its consolidation of a literary tradition was to lay the foundation for the development of Chinese letters for centuries to come. The contribution of the Han dynasty in setting the formal structures of intellectual growth is enormous: the proliferation of official institutions such as imperial libraries and court bureaucracies, the first attempts to compile comprehensive histories, the editing and designation of a literary canon and the beginnings of the commentarial tradition in "the study of the classics" *jingxue* 經學, the establishment of the long-lived examination system that provided China with its government officials until its final abolition in 1905, the ascendancy of Confucianism as a state ideology which would shape the content of the examination curriculum throughout the life of the empire, and so on.

Neither the Han dynasty texts, nor the early Han world more broadly, evidences the analytical, dialectical, or discursive order with which the Western scholar is most familiar. In fact, understanding

Han China requires that, with imagination, we devise a very different strategy for excavating and appreciating the architecture of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, itself a fair representative of both the *Huainanzi* and Han thinking more broadly. To begin with, the choice of the word "excavating" is probably ill-advised here because it assumes that readers must embark on a process of discovery rather than on a collaborative effort to interpret the text for their own place and time. We will indeed need alternatives to the analytically driven theoretical and conceptual devices that have been privileged in the more systematic Western tradition, where the assumption has been that appearances must be penetrated and set aside as dross in order to comprehend the reality that stands behind them.

The "syncretism" which we generally associate with the Han literary world, and with the *Huainanzi* in particular, is not random or eclectic. The underlying structure of most of the syncretic texts and their commentarial appendices tends to be an illustration of what we will call an emanating and centripetal "radial" order. This radial sensibility is pervasive, defining everything from the process of personal realization to political order. A particular person pursues realization as the center of a circle (*lun* 輪) of familial relationships (*lun* 倫) that are deepened through effective communication (*lun* 論). The fabric of communities (*li* 里), patterned (*li* 理) by a syntax of social relations, emerges out of these overlapping patriarchially organized family circles which are themselves nourished intellectually by local and contemporaneous commentaries contending for proximity to a persistent canonical core (*jing* 經). Scholars in writing annotations and commentaries (*zhu* 注 and *zhu* 註) on these principal texts appeal to the *leishu* 類書 classificatory works which organize the world in circles of graduated value around the life at court. At the same time, court members of the bureaucracy vie for proximity to an imperial center of power. Connecting this court politically with the outside world, the tributary system draws "gifts" from the periphery to "contribute" materially and culturally to an ever changing definition of the "Han."

The *Huainanzi*, as a compendium of knowledge, can serve as a fair example of this Han radial order. The text begins from its "hub" with repeated reflections on tracing *dao* back to its source, a theme from which this opening treatise takes its name. The postface to the *Huainanzi* describes the communication of a practical understanding of *dao* as the main objective of those who participated in its compilation:

> Thus, in these twenty treatises, the patterns (*li* 理) of the heavens and the earth are thoroughly explored; the affairs of the human world are broached; the ways of emperors and kings are given full account. This discussion touches upon the huge and the small, upon the most delicate and the much less so. The import of each treatise is different, and each has its own way of expressing its message. Now if the discussion were of *dao* alone, even though *dao* pervades everything and everywhere, it would be the sage alone who could grasp its root and understand its implications. . . . Since discussions of *dao* are so profound, much has to be said about it in order to unfold its real meaning. Because the myriad things are so prolific, observations about them must range broadly in order to disclose their full significance.

Beyond the radial structure of the *Huainanzi* text as a whole, turning as it does on the pivot of *dao*, it is important to give proper notice to the internal impulse that carries the reader from one image to the next. Rhyme patterns, parallel passages, sustained line length, repeated expressions, linking metaphors, expanding hyperbole, the skillful use of tropes—all such literary devices contribute to the rhythmic unfolding of the text.

Often the author of a treatise in the *Huainanzi* will construct an image around a particular character or expression. Either this expression is returned to for further (not necessarily consistent) elaboration, or alternatively, some loosely related image which is suggested in the elaboration itself is pursued. The style of a particular passage will evoke associations with other literature available in the repository of the tradition. Frequently material is carried over from earlier works, or

from the memory of earlier works, to be retailored and made meaningful for the new context. Echoes abound from the disparate schools of the pre-Qin period, often reshaped to express meanings rather distant from their original import, but deemed relevant to life in the early Han. As such, the pattern of the text is a pastiche—a concatenation of diverse images and allusions, all made important by the reflections of the author on how the world ought to hang together.[4] For the reader, the process of mapping out the geography of the text, separating rhymed passages from parallel text, prose exposition from anecdote, is a necessary first step in the project of coming to understand it.

It is this radial and mosaic structure of the *Huainanzi* that has encouraged students of Chinese culture to deal with sometimes single and sometimes multiple treatises within the text as "separate" entities. From both a philosophical and a stylistic perspective, the individual treatises reflect fully the diversity one would expect in a text that is the product of many hands. Although there are continuities such as recurrent themes and an overlapping philosophical vocabularly that belongs to a specific place and time, few scholars would be comfortable with the expression "the philosophy of the *Huainanzi*." There remains some disagreement among interpreters of this text as to whether or not the term "Huang-Lao 黃老" does anything to shed light on the contents of the *Huainanzi* as a whole. The translators of this treatise remain among those who would reserve judgment on its application until we have a clearer idea of what this characterization would entail. At this point in time, "Huang-Lao" has become a receptacle for any early Han dynasty text that has a Daoist tincture, and given the syncretism that marks this period, there is little that is excluded by it.[5]

Much if not most of the scholarship on the *Huainanzi* accomplished so far within the Western academy, acknowledging the diversity of the text, has sought to treat the treatises individually, or at least in related groupings. The story of this research effort is recounted in detail by Charles Le Blanc in the "The Field of *Huai-nan Tzu* Studies"

in his *Huai-nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought* (1985), himself providing a thorough study of the key notion of "resonance (*ganying* 感應)" together with a translation of the *Huainanzi* treatise that most directly expresses it, *Peering into the Obscure* (*lanming* 覽冥).

Two important additions to this project in more recent years have been Harold D. Roth's rigorous study of the transmission of this composite work, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu* (1992), that has become a model of textual criticism, and the translation and analysis of the technical treatises on astronomy (*tianwen* 天文), topography (*dixing* 地形), and calendrics (*shize* 時則) by John S. Major in *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the Huainanzi* (1993), an interpretative work that does much to make good sense of Han dynasty cosmologies.

THE "SOURCE" IN *TRACING DAO TO ITS SOURCE*

The title of this treatise, "*Yuandao* 原道," means literally "to trace out *dao* and nourish one's life on this watery source."[6] It means to find the source of *dao* and to use it as a resource. The document opens with a statement of this image:

> As for *dao*: . . .
> Flowing from its source it becomes a gushing spring,
> What was empty slowly becomes full;
> First turbid and then surging forward,
> What was murky slowly becomes clear. (Section 1)

The *Shuowen* 說文 lexicon, which was compiled in the late first century AD, defines *yuan* 原 as *yuan* 源 or as the original form of this character, *yuan* 厵: "three springs under a cliff," making explicit the association between "source" and "water." It is significant that the notion of "source" appealed to here is natural rather than theological or metaphysical. *Yuan* is the continuing source or spring from which

things emerge and from which they draw their sustenance and nourishment. The language of "source" within the classical Daoist literature is ancestral and genealogical, often represented in specifically reproductive language: ancestor (*zong* 宗), mother (*mu* 母), fetal beginning (*shi* 始), gateway (*men* 門), predecessor of the ancestral emperor(s) (*di zhi xian* 帝之先), the vaginal opening of the mysterious female (*xuanpin zhi men* 玄牝之門), the female (*ci* 雌), the root of the world (*tiandi gen* 天地根), Heavenly ancestor(s) (*tian* 天), and so on. To find the source, then, is to trace out the course (*dao* 道) that has been trodden (*dao* 蹈) by those who have come before, the same path that gives us our bearings in the present moment.

In this particular document, placed at the beginning of the *Huainanzi*, the reflection on *dao* is abstract, often hyperbolic, and even mythological, challenging the reader's imagination as integral to its interpretation. Later treatises in this same text, then, are anecdotal and historical, recounting concrete incidents and personages that punctuate *dao* with remembered details of a shared human narrative.

The abstractness of this initial account of *dao* can be misleading. In the Daoist sense of "source," there is an important assumption that distinguishes it from what might be taken to be a similar pattern in classical Western metaphysics. That is, there is a possible equivocation between two very different senses of "cosmogony." We must distinguish a Daoist "world (*shijie* 世界)" that *emerges* genealogically—literally, "across the boundaries of successive generations"—from a "cosmos" or "universe" that is *derived* from some transcendent principle, a model familiar to us in classical Western accounts of origins. In the latter case, in what we might call a "metaphysical cosmogony," the originative and determinative principle stands independent of its creature—for example, the Judeo-Christian God or Plato's Forms—to impose a preassigned design on the chaos of a recalcitrant world. Natural change is instrumentalized, driven as it is by a linear teleology which takes us from creation to the realization of the given design. There is a plan, a beginning, a more or less straight line, and an end.

By contrast, the Daoist "genealogical cosmogony" is a notion of origins that is historicist, and, for the human being, biographical. It is an account of the narrative origins of a particular population as it has continued across time. But there is one question that arises unavoidably in the consideration of Daoist cosmogony. If non-Daoist cosmogony is usually an account of *initial* beginnings, in what sense is a resolutely genealogical cosmogony, which resists any absolute beginning, "cosmogonic"? Within the Daoist search for an explanation of origins, there is the assumption that the world is "self-so-ing (*ziran* 自然)" and autogenerative, with the energy of transformation residing within the process itself. There is no external efficient cause. Hence, there is no positing of initial beginnings; it is "turtles all the way down."

