

Lecture 5

The Metaphysics, *Xuan* Principles, of Daoism

We have already observed that the rise of Daoism and the character of the system were determined by the question of the origin of the *zhuzi* [various philosophers], namely, that they were directed at the exhaustion of Zhou institutions. With this concept in mind, we will proceed to discuss the doctrines of Daoism. First of all, we may ask, "How should the idea of Dao be understood? How should *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness, Non-Being] introduced by Daoism be understood?" In the next step, in understanding the relationship of *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness, Non-Being], and *you* [Being, Something], how is *you* to be understood? In the third step, how do we understand the relationship between *wu* and *you* and *wu* [things, entities]. By means of these three levels of understanding we shall be able to reveal the entire character of Daoist doctrine.

If someone were to ask, "What is the meaning of the Nothing [*wu*] that Lao Zi talks about?", how should we answer him? This would require that we have a good understanding of the life of Chinese culture and the wisdom it has produced. The wisdom produced under this cultural environment is different from the wisdom and thought produced under the Greek environment or under the Indian environment. Therefore we have to hew close to the life of the culture when we speak of a philosophy and not just speak out of a vacuum.

These days the heads of the younger generation have become like a cross-section; their awareness of the vertical cultural background, of the life of the culture, has become increasingly faint. But our problem requires a vertical perspective. Life, strictly speaking, is not only suspended cross-section-wise in the present time and space. If it were, life would be meaningless. There must also be a vertical thread so that there can be a process of growth and awareness. Awareness requires waking up the vertical thread in a person's life, for only then will one's life be enlarged. If the horizontal cross-section is to be secured and meaningful, the vertical dimension must be enlarged; only that can be

genuine enlargement. That is why we should not restrict our life to the little bit of here and now, for if you were to make a vertical cut, there would be nothing left of life. In the young people of today, the horizontal consciousness is gradually becoming especially strong, or expressed with especial clarity. Once this happens, the vertical thread loses continuity, and young people will no longer understand the life of their culture or their cultural background. Then they will no longer understand the source of the wisdom in the culture, nor its function in human life. The ideas belonging to the horizontal perspective are easier to understand and to express, but this is also the biggest problem with the present civilization.

To understand why Lao Zi's *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness] emerged in the Warring States period, we must take a vertical view of the cultural background. All questions of this kind have a timelessness; all truth has the universality of truth. Don't think that just because that happened two thousand years ago it is irrelevant today. Today's situation is still a Warring States period. Ancient Chinese civilization reached its zenith in the Spring and Autumn [Chunqiu, 722-481 BCE] and Warring States [Zhanguo, 489-222 BCE] periods. According to Oswald Spengler [1918-1922], every people has a "nineteenth century", this "nineteenth century" being a figure of speech. The Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods were a nineteenth century, for example. According to Spengler's theory of cultural extinction, every people can only have one nineteenth century, can only bloom once. Examples are Greece, Rome, and modern civilizations; once having bloomed, they decline and perish. That is why his book was named *The Decline of the West*. From the history of the cultural development of the West, it is easy for Westerners to hold this view. In China, rise and decline are not a big issue; if there is rise there must also be decline, making a wave-like continuity, the one producing the other endlessly, always spiraling forward. From the perspective of physical life and biological life, there is indeed only one bloom. But cultural life is different. It can spring up and find a transcendent basis from which to enrich and revive our physical life, and thus it can continue forever. This would not give you a theory of cultural extinction. A nineteenth century can appear, and appear endlessly, a prospect which can only be understood and grasped with a vertical consciousness.

What, then, do you think the Daoist *wu* was directed at? How do you go about understanding this idea? “The myriad things under Heaven are born of *you* (Being); *you* is born out of *wu*.” (*Dao De Jing*, ch. 40). *Wu* is Nothing, Nothingness. In Western philosophy, the idea of nothing also appears in logic and ontology, but there with a totally different meaning. If you understood the cultural background of Lao Zi, you would know that *wu* is a simplification and a generalization, and that what it originally brought up was *wu wei* "without artifice". *Wu wei* was directed at *you wei*, artifice. Lao Zi objected to *you wei*. And why? It was because of his particular occasion [situation], which we can only understand if we keep close to my previous statement that the various schools of philosophy “were directed towards the exhaustion of Zhou institutions”. *You wei* meant artifice. According to the Daoists, as soon as there is *zaozuo*, artifice, there will be unnaturalness, unease, pretense, and falsity. “*Zaozuo*” is close to English artificial, man-made or contrived. *Wu wei* was primarily directed at this. Its unique moment was the exhaustion of the Zhou *wen* [culture, institutions]. By the time of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the ritual and music, the codes, conventions and institutions established by the Duke of Zhou [Zhou Gong] had become a hollow shell because of the corruption and degeneracy of the aristocracy. They became shackles and chains in people’s lives. Thus the Duke of Zhou’s ritual, music, codes, conventions, and institutions all became external or formal. Ritual and music devoid of real life were artificial, false, external, formal, all these attributes emerging. Only the external, which is not rooted in our lives and which cannot be internalized, can be chains on us. Being that issues from our lives cannot fetter us. Thus Daoism looked upon Zhou codes and conventions as bonds, since all external, empty formalities are artifice [*you wei*], all bonds and shackles to our freedom and ease. It was in this context that Lao Zi brought out the idea of *wu wei* [without artifice].

Wu wei belongs to the realm of a high-level spiritual life. It does not mean inaction. Westerners and people in general translate it as inaction [*budong*], which completely misses the point. *Wu wei* implies being natural. The Daoist “natural” is not the natural of the natural world, nor is it the "natural" in the West’s **naturalism**. Naturalism is close to materialism; it is a kind of materialism, for it refers to the natural world of natural science. What the natural sciences study are all physical phenomena, and their "nature"

