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TAOIST RESOURCES

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Number Two

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Stephen R. Bokenkamp
East Asian Studies Center
Memorial Hall West 207
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

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TAOIST RESOURCES

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From the Editor

With this issue we begin a special series. This and the next two issues of the journal will feature articles dedicated to the memory of two pioneers in the field of Taoist Studies, Professor Edward H. Schafer and Dr. Anna K. Seidel.

We begin with a moving first-hand account of the lives, scholarship, and deaths of these two great scholars by Phyllis Brooks Schafer, the wife of Professor Schafer and close friend of Dr. Seidel's. More than personal reminiscence, Ms. Brooks Schafer's article provides us with a fascinating new perspective on the many contributions to Taoist studies of these two scholars, whose lives and works intersected at critical junctures. We are honored to include here as well an incisive discussion by the well-known scholar of Chinese Religions, Professor Laurence G. Thompson, on the vexed issue of the very definition of Taoism itself. Professor Thompson, after surveying the opinions of others on this question, provides some solutions which take full account not only of the Chinese situation, but of analogous phenomena in other major religions of the world.

The remaining two articles in this issue focus on the Celestial Masters, the first enduring communal Taoist organization. Dr. Angelika Cedzich draws on her ground-breaking work on the earliest examples of Taoist liturgy to address a problem that occupied Dr. Seidel as well — What was new in the Taoist view of death and the afterlife? Drawing on Dr. Seidel's initial insights, Dr. Cedzich presents substantial new evidence on mortuary innovations of the Celestial Masters which were to have enduring consequences for the history of Taoism. My own article likewise discusses one of Dr. Seidel's early insights; this time on the subject of the physiological and meditative practices alluded to in the *Xiang'er zhuan*, the early Celestial Master exegesis of the *Laozi*.

These works began as papers presented on the panels "Early Chinese Religion and Religious Taoism: Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Edward H. Schafer and Dr. Anna Seidel" at the Western Conference of the Association of Asian Studies held at the University of Arizona in Tucson on October 23 and 24 of 1992. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers of the conference, and particularly Donald Harper, for their help in making possible what should prove to be a lively and informative series of articles. In addition, thanks are due to the readers for their thoroughness and promptness, as well as to the staff of the East Asian Studies Center, and particularly to the new Editorial Assistant, Lara Idsinga Ingeman. Without help from many hands, the production of this journal would not be possible.

Stephen R. BOKENKAMP

Dis-covering a Religion¹

Phyllis BROOKS SCHAFER

Keynote Address: "Early Chinese Religion and Religious Taoism: Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Edward H. Schafer and Dr. Anna Seidel" at the Western Conference of the Association of Asian Studies, the University of Arizona, Tucson, 23 October 1992.

I recognize that not everyone here is aware of the curious ways that the personal life Odysseys of Ed and Anna intertwined last year. (I cannot bring myself to call them Professor Schafer and Dr. Seidel.) Before I make my small contribution to the scholarly start of these proceedings, let me recall for you the circumstances shadowing that year without end.

By late 1990 Ed and I knew that he had liver cancer and only a few months to live. We decided not to fight the futile fight and instead to enjoy his last weeks. His last public lecture was at the University of Illinois in November, at the opening of the "Sacred Mountains" art exhibition.² After a subdued Christmas, we took off for a final holiday in the jungles of Belize. Friends there had no idea that they were entertaining a dying Ed, as he took off over mountain trails, climbed pyramids, crawled into despoiled Mayan graves, and chased after birds. Only I knew the true state of affairs. The rest is quick to tell: the return to Berkeley, two weeks of his beloved teaching (Ed had warned his department that he might not finish the semester³), his collapse, and the peaceful last week.

Anna telephoned Ed from Kyoto the evening before he died. He had told me that he felt too weak to take any more phone calls, but Anna was different. They talked for over an hour. I never asked Anna what they talked about, but if it was a conversation like others I had heard, they ranged from silly flirtation to jokes to gossip and, even then, to sudden sideturns into recent scholarly work. And as two realists, I'm sure they talked of death.

Ed died the next morning, just before Angelika Cedzich arrived with the red roses Anna had asked her to bring to him. When he was buried, we tossed Anna's roses on top of the coffin. I sent Anna a picture of the open grave. The image does not bear brooding over.

Five months later, on a sudden whim, Anna came to the Bay Area on what was to be a two-week visit, one of her far too rare frivolities. She knew that she had a serious liver disease, and

¹ My title was going to be "Dish-covering a Religion," with thanks to Lewis Carroll's riddle about the oyster, but I held back. The simple "Discovering" smacked too much of Eurocentric arrogance in this year of Columbian controversy. So, the compromise — never the best way to go!

²"Taoist Holy Mountains," Krannert Art Museum, 16 November 1990. A couple of weeks earlier we had traveled to Seattle, Ed's birthplace, where he presented a paper, "The *T'ai-shang lao-chün k'ai-t'ien ching*: a medieval Chinese cosmology," at the meeting of the Western Branch of the American Oriental Society. This work is defined in Ed's abstract as "a standard medieval account of the creation of the world by a sequence of decrees of Lord Lao." Thus both of Ed's final public speeches were on Taoist topics.