There is a second question that arises in the absence of an external efficient cause, a Creator. How do we distinguish a diachronic explanation of origins which focuses creativity in some initial beginning and the design that propels it—*creatio ex nihilo*—from a synchronic explanation of origins which describes the phenomenon of creation as it is being expressed broadly in this and every moment—that is, *creatio ab initio*?

Dao is nameless and formless. This is so because *dao* constitutes the noncoherent sum of all names and forms. As such, *dao* expresses both "one" and "many," both continuity and difference. The *Daodejing* 42 observes,

> *Dao* gives rise to one,
> One to two,
> Two to three,
> And three to the myriad things.
> The myriad things shoulder *yin* 陰 and embrace *yang* 陽,
> And mix the *qi* 氣 to achieve harmony.

An interpretative reading of this *Daodejing* chapter arguably within the tolerance of the language might be:

Dao gives rise to continuity,
Continuity to distinctions,
Distinctions to plurality,
And plurality to proliferation.

Our first impulse is to read this description diachronically as the proliferation of the many phenomena across time from some originative source. What encourages this interpretation is that it overlaps—sans originative principle—with metaphysical cosmogonies that are familiar in Western culture. In the language of *Daodejing* 25, this would be *dao* as "distance (*yuan* 遠)" and proliferation.

However, there is a less familiar and seldom rehearsed alternative understanding that is also part of an adequate explanation. We can also read this verse as a synchronic explanation of how in this very moment a simultaneous continuity gives rise to difference. On this second reading, given that the myriad transforming things in sum are constitutive of formless and nameless *dao*, we could just as well run the process back the other way with equal effect:

The myriad things give rise to three,
Three to two,
Two to one,
And one to *dao*.

In the language of Daoism, this is *dao* as "returning (*fan* 反)" and consolidation. Hence, the natural cosmology of classical China does not entail a single-ordered cosmos, but invokes an understanding of a dynamic "world" that is the sum of *dao*s construed by a myriad of unique particulars—"the ten thousand things." While from each perspective, *dao* as the context construed from that perspective is more or less coherent, *dao* as the sum of these contexts trades the coherence that would privilege one order among many, for continuity among them. *Dao* is, thus, the complex process of the world itself that does not reduce to any single order.

The water analogy that is so often evoked in explanation of *dao* is deliberate and provocative.[7] Is water one or many? Does water have a formal coherence that is persistent? Can water be meaningfully separated into "things," and if so, do such things persist? Is water noble, or is it base? Is it a thing ("water") or an action ("to water") or an attribute ("watery") or a modality ("fluidity")?

The water imagery of a "spring" or a "watery source" challenges any predilection we might have to overdetermine and reify the world around us. Water in many ways is a synecdoche for *qi* 氣, the sea of vital energy that is both constitutive of the world and an expression of its activities. Water is not only transformative, moving as it does from state to state, but at one moment it assumes the shape of its environment only to surrender its formal aspect in the next. This fluid and processional nature of water recalls a passage in *Zhuangzi*:

> With the ancients, understanding had gotten somewhere. Where was that? At its height, at its extreme, that understanding to which no more could be added was this: some of them thought that there had never begun to be things. The next lot thought that there are things, but that there had never begun to be boundaries among them. The next lot thought that there are boundaries among things, but that there had never begun to be right and wrong among them.[8]

Section 14 of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* is devoted explicitly to exploring and expanding upon the use of water as an analogy for *dao*, and in so doing, alludes to the *Daodejing*. Water is *yin-yang*: at once the weakest and the strongest of things, the most pliant and the hardest, the most nourishing and the most destructive, the most unselfish and the most self-inclined, the most insubstantial and the most concrete. Boundless, inexhaustible, formless, it circulates everywhere, and in being benefactor to everything from the highest to the lowest, it is

not diminished in its own riches. Because of its contribution, it is described as the most exalted of all things—as "the supremely excellent (*zhide* 至德)."

Like *dao*, water is coterminous with and indistinguishable from the things that it nourishes: "it circulates and mingles, and has its beginning and end together with the myriad things." This is what is meant when the *Zhuangzi* observes that the path *is* the process of people walking it—the path is so because it is so:

> A path (*dao*) becomes a path by people walking it.
> A thing being called something becomes it.
> Why is it so?
> It is so because it is so.
> Why is it not something other than what it is?
> It is not because it is not.[9]

What recommends water as an explanatory analogy for *dao* is that it is *wuwei* 無爲—literally, water does not purposely "do" anything, and yet the environment thrives because of its presence. In the Daoist tradition, the function of the sage, like water, is catalytic: to get the most out of the situation. This is another way of saying that each participant in the environment maintains its own integrity, while contributing itself fully and without reservation to its nexus of relationships. To accomplish this, the optimum disposition that must obtain among the various participants is one of deference, each allowing the others to be what they are. Coercion is anathema to this goal, and is seen as a wasteful diminution of available creative possibilities.

In *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, the sage is defined precisely in these noncoercive terms:

> Hence, the sage inwardly cultivates that which is the root instead of outwardly putting ornament on that which is the tip. He preserves his spirit and puts aside his cleverness. Quiescently he does nothing, yet leaves nothing undone; serenely he does not impose order on anything, yet there is nothing that is not ordered. By "doing nothing" is meant not being ahead of things in taking action; by "leaving nothing undone" is meant making use of what is done by other things; by "not imposing order" is meant not putting in a substitute for what is so-of-itself; by "nothing not being properly ordered" is meant making use of the mutual recognition that obtains among things. (Section 11)

In similar passages in the text, "*dao*" and its surrogate, "water," stand in for "sage," celebrating this noncoercive relatedness as that disposition most conducive to a productive harmony (*he* 和).

"DAO" IN *TRACING* DAO *TO ITS SOURCE*

The absence of ontological assertions—assertions about a reality behind appearances—places the classical Chinese tradition in rather obvious contrast with the claim familiar among the classical Greek philosophers that there is some underlying substratum. For the early Chinese thinkers, there is no assumed "Being" behind the myriad beings, no "One" behind the many, no "Reality" behind appearance. Rather than the Parmenidean ontological *claim* that "Only *Being* is," there is the Daoist cosmological *project*, that is, to assure that "all of these becomings that are becoming do so efficaciously." There is no principle (*archē* > *principium*) of order—no superordinate One standing independent of the world to order it as an efficient cause. Rather, there is only the collaborative unfolding of the myriad things or events—the *wanwu* 萬物 or *wanyou* 萬有. Within this collaboration, there is an ever-changing processional regularity that can be discerned in the world around us, making experience *in some degree* coherent and determinate and, given its inherent indeterminacy, in some degree novel and unpredictable.

For classical India, there are many worlds of which this is one. For a Platonic Greece, there is one real world of which the world of sense and change is a poor reflection. The real world in its perfection is bounded, self-contained and self-sufficient, and is thus delimited and static. It is because the natural state of this reality is stasis that for

Aristotle a Prime Mover is a logical necessity. And it is the independence of *the* real world that provides a place from which to objectify it with definite articles such as "the" or "this." This ability to make an object of the world has allowed Western philosophers to decontextualize themselves and step out of the world in which they otherwise reside, thereby assuming a view from nowhere. And it is the absence of their subjectivity in this "view from nowhere" that guarantees the possibility of objective truth and certainty.

China is different. For classical China, neither dualistic like Greece nor pluralistic like India, there is *dao* or *ziran*: "world-as-such" or, better, just the perfective verbal noun "worlding" without the demonstrative pronoun "the" or "this" to objectify it. The Chinese "world-as-such" is unique, processional, and boundless, and the viewer is always resolutely and inextricably embedded within it.

THE PRIORITY OF SITUATION OVER AGENCY

In a world where the energy of change resides in the process itself without appeal to an external efficient cause, there can be little incentive to develop notions of discrete agency. If the world is the locus of change, the human situation which is played out in this world is the locus from which agency is derived. From the Chinese perspective, agents cannot be decontextualized and superordinated in any final sense; to identify and isolate an agent is an abstraction which removes it from the concrete reality of flux, exaggerating its continuity at the expense of its change. Since change is interior to all situations, human beings do not act upon a world that is independent of them. Rather, they are interdependent with the world in which they reside, simultaneously shaping it and being shaped by it. Order is always reflexive, entailing the agent within the action itself. Agency and action, subject and object, are not contraries, but interchangeable aspects of a single category in which any distinction between the agent and the action, between

subject and object, between what does and what is done, is simply a matter of perspective.

The priority of situation over agency in the Chinese tradition is evident in this language of *dao* which does not require an external source of change. The Western understanding of human agency is based at least in part upon an analogy between the human being's real self, and Deity. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is the primary causal agent who exists independent of His creatures that are shaped by Him. Just as a unitary, perfect, and unchanging God originates activity and orders his creation purposefully, so unitary human beings as microcosm act from design to shape their world.

By contrast with this dominant Western model of order, classical Chinese philosophy has a fundamental commitment to process, to motion, to change. The classical Chinese language has no copula verb—no verb "to be"—and thus no impetus to join separate agents to their actions, persons to their contexts, or essences to their attributes. After all, it is the appeal to the copula verb—"He *is* Liu An"—that enables the language to separate agent from everything. Operating in the absence of the copula—"scholarly Liu An fell victim to Emperor Wu's clever scheming"—keeps the whole process together. Agent, action, attribute, and modality are all included in what is an event rather than a "thing." Thus, in classical China, a human being is not what one *is*; it is the compounding of what one *does*.

