

Lecture 7

“The Functional Representation” of Dao

In the last lecture we said that Confucianism explains the vertical vertically, while Daoism and Buddhism explain the vertical horizontally. Today we shall continue the discussion by examining another level in Daoism, namely that the “ontological level” and the “functional level” are not clearly distinguished, or we could say that they are not distinguished one from the other. Why is this so? The main reason is that the Daoist *wu* 無 [have no, there is no, Nothing], is a vision-based “*wu*”. Let us first look at *wu* [have no, there is no, Nothing] as a verb, and then see what it negates. The *Dao De Jing* says:

“Constantly reside in Nothing [*chang wu* 常無] so as to observe its marvels; constantly reside in Being [*chang you* 常有] so as to observe its direction [*yao* 徼][*chang wu yu yi guan qi miao, chang you yu yi guan qi yao* 常無欲以觀其妙，常有欲以觀其徼]”.¹ This is a subjective perspective. Daoism takes this *wu* as ground, as substance. Treated subjectively, this *wu* is a vision-based *wu*, which is to say that it is a functional-level term, a function of the subjective mental state. Taking this state as ground, we may go a step further and regard it as substance, as if it is an objective reality [實有 *shiyou*], as if it signifies “objective reality” and will become a ground on the ontological level, signifying a substance on the ontological level. Actually this is merely a posture.

In Daoism, there is no distinction between the ontological level and the functional level. In other words, Daoism has only the question of how, which also involves other concepts, such as sageliness [*sheng*], wisdom [*zhi*], humanity [*ren*], righteousness/duty [*yi*] and so forth. The *Dao De Jing* has the statements “Abjure sageliness, renounce wisdom”², “Abjure humanity, renounce righteousness”³. Concerning the aspects of sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness, Daoism only has the question of how, not what. This is because “being [*shiyou* 實有]” is not distinguished from “function [*yong* 用]” in Daoism.

“How” is a functional interrogative term, while “what” is an ontological-level interrogative term. When we say “what,” it pertains to “objective reality,” and Daoism does not have this kind of question. This is called confusing the ontological level with

the functional level, confounding them into one, which is why we say they are not distinguished. This involves sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness. For instance, if you ask Daoism “What is Dao?” it can give you an answer, but this answer will not be from the perspective of ontology, but from the functional level. For instance, Dao must be understood through *wu*, “Constantly Have-no [*chang wu*常無] so as to view its marvels, constantly Have [*chang you*常有] so as to view its direction [*Chang wu yu yi guan qi miao, Chang you yu yi guan qi yao* 常無欲以觀其妙，常有欲以觀其礫]”, “Have-no [*wu*, have no, there is no] is the name of the beginning of Heaven and Earth, Have [*you*, have, there is], is the name of the mother of the myriad things [*Wu ming tiandi zhi shi, you ming wanwu zhi mu* 無名天地之始，有名萬物之母].”⁴ Dao is understood through *wu* [have no, there is no] and *you* [have, there is]. Thus, some basic ideas all drop onto the functional [subjective, self-cultivation, soteriological] level.

Previously we explained that “*wu* [Nothing, Non-Being]” and “*you* [Something, Being]” are in Daoism vision-based. They are explained on the functional level so as to reveal the mental states of *wu* [have no, there is no] and *you* [have, there is]. Vision-based is a term used in contrast to being-based. If we look upon Daoist principles as metaphysics then it is a vision-based type of metaphysics. The philosophy we normally understand, notably Western philosophy, is generally a being-based type of metaphysics. This is a major demarcation. Western philosophy from its beginning in Greek philosophy down to the present day generally treats metaphysics from the perspective of “existence” [*cunzai*], which falls under the being-based type. In this respect, the Chinese, especially Daoism, are somewhat more distinctive, the so-called “special character of Chinese philosophy”. Daoism does not take the approach of objective being, but instead takes the approach of the subjective mental state, and therefore it falls under the vision-based type [*jingjie xingtai*境界形態] of metaphysics.

The two terms *jing*境 and *jie*界, coined by Buddhism, came originally from Buddhist texts and did not appear in Chinese texts prior to the pre-Qin period [pre-255 BCE]. Now the term *jingjie*境界 is in common usage. In speaking of *jing* [sphere], Buddhism goes from *jing* to *jie* [boundary, realm,]. Both *jing* and *jie* have substantive meanings. *Jing* refers to an object, and in Buddhism *jing* is external objects. *Jie* means

ground or cause. For instance in the statement “The realm [*jie*] from the time without beginning, all dharma rests on it [*Wu shi shi lai jie, yiqiefa deng yi* 無始時來界，一切法等依]” *jie* means cause or ground.⁵ Once there is such a cause, a sphere is determined, constructing a *jie* [realm]. This *jie* is what is normally understood as world, for example, the world of the Eighteen Worlds. Here world means classification or division. Thus a classification takes shape when there is a cause. In other words, a cause is the basis on which various phenomena are grouped together to become a class, namely a world [*jie*].

The word *jie* [boundary, class] is interchangeable with “cause” and “effect”, where cause and effect are spoken of jointly as a whole. *Jie* understood as cause means that it is understood as a basis, a reason for which. What does it mean when it is understood as effect? When through the cause or the principle these phenomena can be classified together, then this is a consequence. This is what *jie* originally meant in Buddhism.

Jing is an external object. The Weishi [Mere Ideation, Consciousness-only, Yogacara] school propounds that “The *jing* [Skt. *viṣaya*, object] does not leave consciousness [*shi*識, Skt. *vijñāna*]”, “manifesting only according to consciousness.” *Jing* here means object, but it cannot be separate from our consciousness, and not only that but furthermore it is manifested only according to consciousness. Normally we regard the external object [*jing*] as independent. The Weishi teaching, however, makes the external object subjective, making it a “transformation [manifestation] of consciousness” [*shibian*識變]. Some people have seen a similarity between such Weishi doctrine and the subjective idealism of the English philosopher Berkeley [1685-1753]. The two, however, are very different.

Berkeley only says that external objects cannot be separated from consciousness; he did not say they were “only transformations of consciousness” [*wei shi suo bian*唯識所變]. To be is to be perceived, where to be is existence, is *jing* [external objects]. The existent cannot leave our cognitive mind. Apart from our cognitive mind, there is no real existence. However, Berkeley only talks about external objects not being separate from consciousness; he did not say “only transformations of consciousness”. Therefore, Buddhism was in this respect more thorough than Berkeley, and had a stronger psychological flavor than Berkeley.

When *jing* and *jie* are joined to make “*jingjie*”, this term is to be understood from the perspective of the subjective mental state. The degree of cultivation reached [by the subjective mental state], the degree in which the vision of all things rises to a higher plane—that is *jingjie* [mental state]. This “state” then has a subjective meaning, not quite in accord with the original Buddhist meaning. But now since it is understood by everyone, we shall use this ordinary meaning of the term.

The *jingjie* in “*jingjie xingtai* [vision-based type]” is very difficult to translate into English. The *shiyou* in “*shiyou xingtai* [being-based type]” we may translate into being. *Shiyou xingtai* metaphysics is simply metaphysics in the line of being. But *jingjie xingtai* is troublesome, since there is no English equivalent of *jingjie* [also translated as “horizon”]. We may loosely define it as a mental state reached by some kind of practice, for instance, Confucian or Buddhist practice. This mental state can induce a certain “perspective” or “vision” [*zhijian* 知見]. *Jingjie xingtai* metaphysics is metaphysics in the line of vision, namely explaining metaphysics according to the path of a perspective or vision. Through [mental] practice, we acquire a perspective or vision, and through this perspective or vision we acquire a certain view or explanation of the world. The world seen through this view or illuminated by this explanation is not the given, actual world that is commonly spoken of (for instance, the world spoken of by science), but a world viewed on the basis of our practice. A world thus seen is more elevated and differs moreover according to the path and degree of practice. At the same time, the given actual world is determined and immovable; this then is called the determined world. And if this determined world is what Kant [1724-1804] meant by phenomena, then phenomena are that which correspond ultimately to our sensibility and understanding. Hence the determined world is a determined world by virtue of our determined sensibility and determined understanding, for God did not originally create phenomena (according to Kant)⁶. And if our sensibility and understanding are not of a determined (fixed) nature, but are transformable (for instance, consciousness transformed into wisdom), then its transformability is due to the fact that human beings are not determined sentient beings, are not the human beings of anthropology, but can be transformed, in which case phenomena as the determined world may likewise be determined or not determined, may be made existent or non-existent. Then the so-called higher and different worlds all

belong to the level of values, to the spiritual values of practice. And if the ultimate destination of the spiritual values of practice is defined by freedom and being at ease, then the more elevated, different worlds must ultimately be one. Moreover, the myriad things in this higher world are the things of “things-in-themselves”. This then is the ultimate determinant, which is also the absolute reality or being, and not the phenomena that may be made existent or non-existent. Accordingly, that which is commonly called determined is actually not determined, and that which is based on what we previously described as a perspective or vision, and commonly regarded as subjective and not determined,, is ultimately speaking in fact that which is most determined and most objective, the absolutely objective—as well as the absolutely subjective—and that in which subject and object are one.