³His course was taken over by Jeffrey Riegel, who completed it using Ed's prepared syllabus.

she intended to discuss the local possibilities of a transplant (which she had also investigated in Europe). But she came for the fun of visiting friends, with no forewarning of the collapse that came just a few days after her arrival.

Anna was youthful and strong, and she underwent the massive transplant operation. Between us, Angelika and I managed to be with her in the hospital hours of almost every day of the ensuing month, and we watched her regain strength and the will to live. Then suddenly, after she was out of the hospital and had started her return to normal life, the infection hit, and we had to watch as she too slipped suddenly away.

She had planned to spend the months of her recovery in Berkeley, and I had transformed Ed's study into Anna's room with its own telephone, computer, etc. She was delighted at the prospect of re-entering life in the room he had been so wedded to and that she remembered him in. (Those of you who knew Ed at home will remember how hard it was to get him out of his study with its desk, typewriter, books, TV with Bugs Bunny cartoons, and radio with the Giants game — all in use at once.)

Instead, she shares with him the same grave, which now has a pair of stones recording their names and dates. Anna's also has the characters "An-lo," paradise. The year ended with a ceremony that some of us here today attended in a Taoist temple in San Francisco's Chinatown: twin plaques above an altar, flowers and food, incense, and the reading of texts to hurry the two of them through whatever preliminaries they had to undergo on their way to a peaceful afterlife. Thus, two close friends and great scholars converged tragically from opposite ends of the earth, and the thought of their being together brings consolation, at least to those of *us* who hate the thought of the loneliness of death.

But there is another convergence that marks not their *deaths*, but their *lives*; not their *declines*, but their *scholarship*; and not their *livers*, but *Taoism*. These two superb scholars, a generation and continents apart, made the study of this generally unappreciated and underestimated religion the center of a large segment of their very different scholarly work. I have tried to reconstruct the personal paths they took and am presenting today the general outlines I've been able to put together.

Ed tried out most of his ideas on me and expected me to provide a kind of litmus reaction to their reasonableness. Besides his books and articles, I can go through scrapbooks, seeing the records of a party given for graduate students in a particular seminar at a certain date.⁴ In Anna's case, I am aware of how little I know. Over the years, but especially during that last month, we

⁴Ed was not an eager socializer, preferring the company of one or two good friends. But he delighted in planning parties for his students, both graduate and undergraduate. The first such party I find on a Taoist theme is that given on 4 March 1977, for both an undergraduate course in reading Taoist texts and a graduate seminar. Naturally an elixir of immortality was served, and students were appropriately dressed, including one of the participants in this conference in a cloak with a Big Dipper. (At later such parties there were considerably more jade maidens, etc.) Some of the later contributors to Taoist studies who were present at that first Taoist party were Judy Boltz, Livia Kohn, Suzanne Cahill, Robert Chard, Donald Harper, and Richard von Glahn. Earlier, in August of the previous year, Ed's students had presented him with a t-shirt emblazoned "His Grace the Voivode of the Via Lactea" and on the back, the step of Yü.

talked about her life in scholarship, and I've read many of her works. Nevertheless, I keep finding questions that I wish I had asked her. I have tried to fill the gaps by talking and writing to people who knew her and worked with her over the years: her brother Michael, and colleagues in Japan, Europe, Israel, and here in the U.S. Even so, this is necessarily a prolegomenon to a footnote to the study of the growth of Taoist scholarship at the end of the twentieth century.

In my hunt for the first reference to Taoism in Ed's work, I found it in his M.A. thesis, written in Honolulu in 1939 on the topic of Persian merchants in China (an article based on the thesis was published in 1951). In it, he talks of Persians seeking and acquiring in China long-sought gems, often dynastic treasures of their homeland. (Chinese and Japanese dynastic treasures, intimately imbued with Taoism, would later become one of Anna's special interests.⁵) At one point, Ed says that the foreigner *hu* is often described as an alchemist and magician, "often a Taoist of the ordinary Chinese variety."⁶ (It's hard to imagine the Ed of fifty years later referring to any Taoist as ordinary.) In one tale, dated about 400, a Chinese doctor effects a remarkable cure of a Persian, who in turn rewards him by giving him a pearl of great price. The Persian eventually dies, however, and the doctor puts the pearl into his mouth before burial. Later the body is disinterred, and "the exhumed corpse is found to be as fresh and natural as a living man."⁷ Despite these fascinating, typically Taoist topoi, Ed then said that the "Taoist mysteries which surround [the Persian] in the tales are probably more often than not an invention of the storyteller for the sake of enhancing or explaining the miraculous powers and illimitable wealth of the strangers."⁸ It is not until much later, in the early seventies, that we find Ed becoming conscious of the power of Taoism in medieval Chinese culture and turning into its ardent explicator and scholarly advocate.