In the absence of a discrete and independent agent, "knowing" is the unraveling and the coordinating of the patterns of continuity that emerge and persist in the natural, social, and cultural flux around us. These patterned regularities give life coherence and make it more or less predictable. The continuities are not imposed upon the world by some external agency; rather, they reside within the world as the rhythm and cadence symptomatic of a living stream. And the human being is simply one impulse integral to this continually unfolding process.

The essentializing model of order invests a great deal in causal explanations that attempt to identify and isolate the discrete agent re-

sponsible for an event, while the Chinese model is situational, seeking to understand the whole range of relevant causal conditions and the relations that obtain among them as they come to sponsor any given occurrence.

The classical Western search for order is ambitious; its goal is the clear, the exact, the comprehensive knowledge of the unitary cosmic design and the forces that drive it—those natural and moral "laws" that structure and regulate the natural and human universe. The Chinese approach is more modest; it seeks to understand the continuities that define and give meaning to *this* particular moment and *this* particular place in life's ongoing process.

The "two-world" model is based on the concept of a universal blueprint made up of unchanging formal patterns which, once understood, make change predictable and logarithmic, reducible to a given pattern. The "one-world" Chinese model allows that regularity is always attended by change, making order always dynamic, site-specific, and provisional. Given that the patterned regularity is never decontextualized nor detemporalized, the rhythm of life is indefatigable and irreversible, and is evident in the configuration of each snowflake, the grain of each piece of wood, the aura of each sunset, the complexity of each personality, as these always-unique phenomena emerge in the temporal flow only to recede into it again. Because the Chinese order entails a thoroughly symbiotic relationship between its formal and its fluid aspects, every situation is necessarily unique, making globalizing and essentializing generalizations problematic.

DAO AS "THE ONENESS OF THINGS"

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* follows the other Daoist texts in associating *dao* with "the oneness of things." But, as we have suggested, this is not to surrender the particularity of things, dissolving them into some unitary and perfect whole. Rather, it is a recognition that each and every unique phenomenon is continuous with every other phenomenon

within its field of experience, and its field of experience is again continuous with every other field of experience. Because the world is processional and because its creativity is *ab initio* rather than *ex nihilo*—a creativity expressed across the careers of its constitutive phenomena as opposed to being invested by some independent source—its patterned regularity and its content are always provisional and under construction. Phenomena are never either atomistically discrete nor complete. As *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* observes,

> Hence, when the "one" is disentangled
> It can be dealt out to the four seas,
> And when the "one" is unraveled
> It will reach the limits of heaven and earth. . . .
> The convergence of the myriad things
> Goes through a single aperture;
> The roots of the various happenings
> All issue forth from a single gateway.
> Its movements are hidden from sight
> And its changes and transformations are godlike;
> It does not leave any traces behind in its progress;
> It is ever in the lead though always coming behind. (Section 15)

It is at this point that the applicability of the very word "cosmology," at least in its familiar classical Greek sense, becomes problematic. In pre-Socratic philosophy, the term "*kosmos*" connotes a clustered range of meanings, including *archē* (originative, material, and efficient cause/ultimate undemonstrable principle), *logos* (underlying organizational principle), *theoria* (contemplation), *nomos* (law), *theios* (divinity), *nous* (intelligibility). In combination, this cluster of terms conjures forth some notion of a single-ordered divine[10] universe governed by natural and moral laws ultimately intelligible to the human mind.

However, this "*kosmos*" terminology meaning "a single-ordered world" is culturally specific. The notion of "one" is ambiguous. It can mean one-of-a-*kind*, such as one member of a set of things, or *one*-of-a-kind, such as a unique, inimitable work of art. In classical Western

"one-many" metaphysics, this equivocation between "one" and "unique" is resolved in favor of "one," thereby disqualifying the possibility of anything being "unique." In any of the various conceptions of a single-ordered universe assumed by the early systematic philosophers wherein the many phenomena reduce to some One, all phenomena are identical with respect to their dependence upon this One as their determinative source. In a Judeo-Christian universe, for example, all phenomena are identical in the sense that they are dependent upon and explicable by reference to a transcendent creator deity.

In classical Chinese reflections on world order, the equivocation between "one" and "unique" is resolved in favor of uniqueness. Each particular phenomenon is unique, and the field of experience as it is entertained from each of these vantage points is also unique. As the incoherent sum of all orders, the nameless and formless *dao* gives rise to "one" as "continuity," and entailed in this continuity is an always proliferating difference. The point is that the natural cosmology of classical China is not a single-ordered cosmos that returns its many phenomena to a superordinated and independent One; it is a cosmos in which the unique many are constitutive of the ever unique, ever changing, and thus, ever unbounded *dao*.

What encourages us in the shadow of the Western metaphysical tradition to separate time and space is our inclination inherited from the Greeks to see things in the world as fixed in their formal aspect, and thus, as bounded and limited. Instead of giving ontological privilege to the formal aspect of phenomena, the Chinese were inclined to observe them in light of their ceaseless transformation. Temporalizing phenomena and thus perceiving them as "events" rather than "things," they took each phenomenon-in-process to be entirely real. In fact, the pervasive capacity of the manifest world to transform continuously *is* the meaning of time.

The Chinese binomial most frequently translated as *kosmos* is *yuzhou* 宇宙, a term that overtly expresses not simply the interdependence of space and time, but their mutuality. *Yu* refers literally to the "eaves," and by extension, "boundary, territory." *Zhou* is the "moving canopy," and hence "duration." *Kosmos* (*yuzhou*) is defined in the *Zhuangzi* as:

> That which is tangible (*shi* 實), yet has no place in which it dwells, is *yu*; enduring (*chang* 常), yet having neither root nor tip to it, is *zhou*.[11]

"Things" dwell in places; only *tangibility*, which reduces neither to thing nor place, is the stuff of the world. "Things" dwell in time; the *persistence* of tangibility, which reduces neither to thing nor place without beginning or end, is time.

For China, and again in contrast with the dominant impulse of Greece and India, time pervades everything and is not to be denied; it is not derivative of tangibility, but a fundamental aspect of it. Unlike traditions which devalue time and change in pursuit of the timeless and eternal, in classical China, things are by nature always transforming (*wuhua* 物化).

As we have seen, in the *Daodejing* 25, *dao* is described in terms of "distance (*yuan* 遠)" as the particular becomes increasingly distinguished, and "return (*fan* 反)" as the same particular continues to participate in the "transformation of things (*wuhua* 物化)," relinquishing its present perspective and its construal of its field (*dao*), only to be resolved into other things. The particular focus (*de*) and its field (*dao*) are thus a dynamic continuum which can be expressed in this language of distance and return.

Since there is nothing which is not *dao*, there is no external standard against which it can be measured or corrected. This then is the meaning of the phrase, "standing alone it is not reformed (*gai* 改)." That *dao* is unique, however, does not preclude the fact that it is processional (*shi* 逝), and constantly changing.[12]

Metaphysical cosmogony is very ambitious: it attempts to trace the "many" back to the ordering and determinative One. For Aristotle, *episteme* is the knowledge of the causes of being, and the knowledge of the ultimate causes is the highest level of *episteme*, wisdom. Under the light of such wisdom, all becomes intelligible.

If, as in the Chinese alternative, order is emergent rather than existing as an independent scientific principle, knowledge of it must be qualified by the where and the when of it. As such, knowledge must be provisional, and more modest in its claims. The Daoist cosmogonic narrative takes us back to an earlier set of conditions which, as they recede from us historically, offer increasing resistance to explanation by the application of our present philosophical vocabulary. The various aspects of emergent *dao* and our strategies for organizing and understanding it—*yin* and *yang*, time and space, heaven and earth, *qi*, the five phases (*wuxing* 五行)— must be historicized as a contingent vocabulary for the world order as we know it here and now. Thus, to the extent that *episteme* can be rehabilitated to fit the classical Chinese worldview, the cosmogonic narrative is also an "epistegonic" account which provides an emerging understanding of world order. Importantly, at the same time, this account sets historical limits on our understanding. Our relatively clear understanding of our present situation cannot be "universalized" and relied upon to explain all past or future situations. These categories cannot stand as "principles"—as objective, necessary, a priori conditions that locate us within a Greek "universe."

There is another aspect of "knowing" *dao* that wants clarification. In classical Western epistemology, *episteme* refers to a particular kind of knowledge: true, necessary, and demonstrable knowledge. For Plato, for example, the objects of such knowledge are the *eide* or Forms. When we turn to the classical Chinese tradition, we find that there is no distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Knowing is always

practical, contingent, and moral: it is a "doing" rather than a state of mind. Further, "knowing" is meliorative—it makes a situation better. "Knowing" is thus more pragmatic than theoretical. While certainly not a kind of *metis* or "cunning" because of the moral paucity of such knowledge, it still is a task- or proficiency-based awareness which, when fortified by imagination, enables one to move one's project ahead. Such knowing gives rise to creative strategies that enable one to be efficacious in what one does.

Given the inseparability of agent and context assumed in this tradition, *dao* has as much to do with the subjects of knowing and their quality of understanding as it does with any object of knowledge. Without an originative principle, and the linear teleology that comes with it, the world has no persisting governing purpose, and no preassigned design. The alternative to some given and governing purpose, then, is localized and temporalized self-sufficiency—a collaboration between the human knower and the world as it is realized, to get the most out of each situation. Thus, "knowing" *dao* is always proximate—you have to be there.