refers to the nature of the world of physics. According to Western religion, nature is created, encompassing all the finite creations of God, while God Himself is super-nature, with nature and supra-nature counterpoised. The natural of the Daoists pertains to the spiritual life, meaning free and at ease, as oneself, not leaning on anything. At present we only know how to borrow the old Chinese phrase *ziran* [as oneself, self-so, spontaneous, autonomous] to translate the Western idea of “natural”, while we have forgotten the meaning of this phrase which we already had. Here is a twist that we should unravel and return the word to its original meaning. The Daoists’ *ziran* meant being free and at ease, as oneself, not dependent on anything, and spiritually freestanding. Only when one is independent in spirit can one be counted as free; so we see it is a very lofty vision. All the phenomena of the natural world that Westerners talk about, strictly speaking, are *taran* [other-thus, heteronomous], other-dependent, are dependent on other things to be thus. All the phenomena of the natural world belong in the realm of cause-effect relations, mutually dependent, which is precisely not *ziran*, self-thus [self-existing, as oneself], not *zizai* [in the self], at ease, but are other-dependent. And so Zhuang Zi [c.369-c.286 BCE] talked about roaming and non-dependence. In reality, how can there be any non-dependence? For example, when we sit we need chairs, when we are hungry we need food. These all belong to what Westerners call natural phenomena. The natural that Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi speak of does not have this meaning; it means as-oneseff, non-dependent. That is why when *wu wei* is explained as implying the natural, it immediately reveals how special its meaning is. It is directed at the exhaustion of Zhou institutions, at the external, false, formalities. Only by being liberated and delivered from them can one be natural. Being natural requires that we rise to a higher state of non-dependence. It was with these connotations that the Daoists used the phrase *wu wei*.

Wu wei is then universalized, abstracted, and distilled into *wu* [have not, there is not, nothing, nothingness]; *wu* should be seen as a verb first. What it negates is dependence, falsity, artifice, the external, and the merely formal. Rising above them, it reveals a state without artifice, *wu wei*, which of course is on a higher plane. So from the very beginning *wu* was not an ontological concept but a practical concept pertaining to daily existence. This is a question concerning our life, and not a theoretical, metaphysical question. In the broad sense, all questions concerning man’s life are

practical. *Wu* is an idea related to the practical. Wouldn't you agree that it is very easy to understand? Because culture in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods developed problems, the Daoists saw right away that people's lives had descended into pretense and artifice, with the greatest loss of ease. It was very hard being exhausted from rushing around for one's survival and from living in an empty framework of pretense and form. Christianity was the first to give us the idea of original sin, Buddhism the first to give us karma and *avidyā* [ignorance, unenlightenment]. What Daoism first gave us did not have to reach so far. What it first gave us was right before our eyes, and that was artifice. Pretense and artifice were most responsible for taking away men's freedom and ease. Towards this, the Daoists had genuine susceptibility, so-called existential susceptibility. From this point of origin we could talk about original sin, and about karma too, for no matter how heinous the sin, this was the problem. The freedom and ease that was like floating clouds and flowing water that the Daoists spoke of required enormous discipline [*gongfu*, work/effort] and represented a very lofty vision. This vision was reached only with maturation and after being finely tempered. Clearly it required enormous discipline because from this perspective life was very vexing.

Take the idea of *jinchi*[standing on ceremony, stiff formality], which the Confucians also talk about. The Neo-Confucian Xie Shangcai [1050-1103] spent his whole life trying to be rid of this *jinchi*, which shows how difficult it was. *Jinchi* means to be artificial and unnatural [not at ease]. And who can be free of artifice and *jinchi*? It's a phenomenon that's a pain in the neck to everyone. It is like the Buddhists trying to be rid of *avidyā* [ignorance], achieved only when one attains Buddhahood. The Daoists didn't think it necessary to be so esoteric. All that mattered was *jinchi*. Get rid of it and you become a sage [*shengren*]. Isn't that the same? According to Daoism, *jin* was being artificial and unnatural. If you could dissolve it, then you would be an Authentic Man [*zhenren*]. Daoism talked about *wu* [without artifice], and *ziran* [self-thus, being natural] from this level of the Authentic Man. And so it is an idea pertaining to practice. In our conduct of life, in human existence, there is always a component of pretense and dishonesty, as false as the manmade diamond. The Daoists were especially sensitive to this and from it developed a whole new doctrine.

If, after first understanding the idea of *wu wei* [be without artifice], we universalize it, we shall arrive at the idea of *wu*. Looking at *wu* as a verb, we can explain it with reference to the occasion, namely that it was negating Zhou proprieties [*wen*, culture], which in fact included everything. Then we can remove this occasion and go forward: Why does it oppose artifice? This we can probably explain on three levels. The lowest level is the rushing about in the physical life which takes away freedom and ease. Everyone has a practical, physical life where the rushing about causes it to flow out in all directions. This is the first level of life's pain. We see it clearly in the present world, where the modern person seeks stimulation in rushing about, and not finding satisfaction there, seeks then to numb the senses. That is why Lao Zi said: "The five colors blind the eyes, the five notes deafen the ears, the five flavors rob [*shuang*] the mouth of its taste, the chase and the hunt but madden the heart." (*Dao De Jing*, ch. 12). *Shuang* should be interpreted as "deficient" and "to lose", such as *shuang* in *shuangshi* [lose] and *shuangyue* [fail to keep a promise]. The confusion of the five colors blurs the eyes. To sum it up in present-day language, it means that with the rushing about in our physical life, our physical life flows away like horses galloping in all eight directions. Going one level higher, we come to the level of psychological moods such as instability in joy and anger. To fall into this level is also vexing. Going another step higher is the level of thought, where thoughts [*yinian*] are contrived. The calamities of the present world [1978] are primarily calamities of thoughts, totally the creation of **ideology or ideological mind-sets**. For example, the emergence of the set of ideas known as communism has created division in the world, resulting in two worlds and two criteria for truth, a calamity of the highest order. The contrivance of ideas is most vexing. All the ideas derived from systems of thought are, broadly speaking, all contrivances of ideas. The contrivances of ideas and systems of ideas represent only opinion and prejudice, and, to put it more politely, represent the knowledge gotten from a glimpse through a crack. That is why any great doctrine has wisdom as its goal and does not offer knowledge. The difference in wisdom is that it dissolves away knowledge, systems of ideas, and the contrivances of thought. All contrivances of thought are systems and are derived from a view through a crack; a bit of light comes from the crack, but the surrounding is darkness. Only by dissolving it can there be all light, and this light is wisdom. This is where

Daoism talks about *wu*, where it does not talk about systems, but instead wants to dissolve away all systems. The rushing about in the physical life, the moods of the psyche, and further up, the contrivances of thought and so forth, are all systems, which must all be dissolved away. Although the Zhou proprieties were supposed to adjust to the life of that age, they were after all only a system of codes, conventions, and institutions. If we cannot find the rational, internal basis of the Zhou proprieties and merely look upon them as external, as merely an artificial system, then we should negate them. This is how Lao Zi looked upon the Zhou proprieties. Confucianism of course had a different perspective; that is why it said “Three hundred rules of ceremony, three thousand rules of demeanour without exception issue from human nature and human feelings.” Nor does Confucius speak about *wu* (which does not mean that he did not understand *wu*); instead he introduces the idea *ren* 仁 [humanity, humanness] from the front. Daoism negates the Zhou proprieties, expanding this view to speak about *wu wei* [without artifice], opposing *wei* 為 [artifice]. Putting it in present-day language, Daoists negated the three levels, namely the rushing about in the physical life, the moods of the psyche, and the contrivances of thought. “The five colors blind the eyes, the five flavors rob the mouth of its taste” refers merely to the personal, momentary quest for sensations. The effects of the contrivances of thought, on the other hand, can be much greater, its roots deepest, and once flaring up can result in calamity. That is why its place is on the highest level. The purpose of *wu* is to dissolve it away.