What this vision-based metaphysics of Daoism says is: Dao must be understood through Nothing [*wu*] as ground [*ben*], as substance [*benti*]. “Nothing is the name of the beginning of heaven and earth, Being is the name of the mother of the myriad things”. This “Nothing” is to be understood from the perspective of our subjective mental state (a subjective mental state not of psychology but of practice). If you wish to understand “Nothing is the beginning of heaven and earth” then you must go on and look at the next statement, “Constantly stay in the state of Nothing in order to observe its marvels”. This statement is made from the perspective of the subjective mental state. This is where the meaning of Daoism is revealed, namely, where the functional and the ontological are not distinguished. The state of Nothing revealed by function is the substance of heaven, earth and the myriad things. Whenever substance is mentioned, we easily think of it as a concept of objective reality. However, you should realize that the Daoist concept of substance is revealed from the subjective, functional mental state; or we may say that it is revealed and placed there as an objective being [*shiyou*實有], as if there is really a substance called “Nothing”. Actually this placement is illusory, is a posture. This kind of metaphysics is completely different from that of the West, which starts from objective existence and then goes on to do analysis, with the purpose of arriving at being. Thus we must understand that the Daoist Nothing is not an ontological concept of Western ontology, but is a state of being void, one, and calm pertaining to the realm of practical cultivation.

When we say that the Nothing of the realm of practice is the ground of the myriad things, the concept of ground leads us to think right away of it as a substance, and because a substance, it is then an objective reality. This is how the concept of reality emerges and moreover becomes the highest reality. Such a reality comes about through the subjective perspective. This is a first-level meaning.

Going a step further and concerning sageliness, wisdom, humanity and righteousness, Daoism has only the question of “how” and not the question of “what”. “How” is a functional concept. For example, Kant’s philosophy frequently poses the question “How is such and such a thing possible?” “How is it possible” is a higher-level question, since it is already possible and the question now is how it is possible.

When we say that Daoism only has the question of “how”, we mean that when it comes to *sheng* (sageliness), *zhi* (wisdom), *ren* (humanity), and *yi* (righteousness), it does not say what *sheng*, *zhi*, *ren*, and *yi* are. Humanity and righteousness are directly moral concepts; sageliness and wisdom are states attained by moral cultivation. The highest goal of moral cultivation is to become a sage [*shengren*]. But Daoism does not first directly affirm the existence of sageliness and wisdom and then later directly explain what sageliness and wisdom are. If it first directly affirms sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness and then explain them, this would be the question of what. The question of what is simply a question of being, a question not found in Daoism.

Daoism merely “mentions” sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness but does not directly affirm or explain them (and of course does not directly deny them). How does Daoism mention them? It mentions them by going along with Confucianism. Confucianism directly affirms humanity, righteousness, sageliness, and wisdom and directly explains them. Confucianism has this question. Direct affirmation and definition indicate directly that they have being.

What about Daoism? Good, you Confucianism teach humanity, righteousness, sageliness, wisdom. Daoism will ask Confucianism how best to realize humanity, righteousness, sageliness, and wisdom, which is a question of “how.”

When Daoism speaks of “Abjure sageliness, renounce wisdom [絕聖棄智，絕仁棄義],” “Abjure humanity, renounce righteousness,”⁷ it is not denying sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness on the ontological level, for such an understanding

would be unfair to Daoism. This “abjure,” “renounce,” “Abjure sageliness, renounce wisdom,” “Abjure humanity, renounce righteousness,” “Abjure learning and there will be no anxiety”⁸ are on the surface of the words as if Daoism is denying sageliness, wisdom, humanity, righteousness, and learning. This understanding would be unfair, would show Daoism as too audacious.

How are we then to understand it properly? Daoism does not deny sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness on the ontological level, but on the functional level. Affirmation in Confucianism is on the ontological level. So it has the question of what. Daoism does not have this question, so it does not talk about “abjure” and “renounce” on the ontological level.

Daoism does not talk about “abjure” or “renounce” on the ontological level. Then does it directly on the ontological level affirm sageliness, wisdom, humanity, righteousness? No. So we can say Daoism does not in principle affirm them, nor in principle deny them. To directly affirm or deny them on the ontological level is to affirm or deny them in principle. In other words, Daoism does not have the question of what.

Daoism merely goes along with Confucianism. You, Confucianism, directly affirm sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness. Good! Then I will ask you a question. How do you realize sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness in the best possible way? What is meant by the best possible way? You can say the best way is through school education, through family education, through customs and habits. According to Daoism, none of this would be the best way. There is also a definite rule as to what is called the best way. And this is where Daoist wisdom appears.

How do you realize in the best possible way the sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness that you speak of? That is a question of “how.” Since it is a question of how, then I can also say that you have tacitly affirmed sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness! It is not a direct affirmation in principle on the ontological level; its affirmation is a functional affirmation. I will give it a term, namely a functional preservation.

Since Daoism poses the question of “how,” the question of “what” is ultimately preserved. Since one must ask how they are to be manifested [actualized], then does this not preserve them? This kind of preserving is a “functional preserving,” and sageliness,

wisdom, humanity, and righteousness can be functionally preserved. Thus the Daoist “abjure” and “renounce” should not be misunderstood. In the past people have reviled Daoism as something heretical on account of the belief that Daoism denied sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness. This kind of understanding will not do. If understood this way, how could Daoism have become a great teaching? I have made use of the ontological level and the functional level to dissolve this kind of misunderstanding. Daoism emphasizes the functional level and not the ontological level. To directly affirm a concept on the ontological level of course requires a direct analysis of the concept. Daoism does not pose this analytical question. Analysis, in its broad meaning, is simply deconstruction. Daoism does not have this question of deconstruction. Daoism does not deconstructively or analytically tell us what sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness are.

Daoism talks about abjuring sageliness, renouncing wisdom, abjuring humanity, renouncing righteousness, and says “When great Dao is lost, then there is humanity and righteousness [大道廢，有仁義].”⁹ Dao is lifted very high, and when we drop onto humanity and righteousness, it is already a bad situation, because it is when Dao is lost that we have humanity and righteousness. Naturally it sounds as if morality is being denigrated. But this is a superficial reading. For when you look at it as a whole, Daoism is not like this. Let us now consider the question of morality separately, and talk about it in philosophical terms. Which is to say, Daoism has mixed up the ontological level and the functional level, has not separated them. When this question touches upon sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness, we say that Daoism does not in principle, or on the ontological level, deny humanity and righteousness, or talk about abjuring and renouncing. It only goes along with the question of what and asks how best to realize them, which is a question of how. “When great Dao is lost, then there is humanity and righteousness [Da dao fei you renyi大道廢有仁義]” means that that is not a humanity and righteousness transformed by Dao, not the best way of realizing humanity and righteousness, that it is only talking about humanity and righteousness on the ontological level.

When Daoism talks about *wu* [Nothing/Non-Being], the *wu* of the visionary mode, and even when it talks about *you* [Being], it does so from the perspective of function.

Heaven, earth, and the myriad things are really where one should speak of *you*. How are the “things” to be preserved? They are to be preserved by means of function.

Being and Nothing are the double character of Dao. Dao has Being and Nothing/Non-Being. This duality of Being and Nothing is revealed through function. Nothing [*wu*] is treated as the ontological substance of the myriad things and as the highest principle. The highest principles of the West, such as “Idea”, earth, water, wind, and fire, atoms, or God, all constitute the Western mode. These explanations are all the being-based type [ontological type] of metaphysics.

Daoism reveals Being and Nothing, and the double character of Dao on the functional level, where the highest is Nothing. Nothing is the ground and this Nothing cannot be further particularized. It cannot be further given a special determination. Nor can it be particularized into an Idea, a God, or a Brahman. Nor, as in materialism, can it be particularized into atoms or earth, water, wind, fire, and so on. This Nothing, which is revealed functionally and through the mental state, is employed to preserve the existence of heaven, earth and the myriad things.