THE GERUNDICAL *DAO*

The parts of speech inherent in our Western languages—subjects and predicates, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—encourage us to divide up the world in a given, culturally specific way. Under the influence of the "deep structure" of both our syntax and our semantics, we are inclined to separate things from actiōns, attributes from modalities, the where from the when, and the why or how from the what—all of these according to foundational Aristotelian categories. However, these categories which Aristotle took to be basic features of reality do not govern the way in which the Chinese world is divided up. In fact, categories used to define a Chinese world are fluid, and must be seen as often crossing the borders of time, space, and matter in an unfamiliar way. *Dao* so understood offends against the most basic of Western cul-

tural distinctions, mixing together subject and object, as well as things, actions, attributes, and modalities. *Dao* is at once "what is" (things and their attributes) and "how things are" (actions and their modalities), it is "who knows" as well as "what is known."

THE CONTINUITY OF *DAO* AND THE HUMAN WORLD

There are consequences for insisting upon "the continuity of things." For example, without the assumption that one can stand outside of the world to assert objective truths, the line between description and prescription blurs because subjects are always reflexively implicated in the way in which they organize the world. To say something about the world is to say something about themselves. Their choices, values, and cultural importances are implicit in their interpretations of experience.

The structure and organization of the *Huainanzi* is itself an apt illustration of the inseparability of fact and human values. We might locate the first two treatises of the text somewhere between *mythos* and *historia*: the story of origins told through images, rich in metaphor and other such rhetorical tropes. The following three treatises, by contrast, tend towards *logos*: the "technical" discussions of astronomy, topography, and calendrics respectively. However, as we have stated, the absence of a basis for making objective statements about the world makes fact and value interdependent and mutually entailing. Objective definitions and simple descriptions are thus problematic. The values of the observer are invariably implicated in the observation. The line, then, that would separate science from the arts—chemistry from alchemy, astronomy from astrology, geology from geomancy, psychology from physiognomy, medicine from hygienics, kinesiology from recreative play, and so on—is always porous.

Another consequence of operating without reference to an objective perspective is that *saying* and even *thinking* something about the world is *doing* something to it. The severe separation between theory

and practice that makes "thinking" and "speaking" separate from "doing" is dependent upon the possibility that what is "theoretical" does not change the world. In the classical Chinese worldview and even in the Chinese world today, thinking and speaking are perceived as "actions" that have real consequences in shaping our environments.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "HEAVEN" AND "HUMANITY"

Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 is a comparative philosopher who seems to have come a generation or two before his time. In trying to identify and respect some uncommon assumptions that separate the Chinese tradition from the West, he observes:

> These two kinds of thinking not only differ in terms of categories and the value of their terms, but also differ markedly in their attitudes. If we take inquiry, for example, Western thinking, in respect of any particular thing or event, is inclined to ask "What is it?" before asking "How do we deal with it?" Chinese thinking, on the other hand, is inclined to do the opposite: "How do we deal with it?" takes precedence. Thus I would say that the West has a "*what* priority attitude" while China has a "*how* priority attitude."[13]

Said another way, this means that the focus of classical Chinese philosophy is cosmology rather than ontology: "knowing *how* the world should hang together" rather than "knowing *what* the reality is behind appearances." It is the construction of a way of living (*dao*) that we can trust, rather than the pursuit of the truth. Hence, one of the defining questions during the formative period of Chinese culture is "*How* should we construe the relationship between Heaven (*tian* 天) and humanity (*ren* 人), between the natural and the human worlds?" The pervasive answer to this question found in the classical corpus, although complex and multivalent, is perhaps best summed up in the assumption that there is "a continuity between Heaven and humanity (*tianren heyi* 天人合一)." In order to understand the position

advanced in this particular Daoist treatise, *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, we need to locate it within the philosophical narrative of the late Zhou and early Han.

For Confucius the continuity between Heaven (or more literally, "sky") and man, following in the Zhou tradition, is familial—*tian* is perceived as the ancestral progenitor of human beings. This hierarchical familial relationship between *tian* and humanity is made explicit politically in the expression, "the son of *tian* (*tianzi* 天子)," deemed an appropriate title for the ruler of humanity. Predictably, the same vocabulary is used to characterize order in both the human and the natural worlds. *Wen* 文 is both human culture (*wenhua* 文化) and astronomy/astrology as "the pattern of the skies (*tianwen* 天文)"; *li* 理 is both "the structure of the human heart-and-mind (*xinli* 心理)" and "the structure of the physical world (*wuli* 物理)"; *dao* is both "the way of living for the human being (*rendao* 人道)" and "the workings of nature (*tiandao* 天道)."

The identification of the high ancestors of a human population with "the sky," collapsing categories that usually separate the human world from natural phenomena, reflects an understanding of the notion of *qi* 氣, "vital energy," that is an unannounced assumption in Chinese cosmology. That is, the most dense and coarse *qi* constitutes the lowest and least animate phenomena, the earthly physical world, while the most rarified and subtle *qi* makes up the most noble and animated aspects of the world, the more celestial human beings and the ancestral spirits.

CONFUCIANISM AND THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HUMANITY

For Confucius, at once profoundly religious and profoundly human-centered, spirituality is to be expressed through the quality of interpersonal continuities that constitute a flourishing community. Just as

participating in a robust family life is "governing" the world,[14] so deferring to one's parents as a filial son is an expression of religious piety.[15] While adamant that sacrifices be carried out with the utmost solemnity and genuineness,[16] Confucius still wants the locus of religious experience to be here and now in the human community rather than piety directed towards some transcendent "Other" residing at the dark limits of our understanding.[17]

But it was Xunzi, the most prominant and influential Confucian of his time, who really set the terms for the debate over the appropriate relationship between *tian* and humanity. Because of Xunzi's early rise to fame at the Jixia Academy in the powerful state of Qi, it is his voice that echoes through the literature of this period. His naturalistic position on the appropriate relationship between Heaven and humanity is in many respects close to that of Confucius. He sees *tian* as the regular natural processes which make human life possible, but which at the same time are totally indifferent to human prosperity and adversity. For Xunzi, human morality is the product of concerted human effort. It consists of conventions laid down by wise people of antiquity and passed on generation after generation. Consistent with his naturalism, Xunzi avers teleological and supernatural explanations for natural events. Further, he encourages a clear distinction between what is natural and what is human. While advocating the full exploitation of *tian* as an available resource, at the same time he insists that human beings concentrate their efforts on the human world, and leave the working of *tian* to *tian* itself. Succinctly put,

> The greatest cleverness lies in what is not done and the greatest wisdom lies in what is not thought about. . . . Thus, if people abandon the affairs of the human being to conjecture on the business of *tian*, they will lose sight of the real circumstances of those things around them.[18]

Enter Zhuangzi, a rival of Xunzi at the Jixia Academy. As A. C. Graham has pointed out,[19] Zhuangzi begins his reflection on the appropriate relationship between Heaven and humanity by rehearsing a popular position of the day—in fact, he is summarizing Xunzi's position:

> To know what Heaven does and to know what the human being does is the height of knowledge. Knowing what Heaven does is produced by Heaven itself. To know what the human being does is to use the knowledge one has to develop knowledge that one does not have. To live out one's natural span of years without dying prematurely—this is an abundance of knowledge.

Zhuangzi then takes exception to this dichotomous position, pointing out what he takes to be two fatal flaws:

> But there are some difficulties with this proposition. First, knowing is only confirmed when there is evidence for it, yet what counts as evidence has never been fixed. How do we know that what we are calling "Heaven" is not "human," and vice versa? And secondly, there must be an authentic person (zhenren 眞人) before there can be authentic knowing (zhenzhi 眞知).

The starting point for Zhuangzi in this critique of Xunzi is that "knowing" is relational, and hence Heaven and the human world cannot be separated.

On the classical Western side, a familiar conception of truth is a correspondence between *what* is real—the Being behind the beings, and *what* is representational—a mental mirroring of what really is. On the Chinese side, with its "how-priority attitude," the ambition is of a different order. With no separation between phenomena and ontological foundations, "reality" is precisely that complex pattern of relationships which in sum constitute the myriad things of the world. Knowledge, then, is not abstract, but concrete; it is not representational, but performative and participatory; it involves, not closure, but

disclosure; it is not discursive, but is, rather, a specific kind of know-how: how to effect robust and productive relationships.

Again we see the importance of this "how-priority" thinking of the classical Chinese cited by Zhang Dongsun earlier. This peculiar orientation to the "How?" question has the broadest of possible effects on the Chinese manner of thinking. To cite Zhang Dongsun on *tian* specifically:

> The Chinese attitude toward the demands of *tian* are only to know its purposes in order to secure good fortune and avoid misfortune. As to what kind of thing *tian* is, they are indifferent. This is because the Chinese people do not use the category of ontology with respect to *tian*, and do not consider it to be the ontological ground of the myriad things.[20]

It is certainly the case that notions such as *tian* are profoundly recondite in the Chinese classics, with language such as "distant (*yuan* 遠)" and "dark (*xuan* 玄)" being frequently invoked to describe it. This is because the project in a text such as the *Analects* is not to speculate on *what* the ultimate source of value in the world might be, but to recount *how* one sensitive man—Confucius—made his way in the world as a possible model for others. The *Daodejing* does not purport to provide an adequate and compelling description of *what dao* and *de* might mean as an ontological explanation for the world around us; rather, it seeks to engage us and to provide guidance in *how* we *ought* to interact with the phenomena, human and otherwise, that give us context in the world. And the *Book of Changes* is not a systematic cosmology that seeks to explain the sum of all possible situations we might encounter in order to provide insight into what to do, but is a resource providing a vocabulary of images that enable us to think through and articulate an appropriate response to the changing conditions of our lives.