Thus, making *wu* [not have; be without] a verb first is to negate all of this. Once it is negated, a vision emerges before us, one expressed by the noun *wu*, Nothing. The noun *wu*, Nothing, taken apart is then turned into the phrase no-thing (there is nothing). So Nothing (no-thing) is not the nothing of ontology. When we speak about ontology we are taking the position of Western philosophy, speaking about the ontology of the metaphysics bequeathed to us by Greece. *Wu* does not have the ontological sense. But when the wisdom of *wu* is thoroughly developed, it can also imply an ontology; that, however, would not be the ontology based on the West, but pertains to the practical, namely practical ontology. All Chinese thought [*xuewen*, learning] is practical; for

example, the moral metaphysics of Confucianism is practical, in the broad meaning of practical. In the language of Daoism, what practice manifests is described in such terms as release, being carefree, and without artifice, and when such wisdom totally breaks through, it can imply a practical ontology. "Release [*jietuo*]" is more appropriate to Buddhism, and Daoism did not have this term, although they had such terms as "being untrammelled [*satuo*]", where the meaning is slightly different. To sum it up, let us just use the word practical. Once wisdom breaks through, and because there is nothing outside wisdom, then it has to give an explanation of heaven and earth and the myriad things. Consequently there can be a practical ontology, which can also be called a practical metaphysics. This practical metaphysics, ontology, rests on the understanding of *wu*.

Having understood the origin of *wu*, how are we to understand *wu* according to the vision it has revealed? This is the Dao [the Way] that Daoism speaks of. Dao is a commonly shared old term used by everyone. Daoism seeks to understand and define Dao through *wu*; so *wu* is an important crux. *Wu* alone won't do either because within *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness] there is also *you* [Something, Being]. So how are we to understand *wu*? How are we to understand *you*? How are we to understand *wu* and *wuh* [things, entities] on the one hand and *you* and *wuh* on the other? We can discuss this on three levels. First separately understand *wu*, then separately understand *you*, then lastly understand the relation of *wu*, *you*, and *wuh*.

The *Dao De Jing* says: "Heaven and earth and the myriad things [*wuh*] are born of *you*; *you* is born of *wu* ", clearly explaining the relations of *wu*, *you*, and *wuh*. When a statement like this appears, does it not give us metaphysics? The purpose of metaphysics is to explain heaven and earth and the myriad things. Western philosophy begins from existence, from ontology and epistemology, hence making *wu*, nothing, nothingness, an ontological concept. Daoism goes about it differently; hence we cannot understand it via this approach, but must understand it from the human person's life. The state revealed by *wu* is, in Daoist terminology, *xu* [void]. "Being void, one, and calm [*xu yi er jing*]" is originally a statement from Xun Zi [fl. 298-238 BCE] (*Xun Zi*, "Jie Bi" chapter, [Knoblock 1994, 3:104]). The *Dao De Jing* says: "Reach the void ultimate, maintain

stillness absolute.” (*Dao De Jing*, ch. 16). Void and calm being Daoist spiritual cultivation, Xun Zi’s statement comes from Daoism. The state of *wu* is one of "void, one, and calm" [*xu yi jing*], meaning that one's mind and spirit should not be attached to any one fixed direction. The rushing about in life, the moods of the psyche, the contrivances of thoughts, all have a fixed direction. Attachment to this precludes reaching through to that. Your life attaches to this, my life attaches to that, each affirming his own truth, resulting in conflict and contradiction. The attachment [*zhizhuo*] of Buddhism is this clinging, is to lock one’s thoughts into one fixed direction. That is why the first step in analyzing and understanding *wu* is *xu yi jing* [being void, one, and calm]. Being void brings out the spirit’s liveliness [*ling*, spirit]. If the mind is attached to one fixed direction, then the mental life is blocked and filled with this one direction, and then it is no longer empty, and if not empty, then not spiritually lively [*ling*]. One [*yi*] means pure and unadulterated, without the mess and noise of conflict and contradictions, with existence fragmented and scattered. Using Kant’s terminology, it is to dissolve the manifold, and not to integrate or unify the manifold, but to dissolve it so that it flows away. Calm [*jing*] means not to be restless. Amidst a life of rushing about and the contrivance of thoughts, man is every day engaged in restlessness; once this is dissolved he will be calm. Daoism is fond of speaking of calm. Confucianism frequently speaks of stillness, *ding*. The *Great Learning* says: “When you know how to stop, then you will have stillness. When you are still, then you can be calm. When you are calm, then you can be at peace. When you are at peace, then you can ponder. When you can ponder, then you can get results.” It also speaks of *zhen ding* [true stillness]. The Buddhists speak of *zhi* [stop, rest]. Their meanings are interchangeable. Calm [*jing*] is not the opposite of the motion and rest of physics, but is an absolute mental state. It means stillness, or at any given time pulling the spirit out of reality, and letting it float in a higher, spiritual realm. Nothing [*wu*], being natural [*ziran*], “void, one, and calm [*xu yi er jing*]” are all spiritual states, infinitely, marvelously, versatile spiritual states.

You see then that *wu* is not an ontological concept as understood in Western philosophy. Kant, for instance, divides Nothing into four types, explaining nothing in terms of objective being or non-being, or in terms of an empty or non-empty concept

(see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, page 294-296). Daoism does not explain it this way; hence we make the distinction.