There is in Confucianism direct analysis of sageliness, humanity, wisdom, and righteousness. There is direct affirmation and affirmation in principle; hence this belongs to the ontological level. When the Sage established the teaching, the highest concept was *ren* [humanity, humaneness]. *Ren* procreates Dao, and when extended to the highest pinnacle, *ren* is the Dao that procreates without cease. *Ren* is a concept of morality, and hence is also a concept on the ontological level. *Ren* is treated as substance, meaning a substance on the ontological level. On the other hand, in the double character of Being and Nothing in the Daoist Dao, that Nothing cannot be understood as *ren*, cannot be particularized as *ren*. Daoism treats Nothing as ultimate substance, which is revealed through function, and cannot be particularized. Nothing is originally revealed through function, and the Nothing that is revealed on the functional level is then treated as the ground of the ontological level, these two levels joined together and undifferentiated. This is the Daoist mode.

Confucianism distinguishes the ontological and functional levels. *Ren* is a concept of the ontological level, whether speaking of moral practice or speaking of the generation and transformation of heaven, earth, and the myriad things. According to Confucianism,

the moral order is the cosmic order, and the cosmic order is the moral order. *Ren* is originally moral, being the highest principle by which moral practice is possible. This is the moral order. But there is nothing outside of *ren*, likewise nothing outside of mind, outside of mind there being nothing, and likewise nothing existing outside *ren*. All the myriad things are covered under this moral spirit, *ren*. *Ren* has absolute universality, and when it reaches absolute universality *ren* is cosmic order. This may be said to be a moral metaphysics.

Well, this is then an explanation on the ontological level! Confucianism is centered around the question of what. Because of the question of what, it directly affirms and directly denies. Through the analysis of “what is it” it gives an affirmation or a denial. For example in negating sin, it erects ritual to guard against evil, for only thus can there be any objective right and wrong. These are questions on the ontological level. Are there also functional-level questions in Confucianism? Functionally speaking, there are in the Confucian classics though not numerous, and everyone can find them.

“What does heaven ever say? The four seasons move along, the myriad things are born. What does heaven ever say? [天何言哉，四時行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉。]”¹⁰ The Sage also says: “I wish to be without words.”¹¹ There are also instances in the *Yi Jing* Commentaries [*Yi Zhuan*] such as: “Not to speak and to be truthful lies in virtuous action.[不言而信，存乎德行].” And again: “Change [*yi*] thinks not [*wu si*] and acts not [*wu wei*], for it silently influences and interpenetrates with the world.[*yi wu si ye, wuwei ye, jiran budong, gan er sui tong tianxia* 易無思也，無為也，寂然不動，感而遂通天下之故]”¹² This is speaking on the level of spiritual cultivation. But we cannot on the basis of these few statements claim that the *Yi Jing* Commentaries is derived from Lao Zi [6th? cent. BCE] and Zhuang Zi [c.369-286 BCE]. Nor can we say that when Daoism speaks of *wu* it comes from the Confucian *Yi Jing*. All this is wrong. The *Yi Jing* Commentaries came later. The *Analects* is a record of the words and deeds of Confucius [551-479 BCE], but before the *Analects* some Confucian classics also spoke of *wu*, for example the *Book of Poetry* [*Shi Jing*] and the *Book of History* [*Shu Jing*]. The *Book of Poetry* says: “Heaven above carries [the world] without [*wu*] sound without [*wu*] smell [*Shang tian zhi zai, wu sheng wu xiu* 上天之載，無聲無臭]”. King Wen [Wen Wang

[] [12th cent.BCE] “Without [*wu*] giving utterance to loud words, first reached the shore. [*Bu da sheng yi se, dan xian deng yu an* 不大聲以色，誕先登於岸]” It is most prominent in the *Book of History*, and most often quoted. The “Great Plan [Hong Fan]” chapter says: “Without [*wu*] contriving to love good, follow the way of the king; without [*wu*] contriving to hate evil, follow the road of the king. Without [*wu you*無有] slanting, without [*wu you*] favoring, the king’s way is great. Without favoring, without slanting, the king’s way is level [*Wu you zuo hao, zun wang zhi dao, Wu you zuo e, zun wang zhi lu. Wu pian wu dang, wangdao dangdang, wu dang wu pian, wangdao pingping* 無有作好，遵王之道，無有作惡，遵王之路。無偏無党，王道蕩蕩，無党無偏，王道平平]”¹³ “Without slanting, without favoring” is somewhat simpler, unlike the profundity [*xuan*] of the Daoist *wu*. But “Without contriving to love good, without contriving to hate evil [*wu you zuo hao, wu you zuo e*]” is already very profound. These seem to smack of Daoism, because they are very similar to Daoist utterances.

Speaking on the ontological level, we must affirm loving good and hating evil, as when Mencius [Mengzi, 371-289 BCE] says: “Shame and dislike are in all men [*Xiu wu zhi xin, ren jie you zhi* 羞惡之心，人皆有之].” The *Book of Poetry* says: “The natural disposition of man is to love excellent virtue [*Min zhi bing yi, hao shi yi de* 民之秉彝，好是懿德]”. This sense of loving good [*hao shan*好善] and hating evil [*wu e*惡惡] is in all men. The *Analects* says: “Only the person who is *ren* can love [*hao*] or hate [*wu*] another.” Here love (good) and hate (evil) are paired. “Shame and dislike” speaks of righteousness, stressing “dislike of evil” [*wu e*] but also implying “love of good [*hao shan*].” “Love excellent virtue” stresses “love of good” but also implies “dislike of evil.” In sum, they speak of loving good and hating evil.

Wang Yangming [1472-1528] in four sentences teaches:

Without good, without evil, is the mind-in-itself;

Having good, having evil, is the activity of volition;

Knowing good and evil of the activity of volition is *liangzhi*[one’s moral ability;

Doing good, removing evil is the rectification of our actions.¹⁴

Wu shan wu’e xin zhi ti 無善無惡心之體，

You shan you e yi zhi dong 有善有惡意之動，

Zhi shan zhi e shi liangzhi 知善知惡是良知，
Wei shan qu e shi gewu. 為善去惡是格物。

Liu Jishan makes four other statements:

Having good, having evil, is the action of the mind.
Loving good, hating evil, is the stillness of the will.
Knowing good, knowing evil is *liangzhi*.
Ultimate good, no evil, is the law of things.
You shan you e xin zhi dong 有善有惡心之動，
Hao shan wu e yi zhi jing 好善惡惡意之靜，
Zhi shan zhi e shi liangzhi 知善知惡是良知，
Zhi shan wu e shi wu ze 至善無惡是物則。

Moral practice is concerned with “loving good, hating evil”; hence loving good and hating evil must be affirmed. That this affirmation, which belongs to the ontological level, runs through all of Confucianism over three, four thousand years down to the present no one can dispute.

However, the statements in the *Book of History*, “Without contriving to love good,” “without contriving to hate evil,” “the king’s way is broad,” “the king’s way is level,” are expressed beautifully and quoted frequently. They consist of adding to the loving and hating of the ontological level the mention of “Without contriving to love good,” “without contriving to hate evil,” which are statements on the functional level.

There is love [of good] and hatred [of evil], which is affirmed on the ontological level. But if we want to reveal this love and hate, then only the love of “without contriving to love good” and the hate of “without contriving to hate evil” are good. That is the best way of manifesting love of good and hatred of evil. Clearly there are two levels here. “Shame and dislike are in all men.” “It is the people’s natural disposition to love excellent virtue.” “Only the person who is *ren* can love or hate another.” These all affirm love [good] and hate [evil] in principle. For men not to know love [of good] and hatred [of evil] would be a disaster. Love [*hao*好] and hate [*wu*惡] in Confucianism always means to love good and to hate evil, and not the ordinary to like or dislike. To like and dislike do not have any moral significance. For example, if you like black tea

and I like coffee, this sort of like and dislike belongs to psychology or to physiology and not to morals. The Confucian love [*hao*] and hate [*wu*] refer to morally loving good and hating evil.

“Not contriving to love good” means you must not have a contrived love, which is to say you should have the love of “not contriving to love the good.” Only the love of not contriving to love is the good “love.” And hate? You should have the hate of “not contriving to hate,” for only that is the good “hate.” Only when you have the “hate” of “not contriving to hate” can you accomplish this “hate.” Only when you have the “love” of “not contriving to love” can you accomplish this “love.” That is why not contriving to love and not contriving to hate are statements going above the ontological level and belonging to the functional level. Clearly there are two levels here that should not be overlooked. People tend to confound them.