"Knowing," then, in classical Daoism is not so much a knowing *what*, which provides some understanding of the environing conditions of the natural world, but is rather a knowing *how* to be adept in our relationships, and *how*, in optimizing the possibilities that these relations provide, to develop a sense of trust in their viability. The cluster

of terms that define knowing are thus programmatic and exhortative, encouraging as they do the quality of the roles and associations that define us. Propositions may be true, but it is more important that husbands and friends, and in fact, all of the relations which bind us into our social, cultural, and natural environments, be so.

Rather than a vocabulary of truth and falsity, right and wrong, good and evil—terms that speak to the "whatness" of things—we find pervasively the language of harmony and disorder, genuineness and hypocrisy, trust and dissimulation, adeptness and ineptness—terms which reflect the priority of the continuity that obtains among things: "how well" things hang together.

Given that the heart-and-mind (*xin* 心) does the work of both cognizing and feeling, there is no dichotomous relationship between intellection and sensation, between thinking and living. This point can be reinforced by rehearsing what Zhang Dongsun takes to be the distinguishing characteristics of Chinese epistemology. When the knower and the known establish a relationship, according to Zhang, there are three conditions:

> i) they are intrinsically related such that each relationship influences the other, the relationships are intricate and complex, and each member of the relationship is different after the relationship has been established, and changes with it;
> ii) all relationships are mediated by layer after layer of intervening experience, rather than being unmediated and direct;
> iii) and knowledge is always a kind of interpretation rather than a copy or representation.

In Zhang Dongsun's characterization of Chinese epistemology, we would have to allow that he is not only reflecting on epistemic assumptions characteristic of the Chinese tradition, but more fundamentally and importantly, on ethics: that is, how personal, communal, and political relationships are formed and develop. The epistemic commitment lies in "realizing" a viable community rather than "knowing" the truth about the world.

One might want to argue, as Xunzi does, that the Daoists do maintain a distinction between the human and the natural world by siding with the natural against the human. This was his specific complaint against Zhuangzi:

> Zhuangzi was blinkered by *tian*, and did not know humanity.[21]

Certainly there are passages in the *Zhuangzi* that would suggest this:

> The authentic person (*zhenren*) of antiquity did not know pleasure for life nor displeasure for death. He embarked on life without rejoicing and passed on without resistance. Like a flash he came; like a flash he went, and that was all. . . . This is what is called not aiding *dao* with our minds, and not assisting *tian* with the human.[22]

But to give Zhuangzi his best argument, we would have to allow that he was fully aware that this human/not-human dichotomy is problematic, and that his compensatory efforts to reinstate the natural were not an advocacy of the natural at the expense of the human. In fact, the *Zhuangzi* criticizes the Confucian for buying into such a distinction, and being preoccupied with the human world:

> The house of Youyu (that is, the "Confucian" sage, Shun) is no match for the House of Tai (the patriarch of the Daoist "Ultimate" clan). Youyu still hung onto *ren* 仁 in order to intercept other people, and even though he was indeed able to win them over, he never made his way out into what was not-human (*feiren* 非人). As for Tai, he would sleep deeply and contentedly, and would take on the perspective of a horse and sometimes a cow. In his awareness he was sensitive and confident, his *de* was utterly genuine (*zhen* 眞), and he never began to enter into what was not-human (*feiren* 非人).[23]

In this passage, the Confucian does not venture out into what is not-human (*feiren*) because of his exclusive commitment to the human world. The Daoist has never entered into what is not-human

(*feiren*) because, dealing with *dao* indiscriminately, he does not entertain a human/not-human distinction.

In fact, as we have seen above, Zhuangzi says flatly,

> How do we know that what we are calling "Heaven" is not "human," and vice versa?

The *Zhuangzi* proposes its resolution to this dichotomy between Heaven and man, between nature and the human world, in its description of the Daoist "intact person (*quanren* 全人)." First, it reiterates Xunzi's criticism of Zhuangzi:

> Yi the archer was skilled at hitting minute targets but clumsy at preventing others from making him celebrated because of it. The sage is skilled at what is natural but clumsy at what is human.

Then it offers the alternative that trumps this lopsided "sage":

> To be skilled at what is natural and to be equally good at what is human—only the intact person (*quanren*) can do this! Only insects can be both insects and be natural. The complete person hates what is natural, and hates what is natural about what is human. How much more does he hate this flip-flopping between "Am I natural?" or "Am I human?"[24]

TRACING DAO *TO ITS SOURCE* AND THE CONTINUITY BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HUMANITY

On a first reading, *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* seems to accept the distinction between *tian* and man, siding with Heaven against the human:

> By "Heaven" is meant
> Pure and unadulterated like uncarved wood and undyed silk,
> Original simplicity and sheer whiteness,
> Which has never been admixed with anything else.
> By "man" is meant
> Studying each other and exercising one's knowledge and presuppositions,
> Being crafty and deceptive to others,
> In order to get on in the world
> And to be able to deal with the vulgar.
>
> Thus, an ox's having cloven hoofs and horns,
> And a horse's having a mane and uncloven hoofs
> Is what is "Heaven";
> Bridling a horse's mouth
> And boring an ox's nose
> Is "man."
> Those who follow Heaven ramble about with *dao*,
> Whereas those who accede to man have dealings with the vulgar. (Section 10)

But this passage is in fact borrowed from the *Zhuangzi*, and as with the *Zhuangzi*, the assumption that this text sides with Heaven against man is not borne out. In fact, the primary concern is for human beings to maintain their own integrity without agitating their natural equanimity with unwanted distractions:

> Thus, one who understands *dao*
> Does not barter what belongs to Heaven for what is man's.
> While externally he is transformed along with the transformation of things,
> Internally he does not become other than what he is really like. (Section 5)

The category "Heaven" here is both "inner" and "outer," including both the natural world and those natural conditions which are defining of human integrity. "Man," on the other hand, refers to the unnatural preoccupations which disturb both the person and the environment. The point here is that "integrity" is not genetic, but achieved within one's context, and for one to lose one's integrity is to jeopardize the integrity of one's natural, social, and cultural environments. On the other hand, persons who preserve their integrity wander contentedly through the world as companions with the processes of change:

Thus, the sage does not adulterate Heaven with man,
And does not allow desire to disturb his actual nature.
He hits the mark without planning,
His word is trusted without his having to speak,
He succeeds without deliberating,
He accomplishes without doing.
His purity reaches up to the mansion of the spirits
And he is a comrade of the demiurge of change. (Section 10)

SEIZING THE MOMENT

What is the role of the human being in the unfolding of *dao*? In China, the pursuit of wisdom has perennially centered on finding a way to stabilize, to discipline, and to shape productively and elegantly the unstoppable stream of change in which the human experience is played out. Given the always unique and always provisional nature of *dao*—a work in progress, as it were—the human being has and continues to have a creative part in forging the path.

The term *dao* (道) combines in itself continuity, novelty, and an indeterminate leading edge (*dao* 導) that allows for effective manipulation. Often, the most advantageous position for leading—for "seizing the moment"—is from behind.

> By "coming behind" is not meant being stagnant, numb, and inert. Rather, it means putting store in always being in accord with that which is necessarily so, and being appropriate to the moment. When a person grasps the principles of *dao* and uses them to match change, then he controls others whether he is in the lead or in the rear. Why is this? Because he does not let go of the means to control others, giving others no chance of controlling him. (Section 12)

"Seizing the moment" is a particularly appropriate expression because, given the processional nature of *dao* and its propensity to unfold in this direction as opposed to that, proper timing is essential:

The right moment becomes the wrong
Before one can take a breath.
One who acts too soon anticipates the opportunity,
And one who acts too late gets left behind.
The sun revolves, the moon wheels its course,
And the right moment waits for no man.
Thus, the sage values an inch of time over a foot of precious jade.
It is because the right moment is so hard to catch and so easy to miss.
(Section 13)

As well as underscoring the importance of timing, "moment" gives us the situatedness and the cognate associations that we need to probe the meaning of *dao*. "Moment" at once entails "momentum" in the sense of the ineluctable propensity of things, "motive" in the sense of directedness and goal, "the right moment" in the sense of timing, "emotion" in the sense of motive force, and "momentous" in the sense of importance.

The most pervasive image of this moving line in the philosophical literature is the one, cumulative path (*dao*)—the continuous moving line of culture that is under construction by the "roadbuilders" of each generation. This moving line, defining the ever changing, ever provisional, cultural horizon, has many images: in calligraphy and painting, it is captured in the brush stroke (*yihua* 一畫), in art and ornamentation, it is expressed as the fabulous dragon (*long* 龍) and phoenix (*fenghuang* 鳳凰), in poetry, it is the measured cadence of each line, in the art of warfare, it is the formulation and manipulation of strategic advantage (*shi* 勢). Importantly, the shaping of this moving line as it inscribes the cultural tradition is an art and an achievement.