Daoism attempts to understand the mental state of “void, one, and calm” through “infinite, marvelous uses”. The spirit [*ling*] is Being that has infinite, marvelous uses. If your mental state [*xinqing*] is limited by this, a given, direction, then you cannot use it somewhere else. This is what is meant by “fixed use”. Using a Daoist term, it is called *li* [function]. In Lao Zi’s *Dao De Jing*, *li* and *yong* [use] are separate. Chapter 11 says: “You is *li* [function]; *wu* is *yong* [use].” *Li*, function, is “fixed use”. *Yong* is called “marvelous use”. Whenever there is marvelous use it is infinite. That is why there is the statement: “Marvelous use has no direction.” Direction [*fang*] means direction and place. It is a spatial idea. When employed in “*xiaolian fangzheng*” [filial, honest, square and straight], it denotes virtue and describes a moral character. The statement “Marvelous use has no direction” takes the original meaning of *fang* [place, direction]. If there is a fixed direction, then the use is no longer marvelous. *Li*, fixed use, means a use that has a direction and is limited. Marvelous use is infinite and directionless use. Who can achieve this state of wisdom? For instance, we who live in this difficult age can show whether we have self-cultivation, and whether our mind can be “void, one, and calm”, so that we may reflect clearly. We should not be splintered by external distractions, and we should first of all reveal this state, this base.

The purpose of revealing this state is to enable you to respond to the world. That is why *wu wei* [not doing, do nothing] is always linked to *wu bu wei* [nothing not do, do everything]. Only that which is of infinite marvelous use can deal with the exceedingly variegated world, which is why Daoism used to be called “the imperial science”, and whoever wanted to advise the sovereign had to study Daoism. Zhang Liang [3rd cent. BCE] was the best example of this in history. He was supremely intelligent, nimble of mind and clear of vision. In the strife [c. 209-206 BCE] between the states of Chu and Han the principals in the fray were not always clear-sighted. It was because Liu Bang [founder of the Han dynasty, 256-195 BCE] possessed a relatively flexible mind that he could finally gain victory. The Overlord of Chu [232-202 BCE] was said to have been so brave in battle that he could best ten thousand men; but because his mind was obdurate,

he could not use Fan Zeng [277-204 BCE] even though Fan was in his employ. Nor was Liu Bang clear-headed, but as soon as Zhang Liang pointed things out to him, he could grasp the point and avoid making a mistake. (See my *Lishi Zhexue [Philosophy of History]*, part III, chapter 1). How can there be certainty in any age? Events are dependent on people. If you take the right path you will get good results, but if you take the wrong path, you will get the wrong results. That is why it is most important to learn, to seek cultivation and training and rise to a higher level.

Hence the statement “Do nothing and nothing is not done [*wu wei er wu bu wei*].” (*Dao De Jing*, ch. 37). “Nothing is not done” is the effect. “Do nothing” [*wu wei*] is the cause. Once this is understood, we may advance a step and examine “*you* [there is, Being]”. Daoism is very complete. *Wu* [there is not, Nothing, Nothingness] is the essence, but we cannot just speak of *wu*, for it won’t do for life to be abstracted and suspended in nothing. All three levels of *wu*, *you*, and *wuh* [things] must be taught before it is complete and reveals its entire use.

How does Lao Zi explain *you* [have, there is, Being]? At first *you* was also not the concept of “being” found in Western ontology. It has to be approached from the mental state based on *wu* [have no, there is not, Nothing]. This state requires that attachments to any fixed direction must be dissolved. But one cannot stop there, for then one would be suspended in emptiness. This is simply an analytical way of expression. To use Hegel’s terminology, this first step in understanding *wu* is *wu in an abstract stage*. If we stop here, we would only understand the ontological nature of the abstract *wu*, namely its special nature as ground; in other words, we would abstractly understand the *wu*-itself, which is what Hegel called pure universality.

What is pure universality? Why can we use Hegel’s term to describe that stage of *wu* when it is suspended in a vacuum? That is, why can we use pure universality to describe the *wu* that is an abstract stage? Since *wu* is the ground, it can of course be universal; turning this into a noun gives us universality. All ground has universality. When we say that *wu* is pure universality we mean that it does not at this stage have content; it cannot be concretized but hangs in an abstract vacuum. Without content *wu* is just “nothing itself”, just pure universality. This is not Dao, and showing this is just for

the sake of expediency. We must go a step further and speak of *you* [have, there is, Being]. We speak of *you* when this pure universality comes in contact with concrete content. It is concrete because there is content. That is why we can apply the phrase “pure universality” to *wu*.

Then how are we to understand the concrete content “*you*”? *You* is not Being outside ready to be stuffed inside. For that would mean that *wu* is an empty framework that could be stuffed. It is not very difficult to understand *wu* abstractly. But understanding *you* is quite subtle. *Wu* is a mental state that is void, one, and calm with infinite marvelous uses and very agile. How can we see that its use is infinite and marvelous? We can see it from *you*. *You* is the orientation of the mental state that is void, one, and calm and has infinite and marvelous uses. Using the terminology of the *Dao De Jing*, it is the *yaoxiangxing* 徼向性 [want-direction, orientation].

The *jiao* 徼 in “Constantly have desire and thus to observe its want [徼 *jiao*, *yao*]”--pronounced *yao* 腰 as in *yaoqiu* 要求 [request]—is the want [*yao*], of “*yuanshi yao zhong* 原始要終 [literally, investigate the origin and seek the end; investigate thoroughly from beginning to end.]” of the *Yijing*’s “Xici Xia [Appended Statements B]”. Once there is want, then there is an orientation [direction], namely a want-orientation. Once a want-orientation, then there is a thrust. The infinite, unlimited, mind is originally void, one, and calm, without sound or smell, without any signs or clues. The want-orientation represents a clue and sign, and this is where we speak of *you* [have; there is]. This is to speak of *you*, completely subjectively and with reference to the want-orientation of the unlimited mental state. It is not speaking of *you* objectively. The first chapter of *Dao De Jing* says: “Constantly reside in *wu* so as to observe its marvels; constantly reside in *you* so as to observe its want.” The “Constantly reside in *wu*” [*chang wu* 常無] is the mental state we have just described. “Its marvels” refers to Dao. Not only must the mind reside in the state of *wu*, so as to observe the marvels of Dao, but it must also often reside in the state of *you*, so as to observe the want-orientation of Dao. Turning it around, we may say that the want-orientation is simply the *you* [Being] of Dao. *Dao De Jing* approaches Dao through *wu* and *you*, for this is the double character of Dao.