The “*zuo*” [make, contrive] in *zuo hao* [contrive to love] and *zuo wu* [contrive to hate] means artifice, and artifice means the intentional and not spontaneous. Once there is *zuo hao* and *zuo wu*, then there is intentional love of good and intentional hatred of evil. Once there is intent, the mind will not be level [*ping*], which, according to Wang Yangming, will give rise to selfish thoughts and selfish intentions. Even if it is not apparent to the ordinary person, and perhaps this selfishness is very subtle, yet it is still selfishness. If artifice is removed, then you have what Daoism calls the spontaneous [*ziran* · self-so, natural], and this is the starting point for the discussion of spontaneity [*ziran*].

“Without contriving to love,” “without contriving to hate” do not mean that you should not have the concept of loving good and hating evil. They do not indicate a denial of such love and hate. Clearly there are two levels here. The love and hate of the ontological level must be affirmed, and should be actualized in the best possible way. According to the "Hong Fan" chapter of the *Book of History*, they should be actualized in the way of “without contriving to love good”, “without contriving to hate evil.”

One could say that the entire wisdom of Daoism is found here. On the other hand, we cannot say that the wisdom of Daoism came from reading the "Hong Fan" chapter or say that Daoism grew out of the Confucian classics. This is the method of the textual scholar who searches the text and pulls out sentences, hoping to discover the source of a

school from the language; but we cannot say this. Even if certain sentences and phrases bear a superficial resemblance to, or match, ones in the *Book of History*, we cannot say this.

Confucianism also has questions of the functional level, but it makes a clear distinction between the functional level and the ontological level. Ontology is explained on the ontological level, not on the functional level. Daoism, which is just the opposite, does not explain ontology on the ontological level, but on the functional level. Daoism leans completely towards the functional side, making this aspect its forte. On the basis of this aspect alone it can qualify as a great doctrine and deserves to be called a school of thought, the Daoist school. The doctrine of the Sage [Confucius] is not without this kind of thought, but he does not treat *wu* as ground, for the ground lies in *ren*, which is a direct, ontological-level term.

Daoism asks a question: How do you realize sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness in the best way? What is the best way? Generally the answer is through family education, school education, social education, and so forth. We have them every day but they are not the best, the ultimate, way. You can explain with the analytical method, and come up with many different ways, but it will still be difficult to come up with a perfect, satisfactory way.

According to the Daoist method, the best way is the way of “affirming as if negating.”¹⁵ “Affirming as if negating” [*zheng yan ruo fan* 正言若反] is a famous statement in the *Dao De Jing*, one belonging to the functional level. “Affirming as if negating” implies paradox [*guici* 詭辭, *diaogui* 弔詭]. It is dialectical paradox.

We will divide the so-called best way into two kinds. One is the analytical method, in which various ways are proposed analytically, for example education, improvement of the environment, and so on. What the analytical way proposes is only a strategy, a method, and this belongs to the sphere of knowledge. The second way is to affirm as if negating. This kind of paradox does not belong to the sphere of knowledge. This is not an analytical way of speaking but rather belongs to wisdom. That is why the *Dao De Jing* does not propose ways on the knowledge level; it does not use the analytical method. To affirm as if negating is not an analytical method but rather dialectical paradox. Thus in the view of Daoism, the best way is determined to be paradox on the wisdom-level.

This level is precisely the wisdom-level method indicated by the “without contriving to love good,” “without contriving to hate evil” of the *Book of History* (*Shang Shu*尚書). Only this is what is meant by “the king’s way is level.”

For example, what is the king’s way? You may use the analytical method and explain that the Three Dynasties of Xia [2205?-1766? BCE], Shang [1766?-1122? BCE], and Zhou [1122?-255 BCE] belong to the Dao of kings, and the time before belongs to the Dao of emperors. The Three Kings exemplified the Dao of kings while the Five Emperors exemplified the Dao of emperors [*di*, also translated gods]. The Chinese people yearned for the Dao of kings and Dao of emperors. By the time of the Three Dynasties the Dao of kings had declined, and this was a time of “small prosperity” [*xiao kang*] and “making the empire his own household” [*jia tianxia*]. But in reality the Three Dynasties were fairly decent, which is why it was described with the term “the Dao of kings.” Speaking of the Dao of kings analytically, there were aspects which qualified it to be the Dao of kings, a point which Huang Lizhou [1610-95] explained very well. The *Mingyi Daifang Lu* [*Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*] says that up through the Three Dynasties there was law, after the Three Dynasties there was no law. Up through the Three Dynasties it was a time of storing the empire in the empire. It was an open society when wealth was stored in the people. All the laws of society were laws that could stand upright objectively, not laws created at the whim of Mao Zedong [1893-1976]. That is why *Mingyi Daifang Lu* says that after the Three Dynasties there was lawlessness, selfishness, and “making the empire one’s own household”. Those laws were only tools to assist the rulers. Huang Lizhou’s observations were most penetrating. Up through the Three Dynasties there was law, and the empire was stored in the empire. This was an open society. After the Three Dynasties, or perhaps starting from the First Emperor [Qin Shihuang, r. 221-209 BCE] of the Qin Dynasty, it was “storing the empire in the basket,” storing the empire in my own basket.¹⁶

These observations of Huang Lizhou on the Dao of kings are an analytical, formal way of speaking. In the analytical way of speaking, one can lay out the matter item by item, aspect by aspect. This is the language of the ontological level. When the "Hong Fan" chapter said “Without contriving to love good, without contriving to hate evil, without slanting without favoring, the way of the king is level, the way of the king is

great,” this is language of the functional level. This pertains to the operation of the sage’s wisdom. Merely a great quantity of analysis without this sort of wisdom in operation will still result in failure to preserve the empire. Even if you wish to store the empire in the empire, in the end those men of ambition will still store it in their own baskets. Here we can likewise see the distinction between two levels. What is the best way of actualizing [sageliness, wisdom, humanity, and righteousness]? Daoism immediately realized that this was the best method, and so it did not speak analytically. Speaking analytically would only add trouble. It directly took the functional approach, approaching from the perspective of “without contriving to love good, without contriving to hate evil.” This is what is called wisdom.

“Without contriving to love good, without contriving to hate evil”, which is “affirming as if negating”, is a paradox. What is the meaning of affirming as if negating? For example, to speak of love and hate is to affirm them. “Not contriving to love good, not contriving to hate evil”—is this not negating that affirmation of love and hate? This negating serves precisely to reveal love of good and hate of evil truly and naturally. This love and hate is the direct affirmation [*zhengyan* 正言] Lao Zi speaks of, an affirmation that is disclosed functionally, not analytically. To disclose this affirmation through the reverse, is this not a paradox?

Guici [paradox] means strange, weird speech. The Westerner’s paradox can be from logic, as for example, in Russell [1872-1970]’s *Principia Mathematica* there is the logical paradox. The Daoist paradox, however, is not a logical paradox but a dialectical paradox.

In Lao Zi’s language, the dialectical paradox is simply “affirming as if negating.” The statements in Hegel [1770-1831]’s dialectics, for example the opposition of thesis and antithesis, the negation of a negation, the reconciliation of contradictions, all these methods existed in Lao Zi [6th? cent. BCE] long ago, though not in Hegel’s terminology. However, in Lao Zi they are expressed in a very lively fashion, and if they are spread out, they are simply that terminology of Hegel’s. This then is dialectical paradox.

Such paradoxes abound in the *Dao De Jing*. This *gui* 詭 [weird, as in *guici* 詭辭] is what Zhuang Zi [c.369-c.286 BCE] referred to when he said: “Those words of his are named paradox [*diaogui*].” *Diaogui* is simply *guijue* 詭譎 [cunning], *diao* having no

meaning here. What is the meaning of “Those words of his are named paradox?” It follows from the previous statement, “My saying that you were dreaming is also a dream.”¹⁷ Is that not cunning [*diaogui*]? Everything in practical life is dreaming and my saying that you are dreaming is also a dream, including myself in it. Isn’t that contradictory? If you say others are dreaming, you at least should not be dreaming. It is inadmissible in logic for me to say that you are dreaming and I am dreaming too. Logically it becomes a contradiction, a vicious circle. Russell used his theory of types, an analytic approach, to solve this problem. “All men are liars” is not a lie when the speaker is not included in the “all” of “all men are liars.” He is not on the same level as “all”, for there is the distinction that “all” does not include himself. This is to approach it logically. Logic does not allow that kind of circularity.