Appreciating the energy inherent in and expressed by the moving line, the contemporary scholar Li Zehou develops an interesting analogy between the art of the line in design and calligraphy, and the rhythm and harmonies expressed in everything from musical composition to architecture. He draws a contrast between the nature of "formal beauty" on the one hand, which is standardized, static, and

stylized, and the "significant form" inscribed by the line—vigorous, animated, and beautiful in its allusions to life.[25]

Understanding, handling, and maneuvering the moving line to achieve harmony requires a full consideration of both determinate and indeterminate forces, for each situation is unique, and is thus inevitably attended by a certain degree of unpredictability. This sense of underdeterminacy within order is expressed in the Chinese language itself.

A pair of recurring terms that reflect this ubiquitous indeterminate aspect is *ji* 幾 and its homophonous cognate, *ji* 機, both having a rather curious semantic range when rendered into a European language. *Ji* 幾 begins from the notion of "first inklings or stirrings," "minute," "imminent," "nearly," and then extends to "probability," "anticipation," "occasion," and with *ji* 機 it extends yet further to "critical point," "turning point," "pivot," "danger," and hence to "impetus," "motive force," "trigger," "clever device." Finally, *ji* 機 means "opportunity," and, describing the person who is able to seize the opportunity, "adroit," "flexible," "ingenious."

What is the sense of order expressed in this seemingly broad range of meanings? In the articulation of any situation, the indeterminate aspect is usually "small"—a "first stirring"—which, as a "moving force" for self-reorganization and reconstrual, becomes its "critical turning point (*weiji* 危機)." There is an appreciation of how, in complex natural processes, small alterations can produce scale-variant cascading effects. As a critical turning point, this inchoate, indeterminate aspect can literally be either a "danger (*wei* 危)" or an "opportunity (*ji* 機)," depending on whether or not one is "adroit" in being able to seize the moment and make the most of it.

This term *ji* 幾—with its seamless range of meanings—occurs in those canonical documents that have defined the classical Chinese worldview. For example, the "Great Treatise" of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*) associates *ji* 幾 with "deep and profound (*shen* 深)" and "spiritual, mysterious, inscrutable (*shen* 神)":

> The *Book of Changes* is the sage's way of probing what is profound to its limit, and of getting to the very gist of things (*ji* 幾). It is only through this profundity that the sage can come to understand the propensities of the world; it is only through its pivotal significance (*ji* 幾) that he can be successful in the business of the world; it is only through its mystery that he can be quick without haste and can arrive without going.[26]

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* concludes on a similar note: the sage is able to ride *dao* and function effectively as a collaborator with the natural processes by keeping his finger on the trigger (*ji* 機):

> Hence, the sage nurtures his spirit, harmonizes and retains the fluency of his *qi*, calms his body, and sinks and floats, rises and falls with dao.
>
> Placidly, giving it its head,
> When borne down upon, he makes use of it.
> When he gives it its head, it is like shedding a coat;
> In using it, it is like touching off a trigger. (Section 22)

RIDING THE DRAGON (*LONG* 龍)

This image of "seizing the moment" to achieve productive harmony (*he* 和) is constructed in different ways in *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*. In Section 2, Tai Huang ("Greatly August") and Gu Huang ("Anciently August")—that is, both space and temporality—stand at the center and work the handle of *dao*, offering a variation on the "trigger" image and producing not only a human world that is socially and politically stable, but a natural world that is ecologically sound. In such a world, the cadence of life and death achieves its proper rhythm and balance.

> Their *de* embraced the heavens and the earth and brought harmony to the *yin* and the *yang*,
> Ordered the four seasons and regulated the five phases.
> Brooding over things and nurturing them,
> The myriad things in all of their variety were produced.

They provided moistening nourishment to the grasses and trees
And penetrated the minerals and rocks.
The birds and beasts grew large and tall
With coats glossy and sleek,
Wings sprouting out and horns growing, animals did not miscarry and birds did not lay addled eggs, fathers were spared the suffering of mourning their sons and elder brothers were spared the grief of weeping over the younger ones,
Children were not orphaned
Nor were wives widowed,
Evil confluences of the *yin* and the *yang* did not appear
Nor did ominous celestial portents occur. (Section 2)

The image of the control handles and the chariot come together in the master charioteer who gallops to the far ends of the world to pass through the gates of Heaven. In the Daoist tradition, the opening and the closing of these gates is symbolic of the process of change itself:

Hence, he [the man of great stature] travels fast without pitching
And travels far without fatigue.
Without taxing his four limbs,
And without draining the keenness of his hearing and sight,
He knows the lay and the boundaries of the various divisions and quadrants of the cosmos. How is this so? It is because he has his hands on the control handles of *dao* and rambles in the land of the inexhaustible. (Section 4)

In Section 4, the legendary drivers Ping Yi and Da Bing harness the cloud dragons to their thunder chariot and streak across the horizon. Skillful charioting—finding one's way—is an epistemic image. "Knowing" *dao* is being able to lead the myriad things to realize a world of relationships that is free of power and coercion. Climbing the skies and coursing through the cosmos requires collaboration and sensitivity, sometimes galloping the team and sometimes dismounting to walk the

dragons through a difficult patch. It is not where you are going, but how you get there, that is telling of the superlative charioteer.

The *long* 龍—unfortunately translated into English as "dragon," a serpentine animal that, in Western mythology, is properly slain—is a pervasive, usually positive icon in the Chinese tradition.[27] It is yet another way of "imaging" the moving line. Now undulating, sprawling, wriggling, coiling, spiraling, thrusting, and ultimately soaring through the clouds, this "every animal" captures the notion of unrestricted transformation and articulation (*wenhua* 文化) across the axes of time, space, and light.

Where does the *long* as an emblem of changing cultural horizons begin in the Chinese tradition? *Long* is an image that has dominated Chinese cosmology from ancient times. Fu Xi 伏羲 and Nü Wa 女媧, the high ancestors who are credited with developing the fundaments of Chinese culture such as farming, fishing, and abstract symbols (the eight diagrams), are described and represented in the earliest texts as human figures with the bodies of snakes. In fact, this representation is typical of many of the gods, supernaturals, and cultural heroes that are remembered in ancient Chinese legends. Over time, this snakelike figure, now swallowing creatures whole, now shedding its skin, accumulated the features of "every animal" to become the generative and transformative symbol of Chinese culture—the totemic Chinese *long*. This emblem is not only pervasive in the mythology of China, but is everywhere in the natural landscape and architecture of the country. Unquestionably the most substantial presentation of the *long* imagery is the Great Wall, composite of many walls, as it peaks and lunges, dances and glides, meandering across thousands of miles and countless generations to give expression to the cadence of time as much as to space.

Tu Wei-ming sees this *long* as a symbol of the process of accumulation and integration that occurred in the proto-Chinese world, where disparate tribes with disparate emblems of identity combined their resources:

> As a composite totem, the dragon possesses at least the head of a tiger, the horns of a ram, the body of a snake, the claws of an eagle and the scales of a fish. Its ability to cross totemic boundaries and its lack of verisimilitude to any living creature strongly suggest that from the very beginning the dragon was a deliberate cultural construction. The danger of anachronism notwithstanding, the modern Chinese ethnic self-definition as the "dragon race" indicates a deep-rooted sense that Chineseness may derive from many sources.[28]

Significantly, the expression *zhongguo* 中國, going back to the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 BCE), is properly understood not as the singular "Middle Kingdom," but as the "Central Kingdoms"—the diverse states that together made up the world of Zhou China. Similarly, the *long* icon stretches back across history to represent fluidity, diversity and inclusivity—the porousness and absorbency of the Chinese polity and its culture.

STILLING THE HEART-AND-MIND (*XIN* 心)

"Riding the dragon" requires a fluid responsiveness between the driver and his steeds, between the chariot and the way. Above we saw that water with its various characteristics is frequently evoked as an analogy for *dao*. With respect to "knowing the way," we find that this analogy between water and *dao* is extended in yet another way—that is, in the capacity of water to mirror the world as it is manifest, without imposing presuppositions and values upon it:

> It is because the mirror and water do not, in anticipation, equip themselves with cleverness, that the shapes they come into contact with cannot but show themselves as they are: square, round, bent and straight. Hence, an echo does not resound as it likes, and a shadow is not something that is cast once and for all. The likeness of the sound and shape is attained without fuss.
>
> (Section 5)

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* suggests that the optimum posture of the human heart-and-mind (*xin* 心), like water and the mirror, is to achieve and maintain that degree of equanimity which will enable it to take in the world as it is without imposing its own values upon it, and without allowing the world to cause it agitation.

First we must distinguish this "mirroring" metaphor from how it has been understood within the Western philosophical tradition because, given the central importance of the correspondence theory of truth from ancient times, the "mind as mirror" has played a major role. Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* worries about the "mind" and "matter" dualism in post-Cartesian philosophy and attempts to combat what he calls this "Cartesian Myth" of representation. Richard Rorty more recently in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* revisits this problem, ascribing its source to the "mind as mirror" metaphor, the beginnings of which he traces back to the Greeks. Distinctively, the ocular metaphor as it is framed in the Western dialectic is passive and representational, precluding the social, performative, and perlocutionary dimensions of "knowing" that we have stressed earlier.

In the Western tradition, questions of the distinguishability of mind and matter, of rationality and emotion, are central issues within the philosophy of mind. Neither of these topics is of much interest, however, in classical Chinese thought. On the one hand, the hylozoistic ("matter is animated") notion of *qi* 氣, the vital energizing field that constitutes all natural processes, renders discussions of the relevance of any psychophysical dualism moot. On the other hand, *xin* 心 (a stylized drawing of the heart), normally translated as "heart-and-mind," precludes the assumption of distinctions between thinking and feeling, or idea and affect. *Xin* is perhaps most frequently translated simply as "heart," but since it is the seat of thinking and judgment, the notion of mind must be included in its characterization if the term is to be properly understood. Indeed, the functional equivalent of what we often think of as "purpose" or "intention" is also to be included in the notion of *xin*.