Why does it have want-orientation? *Wu* is not a lifeless thing. On the contrary, it is an agile state of mind. No matter whether this world exists or not, or whether there are the myriad events and myriad things or not, it can operate. It can have a want-orientation without an object. Even without a ready object, it can reveal a clue, a want-orientation. Normally when we get an idea, we do not necessarily need an object. The necessity of an object is the epistemological approach. Sometimes we can suddenly, without an object, produce an idea from a root source. This is creation. The issuance of an idea is a want-orientation of the mind and spirit. It is not want-oriented toward any object; rather, the object is created from this want-orientation. This happens in our everyday life. Of course, at this level most of our ideas have objects, or at least are linked to objects. Once we speak of creativity, it means that a want-orientation can be produced even without any links to an object; only this is called creating. For instance, a writer can write when the inspiration comes even without having quotes from literature for every sentence. He does not always need quotes from others, but can even create his own quotes for others to quote. That is why marvelous writings and marvelous thoughts can appear.

Generating *you* from *wu* is completely inner-generation, creative generation, in a way similar to what we have just described, when *you* does not arise in response to an object. We can only say that *you* [Being] and *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness] constitute the double character of Dao when we approach want-orientation from the perspective of the mental state that has infinitely marvelous uses itself. *Wu* is the ground and it must also produce the effect of want-orientation. This is how Daoism teaches *you*, and that is why it is very subtle. If we approach it objectively from Being, no matter how *xuan*, profound, philosophers are, it would be intellectual profundity; in reality it is very easy to understand and not at all subtle. These teachings of Daoism came out of the cultural life of China, produced out of the cultural background of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. They are developed completely from the perspective of man's life. They are authentic, profound, and marvelous, and their functions are even more impressive. The more complex man's life, the higher the culture, the more they are needed. Those who shoulder great responsibilities especially need these teachings, which is why they were called the imperial science.

Once a clue has an orientation, then there is an inclination to be a certain being [*you*], to become a being. From this perspective, the Being of this orientation has creativity; hence it is not a Being of epistemology, but Being of practical ontology, which is to say, it is not the Being that is found in what Heidegger calls representative thought, but, going back a step, belongs to original thinking. The Being in representative thought is a Being that is taken apart and diffused outward, that corresponds to the object.

There is a problem here, however. If, once an orientation emerges and appears in *you* [Being], and the mind is not agile, then it will be confined here and not able to reach there; hence it cannot stop here, and this is where *xuan* [the profound, mysterious] appears. Every want-orientation has a certain direction or orientation. When the mind stops at this want-orientation, *you* leaves *wu* [Nothing, Nothingness]. *You* does not want to leave *wu*; it issues from the infinite versatility of *wu*, and once issued forth, dissolves and returns back to *wu*, constantly revolving in a circle. Thus, we cannot talk about Nothing and Being separately and apart, for this circle must be seen as a whole. When we speak of Nothing, it is also Being, and when we speak of Being, it is also Nothing, resulting in a kind of dialectical thinking. Being which at the same time is not Being is Nothing; Nothing which at the same time is not Nothing is Being. This appears to be a play of words, but only when one does not understand it. If you understand it, the rules are very simple. This circular revolving is then “*xuan*” and it is the *xuan* of “The *xuan* of the *xuan* [the mystery of mysteries], the door to the myriad wonders” of the *Dao De Jing*.

The *xuan* cannot be explained as clearly as in analysis. *Xuan* means black. Water when deep becomes black. Thus *xuan* expresses the meaning of profound. It also means not as transparent and easy to understand as analysis, but somewhat obscure. Actually, the *xuan* is neither easy to understand nor obscure. Because analytical explanation must always follow the rules of logic, it is never xuan [obscure, mysterious] no matter how complex the subject. Nothing that obeys the laws of mathematics and logic is *xuan*. This is a distinction between major principles. The *xuan* is a circle. If we say it is Nothing, it is Nothing and also Not-Nothing, namely Being.. If we say it is Being, it is Being and Not-Being, namely Nothing. Therefore, it is dialectical. The dialectical is

always *xuan*, and therefore profound. If like a whip we move in one direction, the moving always moving, and the still always still, then the moving will forever move in a straight line, and there will not be anything *xuan*. Only the dialectical can be *xuan*, can be profound, namely the *xuan* taught by the Daoists. Therefore dialectics can only be applied to man's practical, spiritual life; explaining it apart from this level would be all wrong. Dialectical materialism discusses dialectics within the sphere of science and the material world, which is wrong. (See chapter 13 of my *Logic [Lizexue]*).

The *xuan* is profound and mysterious. The essential meaning of the profound is determined by the meaning of dialectics. Dialectics is usually spoken of as a method, where only the process of its development is stressed. Actually if analysis is dissolved, would not the meaning become one level deeper? Since it is both profound and a mystery, then it is what the *Dao De Jing* speaks of as *xuan*. The first chapter of the *Dao De Jing* says: "These two issue from the same source but have different names. The same is that which is called the *xuan*. The *xuan* of the *xuan* [mystery of mysteries] is the door to the myriad wonders." The "two" refers to Nothing and Being, the double character of Dao. Nothing and Being both belong to the same source, getting their names, Nothing and Being, after they have issued forth.

Now we enter upon the third step: What is the relation of Nothing [*wu*] and Being [*you*] to the "things" [*wuh*] of "the myriad things of heaven and earth?" Although Nothing and Being are explained subjectively, they are both absolute universal principles. It is because they are absolutely universal that they can cover and involve heaven, earth and the myriad things. The *Dao De Jing* says: "Nothing names [is the name of] the beginning of heaven and earth, Being names [is the name of] the mother of the myriad things." Heaven and earth are the overall name for the myriad things, while the myriad things is a way of speaking of heaven and earth when they are spread out. Actually they are the same. Speaking of the beginning of heaven, earth and the myriad things, they begin from Nothing. If they began from Being, then Being would still begin from Being going back in an endless regress. Therefore, either there is no beginning, or if there is a beginning, then it has to be Nothing. So with regard to the beginning of heaven, earth and the myriad beings, we call it Nothing, and take Nothing as ground. Thus the relation

between Nothing and heaven, earth and the myriad things involves the myriad things turning backward, returning to its ground. The next statement, “Being [*you*] is the mother of the myriad things”, turns forward, involving heaven, earth and the myriad things facing forward, and spreading out heaven and earth. Mother has the meaning of “formal ground”. When explaining philosophical principles, the Chinese like to use concrete terms and symbolic metaphors, such as mother. The myriad things in *you* give birth, nurture, erect, and strengthen, and within the sphere of Being grow and undergo transformation; hence *you* is the mother-ground, or formal basis, of the myriad things growing and undergoing transformation. As soon as there is Being, Being has a want-orientation, and that orientation reaching here and being actualized results in a thing. *You*, Being, is thus the ground by which a thing can be actualized.