But in the dialectical paradox, there is this circularity, where the speaker himself is included. This is a self-negation and a contradiction. Strictly speaking, however, it is not a contradiction and a logical contradiction cannot be applied to it. It is not a contradiction but a paradox, something odd and abnormal. Logic is normal; paradox is abnormal. That is why [*Zhuang Zi*] "Equalizing Things" chapter says: “My saying that you were dreaming is also a dream.’ These words of his are called a paradox [*diaogui*].” *Diaogui* is a very apt term for translating the Western word paradox.

There are two kinds of paradox, logical paradox and dialectical paradox. The logical paradox is normal. Applying logical inference to it will definitely produce a certain kind of proposition, called a tautology. “Affirming as if negating” indicates a dialectical paradox. And precisely because it does not give us knowledge it leads us to the realm of wisdom.

There are numerous such statements in the *Dao De Jing*. For example: “He who puts himself behind advances himself. He who forgets himself preserves himself.”¹⁸ This is simply a paradox. To put yourself in front, you must go through the negation of putting yourself in front and put yourself behind. If you regard words as a kind of power technique, then they are a power technique. If you regard them as a kind of wisdom, then they are a kind of wisdom. We are now treating them as wisdom, not as power technique. When intriguers and politicians manipulate them, they are regarded as power technique. For example, Mao Zedong on the eve of launching the Great Cultural

Revolution [1966-76] hurried to Hangzhou to convalesce, pretending to be near death. That is precisely what is meant by “Put yourself behind and you will be in front.” Liu Shaoqi [1898-1969], who had no inkling of such power tactics, proved the dupe, which means Liu was still a scholar.

“Put himself behind and he will be in front. Forget himself and he will be preserved.” Here the word “forget” is most important. It is through this word “forget” that Daoism reveals “affirming” [*zhengyan*]. Forget himself and he will be preserved. We all wish that we ourselves may be preserved. How are you to ensure that you can be preserved? The best way is to forget yourself. If you are preoccupied with yourself day in and day out, the result will be that you will on the contrary not be able to preserve yourself. How can your consciousness focus on your whole body day after day? Can your consciousness completely focus on the whole physical you? Do you know how many cells our body has? None of us can see our own hair, for we have to look at a mirror to see that. Some people who believe in the omnipotence of science go to the doctor for a physical check-up at the slightest indisposition. They are turned this way and that and even if they had no ailment to begin with, it will give them one.

The Daoist wisdom is the wisdom of the word “forget” [*wang*]. The saying “Fishes forget one another in stream and lake, men forget one another in the art of Dao [*Yu xiangwang hu jianghu, ren xiangwang hu daoshu* 魚相忘乎江湖，人相忘乎道術]”. comes from Zhuang Zi¹⁹. Fishes in the stream, lake, and sea may forget one another. You will not look after me and I will not look after you. “Men forget one another in the art of Dao” means that only in times when the art of Dao prevails can men forget one another. When fishes are not in the stream, lake, or sea they cannot forget one another, for I will spit a mouthful of water for you and you will spit a mouthful of water for me so that we may drag out our last breath. If a life has to depend completely on a mouthful of water then that will be perilous indeed. Zhuang Zi’s illustration is a very good one. Only when men forget one another in the art of Dao can they live out their natural years and be free of all terrors. Our age is one that is destitute of the art of Dao, which is why no one is able to forget the others and everyone harasses one another, I harassing you and you harassing me. To be antagonistic is to harass, and sometimes to take care of is also harassment. Excessive attention is disagreeable, like the emperors of the past who had too

many attendants and could not enjoy freedom and ease. As soon as they stepped into court they would be watched by the numerous civil and military officials. And as soon as they retired from court they would be followed by a host of people. The emperor never had a moment of freedom, and this is where “forget one another” is needed. Forgetting one another is great wisdom.

What does “forget” in “Forget himself and he will be preserved” refer to? It refers to the *wu zuo* [not contriving, without artifice] of “Without contriving to love, without contriving to hate.” This “forget” means to dissolve that artifice. The Chinese can usually appreciate this kind of wisdom. By extension, we can say: “By intentionally doing good [*wei shan*], even that good will not be rewarded. By unintentionally doing evil [*wei o*], even that evil will not be punished [有心為善，雖善不賞，無心為惡，雖惡不罰].” *Zaozuo*, artifice, means intentionally doing good. Doing good is what should be done, but as soon as it is intentional [*youxin*], then there is selfish intent, which is selfishness. The *youxin* [having a mind, mindful, intentional] in “intentionally doing good” is exactly the *zuo* [contrive], of “Without contriving to love, without contriving to hate” of the *Book of History*. As soon as there is intent, then there is selfishness, what Kant calls conditional and not categorical. This is an ordinary principle and easy to understand.

Daoist wisdom is concentrated in this “*wu*” [without, Nothing] of the functional level. If we think of the statements in the first chapter of *Dao De Jing*, “Nothing [*wuming*無名, the nameless] is the beginning of heaven and earth; Being [有名, the named] is the mother of the myriad things” along the lines of ontological metaphysics, it would not be appropriate and the real meaning would be lost. The true meaning must be determined from the standpoint of function, and only then can we proceed to appreciate the vastness of the meaning. Behind it there is the meaning of a “vision” [*jingjie*], a vision on the functional level.

Daoism reveals *wu* [Nothing] from the perspective of function. In other words, it treats Nothing as ground, as substance [*benti*], and from this speaks of metaphysics, of Dao procreating the myriad things, this procreating being the procreating that does not procreate. Although it is stated that “Dao procreates it, virtue nurtures it,”²⁰ this procreating does not affirm a Dao-substance on the ontological level, and from the

creativity of this substance procreating the myriad things. Daoism approaches the problem from the functional level, passing through such wisdom as “forget,” in other words through stepping aside, so as “not to block its source, not to repress its nature [不塞其源，不禁其性]”. For the myriad things will spontaneously and naturally arise, grow, and consummate. This is equivalent to “Dao procreates it,” which is of course a negative meaning, but it will suffice. Consequently Daoism speaks of “Without taking action [*wu wei*, without artifice] there is good rule [無為而治].” This is very high wisdom. Some people say: “Without taking action there is no rule.” In this case, your “without taking action [*wu wei*]”, is not the Daoist “without taking action.” Your “without taking action” is somnolence. “Without taking action there is good rule” is of course wisdom of the highest order. Behind it there are numerous principles buttressing it.

This example can also be used to determine that Daoism treats the functional level as the ontological level. Of course this interpretation would not fit the Confucian classics. It would not be totally wrong, but it would not be correct. That is why it was inappropriate for Wang Bi [226-249] to base his interpretation of the *Yi Jing* on the *xuan* metaphysical principles of Daoism.

Yi Jing, a Confucian classic, has the problem of two levels, the ontological level and the functional level. Daoism does not have a substance that is treated directly on the ontological level. Daoism treats something on the vision-based level as the ground. If we use this to interpret those crucial statements in the *Yi Jing*, it would be a mistake, or at least would be insufficient, for it would fail to reveal the meaning of Confucianism. For example, the *Tuan* 爻 definition of the *qian*[creative principle, heaven] hexagram says: “Great indeed is the *qian* first principle, the myriad things beginning here.” Wang Bi is all wrong when he explains this through the *xuan* principles of Daoism. You will understand this by reading [my book] *Material-Nature and Xuan Principles* [*Cai Xing Yu Xuan Li*]. “Returning he sees the mind of heaven and earth” is a Confucian principle and may be seen at the *fu* [return] hexagram. This “mind” is not the functional-level mind of “Without contriving to love good, without contriving to hate evil”. It is an entity on the ontological level, a substantial term. Since Wang Bi is unable to explain these points, he fails to bring out Confucian principles. He only makes general statements employing the

Daoist *wu*, which is empty of content and belongs to the functional level. This Daoist *wu* is devoid of content and no special determination can be applied to it. It is simply *wu* [Nothing], and it is enough that it is revealed on the functional level.

If we are to apply a special determination to *wu*, then we must, outside of the functional-level *wu*, affirm that there is a being [*cunyou*] on the ontological level, and analyze it frontally. Because Daoism does not have questions of this sort, its *wu* cannot be particularized, cannot be particularized as *ren*, or particularized as heaven's command without end, or as the Christian God, or as the Indian Brahma. All this is impossible.

As to understanding the meaning of this level, all it requires is to go along with Daoist thought and do a little bit of corresponding self-cultivation. We must approach it from the functional level, forget all that artifice, and dissolve away all the artificial and the unnatural. Once that is dissolved what is left is a vast void, a being void, one, and calm, where there is Nothing. This then is void [*xu*], is Nothing [*wu*]. It is from this place that *wu* is revealed and no special definition is applied to it. Daoism simply takes this Nothing as its substance; hence it has only one level, the functional level, treating the functional level as the ontological level. Strictly speaking, however, it takes the Nothing that is revealed on the functional level as the ground (Nothing is treated as substance and therefore regarded as reality). And this ground is used to preserve the existence of heaven, earth and the myriad things, in other words, using Nothing to preserve Being. (Being and things are one, and refer to things.)