A first observation is that we have to resist the dualistic understanding of body and its parts as reified corporeality. Taking our cue from Chinese medicine in which the term *zhen mo* 診脈 means "taking a pulse" rather than "examining a blood vessel or artery," we have to think physiologically rather than anatomically. *Xin*, then, is not primarily a thing, but a function, not primarily an anatomical structure, but a physiological process. Bracketing the "What is *xin*?" question as being overly analytic, perhaps we do better to ask the more systemic question: "*How* does *xin* function?"

In the classical period, *xin* is first the function of thinking and feeling, and derivatively, the locus of thinking, an "office" or "occupation" or "organ (*guan* 官)" similar to the other senses. The advantage of *xin* over the other sense occupations, however, is that it is able to think and reflect:

> The organs (*guan* 官) of hearing and of seeing, being unable to reflect, can be misled by external things. When one thing engages another, all it does is draw it to it. But the job of the *xin* is reflecting. When it reflects it gets it, and when it does not, it does not.[29]

The interpenetration of idea, intention, and affect expressed in the notion of *xin* entails the conclusion that thinking is never a dispassionate speculative enterprise, but involves normative judgments which assess the relative merit of the sensations, inclinations, and appetites that constitute our experience of the world and of ourselves. Further, since appetites and ideas are always clothed in some degree with activating "emotion," they are to be understood, more often than not, as *dispositions to act*.

Another implication that follows from the inseparability of feeling and thinking is the practical orientation of most of Chinese thought. If ideas are dispositions to act, what might in other cultural contexts be thought of as theories are little more than wholesale practical recommendations. Thus it is most difficult among the Chinese to find contexts within which the separation of theoretical and practical activities would prevail. When, for example, Confucius says, "From fifteen, my

heart-and-mind was set upon learning. . . ,"[30] he is indicating his commitment to a practical regimen aimed at self-realization. Thinking and learning are, within the Chinese tradition, oriented to the practical ends of the moral life. As Mencius observes:

> For a person to realize fully one's heart-and-mind is to realize fully one's nature and character, and in so doing, one realizes nature (*tian* 天).[31]

Going back to Plato, the Western tradition is accustomed to construe efforts aimed at moral perfection as involving an internal struggle between reason and passion, or, with Augustine, between what we know we ought to do, and an obstreperous "will" that frustrates our acting upon that knowledge. In the Chinese world there is little such internal conflict assumed to be involved in ethical development. The unpartitioned self characterized by *xin* means that it is unlikely that we should find Hamlets or St. Pauls prominent among the Chinese.

But then does *xin* even entail a "self" as presumed in Western conceptions of person? Jacques Gernet makes the distinction between the traditional Chinese notions of self and familiar Western concepts by rejecting the relevance of the mind/body and reason/experience disjunctions to the Chinese experience:

> Not only was the substantial opposition between the soul and the body something quite unknown to the Chinese, all souls being, in their view, destined to be dissipated sooner or later, but so was the distinction, originally inseparable from it, between the sensible and the rational. The Chinese had never believed in the existence of a sovereign and independent faculty of reason. The concept of a soul endowed with reason and capable of acting freely for good or for evil, which is so fundamental to Christianity, was alien to them.[32]

If Western notions of "self" are typically framed in terms of the consciousness of an autonomous will or reason, such a self can only refer to one's individuated consciousness in relation to itself. The self, in other words, is self-consciousness. But self-consciousness requires that

one is able to objectify one's thoughts, feelings, and so on. Hyper self-consciousness of this sort is a modern Western invention that does not play a role in classical Chinese concerns about personal development.

If in the classical Chinese world the conflict associated with self-realization is not turned inward as a struggle between the heart and the mind—that is, between the passions and reason, between our will and our judgment—what then are the dynamics of personal development? If the dynamic of unrealized selfhood does not entail the self divided against itself, what is the source and the nature of the disturbance that personal discipline is meant to overcome?

It is perhaps in providing a response to such questions that *Tracing Dao to Its Source* makes its most important recommendations. If agitation is not referenced primarily within one's soul, it can only be a disturbance in the relationships which constitute the self in its interactions with external things. Said another way, if a person is not in fact constituted by some essential, partitioned "soul," but is rather seen as a dynamic pattern of personal, social, and natural relationships, agitation must arise as a consequence of poor management of these constitutive roles and relationships. Hence, agitation in the heart-and-mind is not narrowly "psychological," but more properly of broad ethical concern: How should we live and what should we do?

It is *not* through an internal struggle of reason against the passions, but through a mirroring of the things of the world as they are in their relations with us, that we reach a state in which none among the myriad things is able to agitate our hearts and minds, and we are able to promote their flourishing. In other words, we defer to the integrity of those things which contextualize us, thus establishing a frictionless equilibrium with them. And it is this achieved equilibrium that is precisely the relationship most conducive to symbiotic growth and productivity. The Daoist sage in *Zhuangzi* is described in such terms:

> The stillness of the sage is not simply his saying: "Stillness is good!" and hence he is still. Rather, he is still because none of the myriad things is able to disrupt his heart-and-mind. When water is still, it illuminates one's whiskers and eyebrows, and in its placidity it provides a standard so that the skilled artisan can take his measure from it. If the stillness of water provides illumination, how much more so one's spirits. The stillness of the sage's heart-and-mind is mirror to the whole world and mirror to the myriad things.[33]

Throughout the *Huainanzi* we find reference to this "mirrorlike knowing." For example, in *Huainanzi* 6:

> The sage is like a mirror—
> He neither sees things off nor goes out to meet them,
> He responds to everything without storing anything up.
> Thus, he is never injured through the myriad transformations he undergoes.

Rules of thumb, customs, standards, methods, stipulated concepts and theories, commandments, principles, laws of natures, conventions—all of these, in requiring us to "welcome things as they come and escort them as they go," result in what Steve Goldberg has described as "a hardening of the categories." Having stored past experience and organized it in the process, we then recall, participate in, and anticipate a world patterned by these discriminations. The sage, however, mirrors the world *at each moment* in a way that is undetermined by the shape of a world passed away, or by anticipations of a world yet to come.

Importantly, the Daoist project is neither passive nor quietistic. Water is a source of nourishment; the mirror is a source of light; the heart-and-mind is a source of transformative energy. To "know" as the mirror "knows" is not representational, but casting the world in a certain light. Such performative "knowing" is to actively interpret and realize a world with healthy, productive effect. These metaphors for *xin* entail presentation rather than representation, and coordination rather than correspondence. "Mirroring" then is best seen as synergistic and responsive, like virtuoso dancing or charioting where all of the elements are in step, and constitute a fluid interdependent whole.

There is, with appropriate Daoist qualification, an "objectively" real world. And the sage does seek to entertain this world as "objectively" as possible. The qualification, then, is that for the Daoist, the objective world is objectless. The world is a flow of events which belies any discriminations that would lay claim to fixity or certainty. "Things" are a gloriously complex yet passing pattern of discriminations that give way to novel patterns in the flux of irrepressible transformation. Hence, when the sage recommends we become "one with all things," it is certainly an exhortation to appreciate the parity and continuities that obtain among them. Perhaps more importantly, however, it is also an encouragement to become one with "this" or "that," reveling in the bottomless particularity and sustained uniqueness of each passing event made possible by the transformation of things (*wuhua* 物化).

> Before long Master Lai fell ill. Wheezing and panting, he was on the brink of death. His wife and children gathered about him and wept. Master Li, having gone to ask after him, scolded them, saying, "Get away! Don't impede his transformations!"
>
> Leaning against the door, Master Li spoke with Master Lai, saying, "Extraordinary, these transformations! What are you going to be made into next? Where are you going to be sent? Will you be made into a rat's liver? Or will you be made into an insect's arm? . . ."[34]

Even terms such as "quiescence" or "stillness (*jing* 靜)" and "emptiness (*xu* 虛)," a vocabulary which in English translation suggests inertia and stasis, are dynamic in this tradition: an achieved balance, a productive harmony, a frictionless equilibrium, steadiness and stability. For example, "emptiness" of the heart-and-mind is receptivity and tolerance. As room to accommodate a boundless amount of experience, it is "emptiness-becoming-full"; as openness to entertain each new experience on its own terms without prejudice, it is "fullness-becoming-empty."