Looking backward, we say that Nothing is monistic, is one. Looking forward, we say that Being, that the want-orientation, is pluralistic. Since it is pluralistic, it can be the mother, the formal ground, of the myriad things. Lao Zi seeks to understand Dao from *wu* and *you*. *Wu* and *you* mixed together constitute the *xuan*. The *xuan* of “The *xuan* within the *xuan*, the door to the myriad marvels” is the ground of the creation of the myriad things. Speaking analytically and explaining directly, *you* is the basis of the myriad things; speaking synthetically, *wu* is the beginning of heaven and earth. It is because *you* issues from *wu* and moreover *you* and *wu* mixed into one is called the *xuan* that the *xuan* can restore the concreteness of Dao, in other words, the concrete, real function of Dao. By stopping at either Nothing or Being Dao’s concreteness would disappear, making it impossible to restore or manifest Dao’s wondrous uses in creating heaven, earth and the myriad things. Strictly speaking, there is ultimately only one statement, “Dao creates heaven, earth and the myriad things,” Nothing and Being all belonging to one aspect of Dao, and their opposite being heaven, earth and the myriad things. Although Being belongs to both ends, it does not come from the outside, but arises from the infinite mental state, and so the direct meaning is Nothing and Being ranged on one side and the myriad things on the opposite side.

Things are ranged opposite Nothing and Being, but once Being emerges, and there is a want-orientation, then it is directed towards a thing and drops on the thing. That is

why we generally understand Daoist *you* by linking it with the thing. This actually is a derivative, secondary meaning. We should understand the primary, original meaning as *you* linked with *wu*, for *you* arises from *wu*; hence Dao has a double character, and things are not Dao's nature. *Wu* is understood as the substance of heaven, earth and the myriad things, and when there is a want-direction, a thing will be actualized and created. People in general as soon as they speak of *you* explain it as dropping from want-orientation down to a thing. Actually, in the *Dao De Jing*, *you* is the mother of the myriad things, which means, in present-day language, that it is the formal ground of things. The formal ground is always spoken of as being linked to things, which is why people ordinarily explain *you* as being linked to things. In fact, *you* can be picked up and subsumed under *wu*.

This differs from the Western explanation. The Being that Westerners talk about when they discuss things cannot be picked up. For example, Plato's Idea, which is brought up in reference to things, does not have creativity. Creation pertains to the Demiurge, which later becomes equivalent to God, or the Creator. The Creator applies the Idea, this form, to matter to create a thing. Thus Plato's Idea belongs to the intelligible world, but the Idea itself has no creativity. That is why when it came to Aristotle he only spoke of form and matter, criticizing Plato as transcendent, while his own universal was immanent. If we speak in reference to things, we must ultimately drop onto the immanent. Plato in fact only abstractly picked it up in his thought. Strictly speaking, it cannot be picked up. Later when Heidegger discussed ontology, he also explained being in the same way.

Here to say we can pick it up is to speak in reference to Dao. Nothing and Being are the double character of Dao. *You* and *wu* combining into one to become the *xuan* is the concrete Dao; only thus can Dao's creativity be restored. If we first speak overall of the orientation of this creativity, would that not have metaphysical meaning? This is the Daoist type of metaphysics. And if we speak of ontology, it would be Daoist ontology, characterized by the discussion of Nothing and Being in a subjective manner. It is precisely this that can create the object that is a creating approach.

The Daoist type of metaphysics and ontology pertains to practice, in the broad meaning of the word practice. The normal use of the word in reference to morals takes an original or narrow meaning. The three teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism all approach their teachings from spiritual cultivation. This is practice in the broad sense of the word. Confucian practice is moral; Buddhist practice is liberating. It is hard to find an appropriate term for Daoism; it should probably be similar to liberating, and adjectives such as untrammled, at ease, non-dependent, roaming are all general descriptions of practice. Because this type of metaphysics takes a subjective approach, not one concerned with existence, we have given it a name, the “vision-based type [*jingjie xingtai*] of metaphysics”. The metaphysics that takes an objective, ontological approach we will call the “being-based type [*shiyou xingtai*] of metaphysics”. These are major divisions. All Chinese metaphysics -- Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism -- has a flavor of vision-based metaphysics. But Confucianism is not only concerned with a vision-based state, it is also concerned with objective reality; Daoism, on the other hand, only gives vision-based type of metaphysics, and this is what determines its systemic difference. Its systemic difference is shown in how it is distinct from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Western philosophy. We should note that this wisdom which differs from other systems is very special.

We are now left with the very last question. We have just said that Nothing and Being constitute the double character of Dao. Joined together, they constitute the *xuan*, and only the *xuan* can restore Dao’s concrete function of procreating the myriad things. Through want-orientation, a thing is actualized, that is, procreated and manifested. Thus want-orientation (*you*) is the mother of the myriad things. Thus, it is not restricted to the subjective life, for even heaven, earth and the myriad things cannot escape this sphere of Nothing and Being. Such being the case, this is then a metaphysics, one that attempts to explain existence, but this explanation still only takes a subjective, practical approach, and is still a vision-based type of explanation. It is still strikingly different from the metaphysics of Western philosophy, which directly, objectively, and approaching from the object, explains objective reality. The difference is a great division and can be easily distinguished. Then let us take another look to see how it differs from Confucianism and Buddhism so that we may make finer distinctions. All three great teachings of China are

for practice, all taking the subjective approach. If so, what accounts for the differences among Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism? Daoism is purely a vision-type of metaphysics, and the distinction between it and Confucianism and Buddhism is quite subtle. How should we understand this distinction? The crux lies in this fourth question, which is that the *xuan* restores the concrete creativity of “Dao’s procreating the myriad things.” To say procreate and create is to first for the sake of expedience make a blanket statement, so as to correspond to epistemology. Epistemology is concerned only with cognizing the object, not with creating the object. We must not explain Dao with an epistemological (horizontal) attitude, but should set the horizontal attitude upright and take the from-the-top-down or vertical approach to express the creativity of Dao.