During the Wei-Jin period [CE 220-420] Pei Wei wrote *Chong You Lun* [*Essay In Praise of Being*]. Because Daoism exalted Nothing/Non-Being [*wu*], Pei Wei thereupon exalted Being [*you*]. His *In Praise of Being* is deplorable. It cannot refute the Daoist Nothing because he did not understand the meaning of the Daoist *wu*. He did not as yet reach this level.

The Nothing [*wu*] that is revealed functionally is called “*xuan* wisdom” which is to speak from the subjective aspect. From the objective aspect, it is “*xuan* principles.” Nothing [*wu*] can penetrate both aspects. It can be seen as wisdom, called *xuan* wisdom, or as principles, called *xuan* principles. *Xuan* means deep and profound. How do we define “*xuan*?” It is to be defined through “affirming as if negating”, namely, through dialectical paradox. *Xuan* cannot be regarded in blanket terms. People generally have an

aversion to the “*xuan*,” calling it the “diabolical *xuan* metaphysics,” complaining of its obscurity. In fact, it is very clear. You cannot see clearly because it is deep and profound.

It is only because people these days have fixed science as the place of truth and do not acknowledge this level that it is referred to in such derisive terms as “diabolical *xuan* metaphysics,” which is a sign of the shallowness of our time. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, *xuanxue* [literally, Dark Learning] was held as the highest metaphysics and the highest wisdom. As wisdom, it is wisdom of the highest kind. As a discipline, it is *xuan* metaphysics. We should think of this discipline as Kant did, which is to say we should regard metaphysics as a *xuewen* [a branch of learning], as a science. How is this possible? It is *xuewen* (science) in this sense of the word..

We shall look at this body of wisdom as a branch of learning. The science Kant spoke of is not what is now called natural science, but science in the broad sense of the word. By looking at it as a science, we mean to say that Daoism is not just a natural disposition or inclination. Regarded as a natural disposition, metaphysics has appeal for all peoples, except that among different peoples it appears in different guises. However, a natural disposition cannot make up a science. For it to become a science, it must advance a step further, the science must have head and tail, a beginning and an end, with the principles systematically laid out. Only then can it be a science. This is science in the broad sense of the word, best translated with the Chinese term *xuewen* [branch of learning], not with the Chinese *kexue* [science]. The modern person will say at once: “How can you call this science?” The minute people talk of science nowadays they mean the natural sciences or the social sciences. Thus people will say: “You are clearly speaking of *xuan* metaphysics. How could it be science [*kexue*]?” So better translate it as a branch of learning [*xuewen*]. The German *Wissenschaftslehre* is also *xuewen*, science, in the broad sense of the word.

Daoism can also be regarded as a body of wisdom. This wisdom is completely “immediate.” It appears immediately, without a fixed track. “The marvels of its operation resides in a thought,” describes this wisdom. That this wisdom is of the immediate is to be understood completely from the functional level. Only when it can be

objectified can it become a *xuewen* that can be made public, transmitted, and communicated.

This kind of *xuan* wisdom, *xuan* principles, is to be understood from the starting point of the Nothing that is revealed functionally. From this point of view, it bears much resemblance to the Buddhist *prajñā*, which is also wisdom. *Prajñā* is based on what Buddhism calls “emptiness” [*kong*, Skt. *sūnyatā*], and is explained through “conditioned-origination [*pratītya-samutpāda*] substance-empty [*dharma-sūnyatā*]” [*yuan qi xing kong*]. This *prajñā* is wisdom, which we call “emptiness-wisdom [*kong zhi*],” “emptiness-insight [*kong hui*].” Putting aside emptiness-principles and looking at the aspect of wisdom, Buddhism and Daoism are completely identical in method and mode. From the perspective of what we have distinguished as the functional level and the ontological level, Daoism’s main strength lies in its functional level of *xuan* wisdom and *xuan* principles, these defining it as a school. Buddhism, however, is not only confined to wisdom. Aside from the wisdom level, Buddhism also has analytical ontological-level questions, that is, in Hinayana and Mahayana there are both levels. If we leave the ontological level in Buddhism aside and look at its functional level alone, its method and mode of presentation is similar to Daoism, except that the content is different.

In what method are they similar? In paradox. The *prajñā* sūtras [wisdom sūtras, *prajna-paramita* sutras] are particularly rich in paradoxes, as are Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Whenever paradox in Buddhism is discussed, the *prajñā* sūtras are always given as representative. Paradox cannot be understood analytically. Paradoxes can only be approached as non-analytical *prajñā*, just as Daoist paradoxes can only be understood as *xuan* wisdom. This should be noted.

Xuan wisdom and *prajñā* wisdom being similar in the mode in which they are revealed, the *xuan* wisdom and *xuan* principles of Daoism were able to serve as a bridge through which China could absorb Buddhism. By using the *xuan* metaphysics of the Wei-Jin period as a precursor, China was able to absorb Buddhism naturally and quickly and without any barrier. That is why the first to be absorbed was the *prajñā* aspect since this aspect matched *xuan* metaphysics, and could naturally be absorbed. But the analytical aspect did not find a good match in China. The Chinese could very easily appreciate the paradoxes of the *prajñā* sūtras, but could not always appreciate the

doctrines of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, especially the voluminous analyses of Hinayana teaching. But the Chinese could very naturally accept the teachings on *prajñā* because of Daoism.

Commonality [convergence] and spontaneity are two of the characteristics of a science [*xuewen*]. Daoism was indigenous to China and not derived from Buddhism. However, neither can we say that Buddhist doctrines were derived from Daoism, such assertions being meaningless. Looking at the process of the Chinese absorption of Buddhism, we find that the *xuan* metaphysics of Daoism came first. During the time of Wang Bi [226-249], Xiang Xiu [c.221-c.300], and Guo Xiang [d.312 CE], the study of Buddhist *prajñā* had not yet entered China, but they had already much earlier developed *xuan* wisdom. It was only with Kumārajīva [d. 413 CE] that Buddhist *prajñā* metaphysics was introduced and developed in China. Consequently we cannot say that such masters of *xuan* metaphysics as Wang Bi, Xiang Xiu, and Guo Xiang came out of Buddhism. Since *xuan* metaphysics came before, can we say that *prajñā* metaphysics was derived from *xuan* metaphysics? No we cannot. China subsequently also had an extreme sinocentrism which maintained that those foreign monks were ignorant men and that those subtle principles all came from Daoism. Wang Chuanshan[1619-1692], an extreme advocate of Chinese nationalism, was one of those who held this opinion. He was not talking about scholarship but indulging in emotionalism when he said that the foreign monks from India were barbarians. That is unacceptable.

It is meaningless to say that *xuan* metaphysics came from *prajñā*, or that *prajñā* came from *xuan* metaphysics, or to say that Lao Zi came from the *Yi Jing* or the *Yi Jing* came from Lao Zi. It is equally meaningless to say that the Neo-Confucians [*lixuejia* Rationalists] came from Buddhism and Lao Zi. Such shallow observations come out of ignorance about the difficulties of intellectual effort and about spontaneity and commonality in thought. Commonality is found in human knowledge and in the human mind.

Since Daoism does not have the ontological level, you might call it simple, and indeed it is very simple, because the analytically explained ontological level is where you get complexity. Whenever controversy occurs on the ontological level, it does not involve Daoism, because the latter's approach is the functional level. So Confucianism,

Buddhism, and Daoism all say something on this level. For example, when we talk about love and hate on the ontological level, and must define what we mean by love and what by hate and where they differ from what we ordinarily refer to as like and dislike, we expend a huge amount of words in analysis, with the result that the more we analyze the more difficulties we get into, including controversy. It is different with the functional level. As soon as you say “without contriving to love, without contriving to hate”, all that I need is a little nudge in the right direction in order to realize the meaning--no complications here.

Daoism is comparatively simple and moreover is concerned with this one meaning. It does not particularize “*wu* [Nothing]” into anything. From this angle, it is the most philosophical, the most universal of doctrines because it is a doctrine that all can share in understanding and discussing. But in the subsequent development of Chinese philosophy, Confucianism began to regard Buddhism and Daoism as forbidden and taboo. From the Song [960-1280] scholars onwards, this taboo grew and has now lasted for more than a thousand years, with the result of constricting our minds.