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* takes this active, positive contribution of the unagitated heart-and-mind as a central theme. First, stillness or quiescence is the human being's natural condition:

> A man is quiescent when born—
> This is his Heaven-endowed nature.
> He moves when aroused—
> This is the stirring of that nature.
> The human spirit responds when things come on the scene—
> This is the movement of the intellect. (Section 5)

External things have the power to attract one's attention, arousing one's likes and dislikes, and thus obstructing one's way. This distraction can make a person biased and judgmental, thereby obstructing the natural equilibrium of a situation:

> When the intellect comes into contact with things,
> Feelings of attraction and aversion are produced.
> Where these feelings of attraction and aversion have taken shape,
> And the intellect has been enticed from the outside,
> One is unable to return to himself,
> And the heavenly principles in him are destroyed. (Section 5)

The issue here is the quality of relatedness between the internal and the external. It is not that external things are in themselves pernicious or destructive. Nor is it that the human heart-and-mind is given to producing dissension in the world. In fact, in the vocabulary of classical Chinese thought, the internal (*nei* 內) and the external (*wai* 外) are correlative categories which, like *yin* and *yang*, are properly on an interdependent and mutually entailing continuum, inseparable and indivisible. The goal is to keep the internal and external relations intact (*quan* 全):

> . . . [I]nwardly he has that which links him with the trigger of heaven, and so does not give up what he finds in himself for the sake of position, wealth, and ease. (Section 19)

Another way of saying "stillness (*jing* 靜)" that locates this posture relationally between the heart-and-mind and the external world is "nonaction (*wuwei* 無爲)":

> Hence, one who understands *dao*
> Returns to his limpidity and stillness,
> And one who knows all there is to know about things
> Always ends up with nonactivity. . . .
>
> He succeeds without deliberating,
> He accomplishes without doing. (Section 10)

How does one lose one's natural equilibrium? By reliance upon small devices that render one "partial" where one should remain "intact (*quan* 全)":

> Thus, those who embody *dao* do not exert themselves yet are never at wits' end
> While those who rely on devices are worn out with nothing to show for it in the end. (Section 7)

The natural posture is "objectless desire (*wu yu* 無欲)" where one accommodates things and transforms together with them without introducing disintegrative factors—likes and dislikes, possession and rejection, approval and disapproval—into the relationship:

> Thus, when a man harbors a calculating heart
> In his breast,
> The quality of his person is contaminated and his spirituality is not kept whole. (Section 7)

Rehearsing the diversity of the myriad things where each finds what is appropriate for its needs, the text rejects "sagely" interventions that upset the productive continuity of nature:

> The myriad things have been so-of-themselves from the beginning—
> What room is there for interference by the sage? (Section 9)

Tracing Dao *to Its Source* rejects those emotions that upset one's equanimity and balance:

> Gladness and anger are a deviation from *dao*; worry and sorrow are a falling from *de*; likes and dislikes are excesses of the heart; cravings and desires are a burden on the nature. (Section 16)

But the rejection of those emotions that entail "partiality" is itself productive of the greatest happiness:

> If a man can get to a state in which there is nothing which he enjoys, there will be nothing he does not enjoy; when there is nothing he does not enjoy, he has then reached the extremity of the highest joy. (Section 16)

As we find repeatedly in this treatise, a more general observation about personal realization is turned to political account:

> . . . [S]agacity lies not in governing others, but rather in getting hold of *dao*; joy lies not in wealth and rank, but rather in gaining the symphonious [*he* 和]. (Section 16)

THE EFFICACY OF ACCOMMODATION

A major theme of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* is that accommodation is not passive or weak, but the source of the fullest strength and influence. It is accommodation which is productive of timeliness and efficacy. Where small devices are exclusionary, accommodation is inclusionary, enabling one to extend oneself.

This insight—the efficacy of accommodation—is given specific political application. Liu An's greatest problem was the coercion of the central government and its unwillingness to accommodate the mosaic of local political structures. By invoking the efficacy of the ancient kings, Liu An is recommending the ultimate strength of tolerance and suggesting the counterproductivity of pursuing those political desires that entail coercion.

The efficacy of the "dark *de* (*xuande* 玄德)" is illustrated by the transformative effect that Shun has on his world. Through "genuineness of purpose" and acting through the heart-and-mind, he is able to shape the values and customs of the world to a degree that far exceeds the power of laws and punishments. It is external order effected through inner tranquillity; it is governing the trunk and branches by taking care of the root; it is bringing order to the myriad things by managing the gate from which they emerge.

Bringing the discussion down to the present situation, *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source* addresses the question of how to rule the empire explicitly:

> The empire is something which I possess, while I am also something which the empire possesses. How could there be any gap between the empire and me? Why must "possessing the empire" mean effecting one's edicts and commands by holding authority and power and wielding the handle of life and death? By "possessing the empire" is not meant this, but simply finding it in oneself. If I find it in myself then the empire also finds me in it. If the empire and I find it in each other, then we will always possess each other. Again, how can there be room for anything to be wedged between the empire and me? (Section 19)

The wisdom of this text is that accommodation, inclusivity, tolerance are the real strategies for achieving stable and enduring personal, social, and political order. After all,

> If one knows how to look upon himself as large and the world as small, he is close to *dao*. (Section 16)

ON THE TRANSLATION

We have included the Chinese text along with the translation, and parsed passages to reveal the way in which a concatenation of images is linked by parallel sentence structure, the rhythmic pace of the lines, and the judicious use of rhyme. To illustrate the way in which the text

turns from one image or idea to the next, we have introduced section breaks into the English translation that do not occur in the original Chinese. If this is taking an editorial liberty, it should be remembered that the original Chinese text is unpunctuated and unparsed, leaving its readers to discover its rhythm as an integral step in their appreciation of its meaning. We have expended some effort to identify as many of the rhymes as possible, although given the conspiracy of geography, dialect, and the passage of time, any such attempt is necessarily flawed. These rhymes are indicated in the Chinese text with [square brackets].

The Chinese text is adapted from D. C. Lau and Chen Fong Ching (editors), *A Concordance to the Huainanzi*, in the ICS Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992). The specialist reader is referred to the notes in this source for the resolution of textual problems and suggested emendations.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

[1] See Michael Loewe (1986).

[2] See Ho Che Wah (1998).

[3] That is, fully a third of *Beginning Reality* is borrowed from our extant 33-chapter *Zhuangzi*, but it was compiled at a time before the imperial librarian Liu Xiang edited the text down from the 52 chapters recorded in the Han dynasty court bibliography. Hence, *Beginning Reality* might well contain parts of the *Zhuangzi* presently lost.

[4] The motivation of "Han thinking," involving as it does the desire to accommodate a variety of often conflicting texts, is certainly not altogether missing from our own tradition. As higher critics have long understood, the Book of Genesis is a literary pastiche sewn together from a variety of authoritative sources. From the perspective of the compilers, each of the narrative strands giving different, often mutually inconsistent, accounts of Creation, owned sufficient authoritativeness that all had to be included as expressions of cultural range and diversity. As such, cultural coherence overrides concerns for logical consistency.

[5] See Robin Yates (1997):10–19 for a summary account of the current discussion on "Huang-Lao."

[6] It is interesting that a thousand years later, during the Tang dynasty, Han Yu would appropriate this same title to make his argument for a new, simplified Confucian orthodoxy purged of the noxious influences of monastic Daoism and Buddhism. A surface reading of Han Yu would make his project the antithesis of the "inclusivity" of Liu An and his colleagues. But in a careful reading of Han Yu's version of *Tracing* Dao *to Its Source*, we can see that he is a willing appropriator of otherwise competing philosophical ideas. Charles Hartman rehearses Han Yu's argument for the fundamental congruency between classical Confucianism and Mohism, an argument that can be extended to the Daoists and Buddhists as well. See Hartman (1986), especially pp. 145–162.

[7] For an exploration of the meaning of the pervasive water metaphor in the early sources, see Sarah Allan's *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (1997).

[8] *Zhuangzi* 5/2/40; cf. translation in Graham (1981):54, and Watson (1968):40 (hereafter G54 and W40, respectively).

[9] *Zhuangzi* 4/2/33 (G54, W40).

[10] For most of the pre-Socratics, *kosmos* was divine, and for both Plato and early Aristotle, *kosmos* was the "visible God" (*horatos theos*).

[11] *Zhuangzi* 63/23/56 (G103, W256).

[12] This phrase is most commonly translated as "standing alone, it does not change." But *gai* 改 is a particular kind of change: It is not transformation (*hua* 化), or change over time (*bian* 變), or substitution (*yi* 易), but rather "improvement" or "correction."

[13] Zhang Dongsun (1995):375.

[14] *Analects* 2/21:

> Someone asked Confucius, "Why do you not take up office in government?" The Master replied, "The *Book of Documents* says: 'Filiality! Simply being filial and being a friend to your brothers extends into exercising governance.' These family virtues are also the stuff of government. Why must one 'take up office in government?'"

[15] *Analects* 2/8:

> Zixia asked about filiality (*xiao*). The Master replied, "The difficulty lies in showing the proper countenance. As for the young contributing their energies when there is work to be done, and deferring to their elders when there is wine and food to be had—how can merely doing this be considered filiality?"

[16] *Analects* 3/12:

> The expression "sacrifice as though present" is taken to mean "sacrifice to the gods as though the gods are present." But the Master said, "If I myself do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as though I have not sacrificed at all."

[17] *Analects* 6/22:

> Fan Chi inquired about wisdom (*zhi*). The Master replied, "To devote yourself to what is appropriate (*yi*) for the people, and to show respect for the gods and spirits while keeping them at a distance can be called wisdom."

See also *Analects* 11/12:

> Zilu asked how to serve the spirits and the gods. The Master replied, "Not yet being able to serve other people, how would you be able to serve the spirits?" He said, "May I ask about death?" The Master replied, "Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death?"

[18] *Xunzi* 63/17/16f.; cf. Knoblock (1994) vol 3:16f.

[19] Graham (1981):85–86.

[20] Zhang (1995):373–374.

[21] *Xunzi* 79/21/22; cf. Knoblock (1994) vol 3:102.

[22] *Zhuangzi* 15/6/9 (G86, W81).

[23] *Zhuangzi* 19/7/2 (G94, W92).

[24] *Zhuangzi* 64/23/72 (G106, W259–260).

[25] See Li Zehou (1987).

[26] *Yijing* 43/*xishang*/9.

[27] To translate this icon as "dragon," as is conventionally done, reflects the difficulties encountered in cultural translation, *long* needing as it does to be