The relation of the Daoist Dao to the myriad things lies in its being responsible for the existence of the myriad things. Speaking overall, this is also creating. Exactly what form does this creation take? For example, “Dao procreates it, virtue nurtures it.” (Chapter 51). So Dao also procreates! Zhuang Zi also said: “It procreates heaven, procreates earth, inspirits the demons, inspirits the gods.” (“Da Zong Shi [The Great Ancestral Teacher]” chapter). Even heaven and earth must be procreated by Dao, much less the myriad things. *Dao De Jing* also says: “All the myriad things under heaven are born of Being [*you*], Being is born of Nothing [*wu*].” Does this not clearly use the word *sheng*, procreate [give birth]? That is why to use the present-day words of *chuangsheng*, procreate, and *chuangzao*, create, cannot be counted wrong. However, if you wish to advance a step further in understanding, then you will realize that it is not altogether appropriate to use the term create. Even though we use the word *sheng*, procreate, the Daoist explanation of this *sheng* is actually “The procreating that does not procreate.” In Confucianism, it is simply procreate [*chuangsheng*]. The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: “The Way of heaven and earth can be encompassed in one word: In making things it does not waver, and therefore in procreating things it is unfathomable.” That Dao procreates the myriad things, and has a positive procreative function. The Dao of Daoism, strictly speaking, does not have this meaning. Consequently, the procreating that does not procreate becomes a vision-type of metaphysics. The crux of vision-type of metaphysics lies here.

Thus it is appropriate to apply the words creativity and creation to Confucianism, but they cannot be applied to Daoism. At the most we can make a general statement to the effect that they can be responsible for the existence of things, that is, enable things to actualize. "Actualize" is more general; to say "created" would be too concrete. So we should not speak of a creating principle, but should rather call it a principle of actualization. Actualization can take many forms. The Christian God creating the myriad things is one meaning, whereby the mythology of creation is a form of explaining God's creation of the myriad things out of Nothing. Another meaning of actualization is found in the Confucian account of "Heavenly Dao without end" [*tiandao bu yi* 天道不已] procreating the myriad things. That is not creating out of Nothing, but a functional creation of "Speaking in wonder of the myriad things." Both schools of teaching speak of creation, though differently, but both can explain it using the principle of actualization. Buddhism cannot use the word creation at all, for to say nirvana and *dharmakāya* [the Dharma-body] or to say *prajñā* [wisdom] procreating the myriad dharmas [things] would not make sense. Even to say actualizes would be inappropriate. But when we come to Perfect Doctrine [*yuan jiao*], we can at least maintain the necessity of "the existence of dharmas." If we are compelled to say "actualize", it would be the "actualize" of the Tiantai school's statement "When *li* 理 [noumenon, Principle] is present, *shi* 事 [phenomenon, event] actualizes." "Actual" in actualize means necessarily manifest together. Thus no matter whether it is the Christian God, the Confucian Dao [*daoti*], the Daoist *xuan* [the Dark, profound, mysterious], or the Buddhist *prajñā* [wisdom] and *dharmakāya* [Dharma-body], if we speak in blanket terms, the principle of actualization can be applied to them all. But the meaning of "actualization" in each case is different, especially in Buddhism. This is a very subtle question. We will now talk about it in this simple fashion, but later on we will have a chance to discuss it in greater detail.

We can only say in general terms that Daoism discusses the principle of actualization, but we cannot particularize it and say creation. Hence Daoism is a vision-type of doctrine. If we want to say a bit more, add some color to our statement, then should we determine it to be God, or the Confucian Dao, or *prajñā* and *dharmakāya*? The *Dao De Jing* makes no such determination, being content with the one word *xuan*.

In regard to the meaning of this word, I also maintain that Daoism is the most philosophical and formal of philosophies, making no special determination on the principle of actualization. If one determined it to be Brahman, God, or the “Oh, how majestic” mandate of heaven, Dao, etc., these would be regarded by Daoists as a special determination on the principle of actualization, and strictly speaking would have a special want-orientation. Daoism has made no such determination, which is why it is the most philosophical and evinces more than the other philosophies both the universality and, one might say, the emptiness and abstraction of logic. The “procreate” of the *xuan* procreating heaven, earth and the myriad things is “The procreating that does not procreate”. If you understand the procreating that does not procreate, then you will be able to understand everything that has been discussed before. This is very subtle. If you read the *Dao De Jing* a bit you will know, and if you look at it carefully you will see, that this is very deep wisdom.

It is from the procreating-that-does-not-procreate that we can speak of the vision-type of metaphysics. For if it is indeed procreating then that would be a substance-, being-based type of metaphysics. For example, if the Dao of the Confucian “Heaven’s command has no end” actually has the ontological function of procreating the myriad things, it would become an objective reality, a creative reality. The Daoist Dao is Nothing. This Nothing gives rise to a want-orientation. From want-orientation the procreation of the myriad things is explained. Thus we cannot first objectively say that there is something called Nothing in the objective world that is going to procreate the myriad things. Instead we have to pull in and approach it subjectively. We must depend on our mental-state-of-infinite-marvelous-uses to have at any moment a want-orientation, and through the want-orientation explain the existence of objective things. It is moreover a procreating that does not procreate, and is explained negatively. Previously we have said that the want-orientation has no object, and that Nothing itself can generate it. Explaining creativity in this way is easier to understand, and the writing of a composition has been used to explain creation. When *you* and *wu* are merged into one to become the *xuan*, we speak of the manifestation of its operation in concrete life, together with this world. The world cannot be pushed aside temporarily in order that we may talk only of the source of creation. Analytically speaking, although it is of course transcendent, Dao

is also immanent. Only when it is both transcendent and immanent can it be concrete Dao. This is characteristic of all Eastern thought. Since it is immanent, the concrete operation of that Dao must be discussed together with the myriad things [the phenomenal world]. That is, it must be linked with the myriad things being procreated by means of the want-orientation. This then is the procreating that does not procreate. If Dao's creativity is explained to you without linking it to the myriad things and if the want-orientation is explained completely from Nothing, your understanding of it would be only an initial analytical understanding, a temporary expedient. A complete and full explanation would be to say that the *xuan*, which is Nothing and Being joined into one, is the mother, the ground, of the myriad things. All things issue from this, "The *xuan* of the *xuan*, the door to the multitudinous marvels". We can also speak of the want-orientation of Dao without heaven, earth and the myriad things; that would be the creation of the myriad things in the manner of Christianity. Even the Confucians take an approach different from this, for the Confucian creation is one in which "speaking with wonder of the myriad things" operates; hence it also must be explained together with the myriad things. Although the concrete marvelous uses of the Daoist Dao, which is the *xuan*, must also be discussed together with heaven, earth and the myriad things, here we are talking about procreating, where the meaning of creating is not prominent. Moreover, procreating is the procreating that does not procreate. This is the original, real Daoist meaning.