Because of the taboo against Buddhism and Daoism, those who taught the Dao of the Sage have shrunk from discussing this “Nothing” [*wu*]. Whenever you mention this “*wu*,” they will say that you come from Buddhism and Daoism. Actually the Sage can also speak of *wu* [there is not, have not, without, Nothing], and to speak of *wu* does not necessarily mean that you come from Lao Zi. Formerly when Lu Xiangshan[1139-93] and Zhu Zi [1130-1200] argued about the *Taiji Tushuo* [*Essay on the Diagram of the Great Ultimate*] it was because the *Taiji Tushuo* said that “*wuji*”[the Without Ultimate, Limitless, Infinite] comes from Lao Zi and is not the Dao of the Sage. After the rise of Zhu Zi the taboo intensified. Scholars dared not discuss any passage that mentioned *wu* or that were at all esoteric and subtle, for that was considered to be from Chan [Zen]. Thus Buddhism and Daoism became a great taboo. This had a virulent effect on the development of Confucian thought, for scholars dared not speak of anything that was in the least degree sophisticated or profound. The truth of the Sage is naturally as prosaic as your ordinary meal of rice, which is perfectly fine, but it is at the same time extremely sophisticated and treads the Mean. So it is not to say that beyond the three meals a day there is nothing else.

If we use the plain and honest as an excuse to place a taboo on the esoteric and profound, wouldn't that make us desiccated? How can we establish a doctrine by promoting truth in a way that makes it ever more withered and desiccated until finally all lustre is lost? If you are clear on this point, then later on when you see this kind of statement you won't get muddled. Whether it is Buddhism or Daoism is determined from the ontological level. That does not mean that whenever *wu* is mentioned it has to be Buddhism and Daoism. The taboo stems from Daoist *xuan* wisdom and Buddhist *prajñā*. Especially with Zhu Zi, whenever he saw statements along these lines, he would decide they were Chan and not the Dao of the Sage, and forthwith reject them. The upshot was that he cramped himself and limited his resources. That is why this taboo must be lifted.

To lift the taboo requires that we first distinguish the functional-level statements from ontological-level statements. Functional-level statements can be made by anyone and is not a matter of who is derived from whom. To use a Buddhist expression, they belong to the universal common ground [*gongfa*共法]. The concept of *prajñā* [*bore*] is not a universal common ground; otherwise why is it rendered as *bore* [a transliteration] and not translated as *zhihui* [wisdom]? *Prajñā* is determined by the doctrine of “dependent-origination substance-empty”, which is a special wisdom of Buddhism. Daoism and Confucianism do not teach in this way. Although *prajñā* is not a universal common ground, the paradoxical method of presenting *prajñā* is a universal common ground. The word “forget” in Zhuang Zi’s “Fishes forget one another in stream and lake; men forget one another in the art of Dao” is also a universal common ground that everyone can discuss. The Sage can also discuss it, for “Without [*wu*] contriving to love [good], without [*wu*] contriving to hate [evil]” is simply to forget, namely to be without artifice. This is simply the Daoist *wu* [without, Nothing], the *wu* spoken of from the functional level. This is a universal common ground which cannot determine anything and cannot determine what system you belong to. It is on the basis of this that Daoism is a school of thought, making this its main strength, holding fast to this universality, not particularizing it into humanity [*ren*], God, Brahman, and so forth. If we understand this, then it will no longer be a taboo, and if it becomes taboo again, then it must be liberated again. Unless it is liberated, Confucianism will be unable to proceed unimpeded but will

entrap and ensnare itself. If it shrinks from discussing the high and subtle, wouldn't that be the same as relegating itself to a position of inferiority?

Confucianism, a thoroughly great doctrine, does not simply stop with the Middle [*zhong yong*, also Mean]. Extremely exalted, it treads the Middle. Extremely great, it exhausts the fine and minute. Venerating virtue, it treads the path of inquiry and learning. Aren't these statements in *The Doctrine of the Mean* [*Zhong Yong*] eloquent?

What kind of statement did they consider to have come from Buddhism and Daoism? Cheng Mingdao [1032-1085] made numerous such statements, which were anathema to Master Zhu [Zhuxi]. Although Master Zhu said that these statements were far too rarefied, the fact was he did not like them at all. But because he upheld the two Cheng brothers as his philosophical teachers, he could not bring himself to refute Cheng Mingdao explicitly. Actually, he only upheld Cheng Yichuan [1033-1108] as his master, not Cheng Mingdao

These kinds of statements are found in Cheng Mingdao's *Ding Xing Shu*, [*The Book on Determinate Nature*]. He says: "Heaven and Earth's constancy is such that their mind permeates the myriad things mindlessly (*er wu xin* 而無心, without mind); the sage's constancy is such that his heart [*yi qi xin* 以其心] follows the myriad affairs heartlessly [*er wu qing* 而無情, without feelings] [天地之常，以其心普萬物而無心；聖人之常，以其情順萬物而無情]".²¹ This is a paradox and a sophism. Although Master Zhu did not explicitly refute these words, Ye Shuixin expressed his displeasure, calling them the utterances of Buddhism and Daoism.

Actually this paradox contains two levels of meaning. Which words belong to the ontological level? And which to the functional level? The words "that their mind" affirms the mind; this belongs to the ontological level, for it does not say that the mind does not exist. "...their mind permeates the myriad things mindlessly" belongs to the functional level. The *wu* of "*er wu xin*" [*wu xin*, without mind, mindlessly] is the *wu* of "*wu you zuo hao, wu you zuo wu* 無有作好，無有作惡" [without contriving to love, without contriving to hate]. But most people when they see this statement forget the three words "*yi qi xin* [such that their mind]" and see only the words "*er wu xin* [mindlessly]". How is mindlessness possible? This "*wu xin*" [without mind, mindlessly]

is not an ontological denial but a functional negation. A functional negation is what Zhuang Zi calls “*wang* [forget]” and what Lao Zi calls “*jue* 絕 [renounce]”. The words “*yi qi xin*” [such that their mind] indicate that heaven and earth have a mind and return to seeing the mind of heaven and earth. This is a frontal statement on the ontological level. But the mind of heaven and earth “permeates the myriad things mindlessly...”, presenting their mind by the method of *wu* [Nothing/Non-Being]. This is speaking on the functional level, that is to say, removing artifice. The sage also has a heart, for “The sage’s constancy is such that his heart follows the myriad affairs heartlessly.” He Yan [d. 249] and Wang Bi argued as to whether the sage had or did not have a heart, Ho Yan maintaining he was heartless [*wu qing* 無情, without feelings] and Wang Bi insisting that he did have a heart [*you qing*, had feelings]. However, if the sage had a heart but was not encumbered by it, then it was having a heartless heart, “...such that his heart follows the myriad affairs heartlessly.” Here “heartlessly” belongs to the functional level, for there are also two levels here. Most people when they see the word heartlessly [*wu qing*] believe that it comes from Buddhism and Daoism. In fact, people forget that the *Book of History* [*Shu Jing*] in the words “without contriving to love, without contriving to hate” much earlier told us that the sage was “heartless” and yet still had a heart.

Many people detest Wang Yangming’s four-sentence teaching beginning “Without good, without evil is the mind-in-itself.” As soon as they see “without good, without evil” they think “Good gracious, Confucianism is all about good and evil. How can there be no good or evil!”²² “Without good, without evil [*wu shan wu e*]” refers to the presenting state of mind-in-itself which is without the image of good or image of evil. Wang Yangming himself said it very clearly. He said that “without good, without evil” referred to the ultimate, absolute good, which is different from the good that is relative to evil. Absolute goodness does not have any image of good, much less of evil.

One evening Wang Yangming was engaged in a discussion with two of his senior disciples, Wang Longxi [1498-1583] and Qian Xushan [1497-1574]. Wang Yangming said: “Having mind [*you xin*, where there is intent], all is illusion. Not having mind [*wu xin*], all is reality. [有心俱是幻，無心俱是實]”. As soon you have a mind, all is illusion. When you don’t have a mind, everything is real. Then he immediately said: “Having mind, all is reality. Not having mind, all is illusion [有心俱是實，無心俱是

幻]”²³. Don’t these two statements contradict the previous two statements? As soon as people see these statements, they again tend to ascribe them to Buddhism and Daoism, maintaining that these do not represent the Dao of the Sage, for the Sage never made such statements. These two sets of contradictory statements clearly belong to two different levels. “Having mind, all is illusion. Not having mind, all is reality.” What level does this belong to? And what level does “Having mind, all is reality. Not having mind, all is illusion” belong to?

“Having mind, all is reality. Not having mind, all is illusion” is speaking on the ontological level. “Having mind” is an affirmation of *liangzhi* [good-knowing; the moral mind]. *Liangzhi* is mind. Where there is *liangzhi* there is reality; where there is no *liangzhi*, all is illusion. *You* (being) transforming into *wu* (non-being) comes from *The Doctrine of the Mean*. *The Doctrine of the Mean* says: “Sincerity is the end and beginning of all things. Without sincerity there are no things [*wu wuh*].”²² Things only come into being where there is the substance of sincerity [*chengti*]. As soon as sincerity-substance is taken away, the myriad things disappear. “Having mind” [*you xin*] is an affirmation of the original mind of *liangzhi* [*liangzhi benxin*]. It is speaking on the ontological level. All that *liangzhi* permeates, that *liangzhi* reaches, is real. If the substance [*benti*], *liangzhi*, is removed, then everything is illusion, without root or ground. Is this then not the same as the statement in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, “Without sincerity there are no things [不誠無物]”? This is speaking on the ontological level.

But Wang goes on to say: “Having mind, all is illusion. Not having mind, all is reality.” This is speaking on the functional level. Where there is the mind of artifice, the mind of intention, it is not issuing from *liangzhi*, and therefore all the thoughts you have thus generated are false. This is what is meant by “Having mind, all is illusion.” As to “having mind, all is illusion,” it is best that you are mindless [*wu xin*, without mind]. This not having mind is not a denial of mind on the ontological level. This not having mind simply means the “*wu*” [without] of “without contriving to love, without contriving to hate,” and is simply the “*wu*” of “mindlessness [*wu xin*], for their mind permeates the myriad things.” And this is the “*wu*” of Lao Zi.

Clearly there are two levels here, and this is how we explain it now. At the time, Qian Xushan failed to comprehend this, even after much pondering. Wang Longxi, who

was bright, grasped it immediately. “Having mind, all is reality, not having mind, all is illusion.” Wang Longxi said that these words were “speaking of moral cultivation [*gongfu*] in terms of substance [*benti*],” while “Having mind, all is illusion, not having mind, all is reality” was “speaking of substance in terms of moral cultivation.” Isn't moral-cultivation function? “Speaking of substance in terms of moral cultivation” is simply what Lao Zi meant by “Affirming as if negating” [*zheng yan ruo fan*].

These three lectures will basically cover Daoism. First we discussed the major fundamental concepts of Daoism. Then in the last lecture we said that Daoism explained the vertical horizontally. Today we focused on explaining the difference between the functional level and the ontological level. Daoism only has the functional level, not the ontological level. Confucianism has both levels. Buddhism also has both levels, while Daoism has only one level. It treats the *wu* that is revealed on the functional level as ontological substance. It does not differentiate the two levels, but integrates them into one. That is why Daoism and Buddhism can mutually interpenetrate, revealing a shared truth which has the greatest universality and is accessible to all. Later on this area became taboo. We ought to dissolve this taboo, for that truth is not an impediment to the Dao of the Sage.

We conclude our discussion of Daoism with these three lectures. If you take a look at the writings of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi and digest them a little, you will understand why we have defined Daoism in this way. It is a very special wisdom. When we speak of “characteristics” we have to pay attention to these aspects. If we look at it as a discipline, then it is a vision-based type of metaphysics. This requires that we have an understanding of Western metaphysics and see the difference. Unless we distinguish and examine them critically, we will be confused, and such confusion will give a wrong view of Chinese philosophy.

Transcribed by Deng-tai Wu 吳登台

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¹ See *Dao De Jing* [also known as *Lao Tzu* or *Lao Zi*], ch. 1.

² *Op. cit.*, ch. 19.

³ *Op. cit.*, ch. 19.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, ch. 1.

⁵ See *She Dasheng Lun* [*Mahāyāna-samparigraha-śāstra*], by Asaṅga, translated by Tang Xuanzang, Taisho Tripitaka, no. 1594, page 133.

⁶[Translator's note: This comes from Kant's statement: "Just as it would therefore be contradictory to say God is the creator of appearances, it is also a contradiction to say that He, as the Creator, is the cause of actions in the world of sense, as these are appearances; yet at the same time He is the cause of the existence of the acting beings (as noumena)." *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated by Lewis White Beck, 5:102.]

⁷ *Dao De Jing*, ch. 19, "Jue sheng, qi zhi 絕聖，棄智。"

⁸ [Orig. note 6] *Dao De Jing*, ch. 20, "Jue xue wu you 絕學無憂。"

⁹ *Dao De Jing*[Orig. n. 7] *Dao De Jing*, ch. 18, "Da dao fei, you ren yi 大道廢，有仁義。"

¹⁰ [Orig. n.8] *Analects* 17.19.

¹¹ [Orig. n.9] *Ibid.*

¹²[Orig. n.10] My translation. See *Zhou Yi* [*Yi Jing* or *The Book of Change*]: Xici Shang-10. . Also James Legge trans., 1996, *I Ching (Book of Changes)*, p. 370:62.

¹³[Orig. n.11] See Legge, *Shangshu (The Book of History, Part V, Book IV, "Hong Fan (The Great Plan)"* chapter, p. 331.

¹⁴ [Orig. n.12] See Huang Zongxi, *Mingru Xue'an* [*Studies of Ming Confucians*] (Taiwan: Chung-hua Publishing Co.), volume 1, *juan* 12, page 1.

¹⁵ [Orig. n.13] See *Dao De Jing*, ch. 78.

¹⁶ [Orig. n.14] "Before the Three Dynasties there was law [*fa*], after the Three Dynasties there was no law... The law of the Three Dynasties was one which stored the empire in the empire... The law of later ages was one which stored the empire in baskets and boxes." From "Yuan Fa [Tracing Laws]" chapter in Huang Zongxi, *Mingyi Daifang Lu* [*Awaiting the Prince*] (Taiwan: Chung-hua Publishing Co.), pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ [Orig. n.15] "Qiu [Confucius] and you were both dreaming. When I say that you were dreaming, that is also a dream. This kind of statement is called a paradox [*diaogui* 弔詭]." My translation. See *Zhuang Zi*, ch. 2, "Qi Wu Lun" " [On The Equality of Things]. In Victor H. Mair 1994, page 23.

¹⁸[Orig.n.16. My translation.] *Dao De Jing*, ch. 7. See also Lau 1963, p. 11. Orig. note 16; The Sibū Congshū Chūbian number 31 edition of *Dao De Jing*, page 4, has the Heshang Gong Zhang Ju annotation: "When one puts oneself outside the self, then the self survives."

¹⁹ [Orig. n.17] My translation. *Zhuang Zi*, ch. 6, "Great Ancestral Teacher." See also Mair 1994, p.61.

²⁰ [Orig.n.18] *Dao De Jing*, ch. 51. See also Lau 1963, p. 58.

²¹ [Orig.n.19] *Songyuan Xue'an* [*Studies of Song and Yuan Confucian Philosophers*], *Mingdao Xue'an* [*Philosophical Writings of Cheng Mingdao*], "Dingxing Shu [Book on Determinate Nature]", *juan* 13, page 7. Chung-hua Publishing Co.

²² Translator's note: This refers to the "Nine Truth and Nine Explanations" debate between Xu Jingan 許敬庵 (Xu Fuyuan) and Zhou Haimen 周海門 (Zhou Rudeng) on this issue. For an account of the debate, see Thomas A. Wilson, "Confucianism: Ming", in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Antonio S. Cua (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), p. 113.

²³[Orig. n.20] "When the Master set forth for Sitian 思田, escorted by Dehong 德洪 and Ruzhong 汝中 as far as Yantan 嚴灘, Ruzhong brought up the Buddhist concepts of reality [*shixiang* 實相] and illusion [*huanxiang* 幻象]. The Master said: 'Having mind, all is real, not having mind, all is illusory; not having mind, all is real, having mind, all is illusory.' Ruzhong then said: 'With mind, all is real, without mind, all is illusory is to speak of moral cultivation in terms of substance; without mind, all is real, with mind, all is illusory is to speak of substance in terms of moral cultivation.' The Master indicated his approval. Dehong, however, did not as yet grasp it, but after several years of perseverance he finally arrived at the belief that substance and effort in moral practice [*gongfu*] are one." In *Yangming Quanshu* [*Complete Works of Wang*

Yangming] (Taiwan: Chung-hua Publishing Co.), *juan* 3, p. 26. Ruzhong is Wang Longxi, Dehong is Qian Xushan.

²² *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 25.