What does the procreating that does not procreate mean? This is a negative explanation of the function of procreating. Wang Bi [226-249]'s annotation grasps the meaning admirably. In Daoism, the activity of procreating is actually explained as things being born and growing of themselves. Why does Daoism say " Dao procreates it, virtue nurtures it?" Why do we also say that it is a negative meaning? There is a wisdom here, a twist. Wang Bi's annotation says: "Not restricting its nature, not blocking its source." In this way, it can arise and grow of itself. In "Not restricting its nature", restricting means to check and control, not moving along with its own nature, but on the contrary to check and control, distort, and damage its own nature, as a result of which it will not be able to live and grow. "Not blocking its source" means to throw open the source and let it flow freely and then it will flow on its own. This is a very great feat on the part of Nothing. If this can come about, then it would be the same as procreating it, although in fact it was

born of itself. This is what is meant by the procreating that does not procreate, which is a negative meaning.

According to this meaning, Daoism is the most anti-communist kind of philosophy, one very much in accord with the spirit of liberalism. Communism is intent on “restricting its nature, blocking its source.” Because everything is blocked dead, the communist society is a closed society. Liberalism has to promote an open society. The Chinese Communists have herded people into people’s communes where no freedom is allowed. If even what they eat is allotted, would not society be stifled to death? This is what is meant by “Restricting its nature, blocking its source”. It is absolutely inimical to Dao, devoid of Dao. This is where Daoism talks about Dao, about *wu wei*, taking no action, being natural, and where it talks about the Nothing and Being of Dao. This is the perspective from which it talks about procreation being the procreating that does not procreate. This represents a huge feat, for people always want to push forward to control and grip. Now you are asked to take a step back. Wouldn’t that be extremely difficult? Taking a step back is the mark of an open society, for once you control and grip, then it is sealed dead. The Communists now [1978] on the Chinese Mainland is simply enabling us to understand the truth of Daoism and to realize that this is the wisest of positions. Daoism long ago saw the why and wherefore of the disasters that have befallen us. This is how those *xuan* statements can be understood.

Liberalism arose to throw off the control and grip and to bring about an “open society”. That is why under a free and democratic political structure, every effort is made to reduce the power of the government and to use citizens as a balance to serve as check and limitation on government. Things are to be done by the people themselves, while government stands on the side to monitor conflicts that grow too intense. This is the democratic spirit of England and America. There are many social organizations in their society, and the whole of society is robust and prosperous. All activities and operations are conducted by the social organizations themselves. According to the political philosophy of Harold Laski [1893-1950], the function of the government is simply one of coordination, to mediate and arbitrate in conflicts. In geometry, co-ordination involves co-ordinates. In ordinary speech, however, we cannot say coordinates. Mr. Zhang

Junmai [1887-1969] translates it into a *pingting zhuoji*平停酌劑 [balancing and judiciously adjusting] function, rendering the meaning elegantly. Co-ordination means that the surrounding social organizations at the four points on the four sides mutually check and balance one another, mutually arrayed against one another. The strict meaning of the word itself is “an oppositional configuration”, where elements are arrayed in opposition, having a structure and making a configuration. The opposite of this is sub-ordination, with the lower subordinated to the higher. Coordination is what *The Great Learning* speaks of as “the Dao of mutual balance [*xieju* 絜矩]”. The function of mutual balance is to enable the various social organizations of society not be in subordinating relationships (though not without mutual relations). Each has its respective functions and tasks, which are well regulated and make up a square. *Xie* [in *xieju*] means regulating; *ju* means a carpenter’s square. Only when regulating makes a square will all-under-heaven be at peace. When there is sub-ordination and all the world is subordinate to Hitler [1889-1945], or to Mao Zedong [1893-1976], how can it be at peace? *The Great Learning* long ago said that we should make the world peaceful. Only if we follow the Way of mutual balance will we be able to make the world peaceful. With sub-ordination, it cannot be peaceful. The function of the internal government of a nation should be to carry out its responsibilities and implement the function of coordination, which means the balancing and judiciously adjusting function by following the Dao of mutual balance. This is the only way to freedom, to an open society. (See my *Zhengdao yu Zhidao* [*The Dao of Polity and the Dao of Governance*], chapter 3).

Daoism is deeply aware of the great evil of controlling and gripping, of “restricting its nature and blocking its source”. That is why it insists on teaching people to step aside. This then is the procreating that does not procreate. Thus Mao Zedong was said to have once asked his English secretary: "If one day the Chinese Communists should fail in achieving their ideals, where would we have failed?" The answer he received was quite good. He was told that the failure would be on two points: not being natural, and not being in accord with human nature. Not being natural would not be in accord with the spirit of Daoism. Not being in accord with human nature is simply “restricting its nature, blocking its source”, controlling, gripping, and imposing too many prohibitions. But this

requires our continued perseverance, for otherwise we will still be helpless against them because their control and grip are too tight. Unless we ourselves are alert, unless we become aware and persevere in helping the world to become aware, we will not be able to bring about their collapse.

We may look upon Daoism as wisdom about human life and applicable to our own everyday life. As a branch of knowledge, it is a vision-type of metaphysics. This lecture has described how we can go about understanding the character of the Daoist system. Most of it is written down in the book *Caixing yu Xuanli* [*Material-Nature and Xuan Principles*]. Take a look at it and then take a look at Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* and you will be able to understand all of this. When the Chinese teach the learning of China they should do so with respect and sincerity, and their explanation of the thought should be accurate. That is why if you wish to understand your own cultural background, you should not confine your life to the space and time of the horizontal cross-section, but should connect your life vertically. This is the real way to enlarge your own life, and this is how you will correspondingly be able to understand the classics. These days people's heads are just a horizontal cross-section and their lives cannot connect to the cultural background. As a result they are unable to connect with and respond to the wisdom of the ancients. Their interpretation of ancient texts is mostly nonsense. It behooves you then to apply yourselves carefully to your studies.

Transcribed by Yi-hsien Hu 胡以嫻

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