Anna's entry into Taoism came more directly, at the start of her career, through an interest in religion *per se*. Raised in a Roman Catholic family, she was also intensely conscious of her Jewish roots through her Jewish grandfather. Despite the danger to the family, her parents managed throughout the Hitler years to hide and ensure the survival of two Jewish friends. Although the Third Reich fell when she was six, Anna remembered having to make the Nazi salute every morning when she entered elementary school. As soon as she was old enough to comprehend what she and the world had experienced during those years, she became intensely preoccupied with the whole question of the Final Solution and the role of religion both in giving birth to it and in combatting it. She abandoned her Catholicism, but not her search for ways to make sense of life and death.

Hubert Durt has told me that she started her Taoist studies well before the Tao-tsang project

⁵See, for example, "Kokuhō, note à propos du terme 'trésor national' en Chine et au Japon," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 69 (1981): 229-261. My translation of this article will appear in the forthcoming collection of Anna's Taoist articles to be published by Princeton University Press.

⁶"Iranian Merchants in T'ang Tales," *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* 11 (1951): 415.

⁷"Iranian Merchants," 415.

⁸"Iranian Merchants," 416. The stories appear in the collection entitled *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, assembled under the order of the Sung emperor, T'ai Tsung (A.D. 976-997).

was launched. In her search for a mindset and way of viewing life different from those of her Judaeo-Christian background, she was initially attracted to Buddhism. But at that time, with the exception of Louvain, Buddhist studies were not thriving in Europe. She wanted to study in Paris, and there Buddhist studies were continued only by the final classes being given by Demiéville. On the other hand, Taoist studies with Kaltenmark and Stein were coming into full bloom. At the outset, Taoism represented to her the most *different* pattern of religious thought she could find.⁹ Coincidentally, it was a field in which a young scholar could immediately do groundbreaking work of the most fundamental kind. Thus Taoism and religion were at the center of her concerns from the very outset.

Ed came to the study of Taoism only after what would have been for other scholars a completely satisfactory life's work. Just for the sake of comparison, I have drawn a line through Ed's bibliography at 1967, imagining his death at 53, Anna's age when she died, and allowing one more year for in-press things to appear.¹⁰ I find after 1967 six books, thirty-seven articles, twenty-three book reviews (many of them, like Anna's, "articles" in their own right) — plus other contributions to scholarship like encyclopedia articles, teaching texts, etc. In the bibliography he compiled himself of his publications on Taoism, I find only one listing before 1967, an article on mineral imagery in poetry that he published in 1963 and judged to be Taoist in retrospect. So essentially all his thinking and writing on Taoism came after the age at which Anna died. He lists three books and thirty-three articles on Taoist subjects, including one article in Anna's *Cahiers*.

By the time of the publication the *The Divine Woman* in 1973, he had a strong suspicion that all was not right in conventional views of Chinese gods and goddesses. Taoism starts to feature in his effort to put together the reflections and revivifications of ancient Chinese goddesses as they appear in the work of T'ang poets. Taking up the *Lao tzu* and talking of the hints there of a female quality in the Tao: he refers directly to Taoism, "It is the Mother of all under Heaven — I do not know its Name but I style it 'Way shower' (Tao)." In typical Schafer fashion, he admits the attractiveness of elaborating on this idea, but puts it firmly to one side as needing "solid investigation."¹¹

In his conclusion to this book, he says that water goddesses in T'ang poetry resemble "tinted photographs or fashionably painted dolls, but remain pitiless nature spirits and lethal sirens underneath.... Only occasionally, when tintured with the lore of popular Taoism, do they hold out the prospect of something like lasting bliss."¹² But still Taoism is a set of phenomena,

⁹Fax dated 27 July 1992.

¹⁰A very useful bibliography of Ed's work up to 1984 is the annotated bibliography produced by David Honey and Stephen Bokenkamp for the University of California student publication, *Phi Theta Papers* 16 (1984): 8-30. (This issue was dedicated to Ed and contains, as do all issues of this journal, interesting early works by several now notable scholars.) The bibliography, without the extensive annotation, was updated for the *Festschrift* edited by Paul Kroll that appeared as a complete issue of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 241-245, and further updated by Kroll for the memorial volume of *T'ang Studies* 8-9 (1990-91): 9-22.

¹¹*The Divine Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 33.

¹²*The Divine Woman*, 147-148.

something tantalizing on the margins of the book, a tease for the future.

When he published *Pacing the Void* in 1977, Ed had not only entered Taoist studies but had made a particular corner of them his own. This corner, Taoism in literature, was sharply defined in Terence Russell's 1986 review of his later book, *Mirages on the Sea of Time*. Russell talks of Ts'ao T'ang as a "thoroughly Taoist poet," and decries the lack of general attention among literary scholars to Taoism and to acquiring even "a rudimentary understanding of medieval Chinese religious belief." He goes on to say "It is both sad and significant (and not a symptom of egoism) that so many of the notes to the text of the book make reference to Schafer's own publications. Very little else is available for support and comparison."¹³

Meanwhile, Anna was proceeding, through her seminal articles and works on messianism in early Taoism¹⁴ and the divinization of Lao tzu,¹⁵ on her steady course towards building an understanding of the fundamental nature of Taoism. As a scholar working directly in Chinese religion, she was a participant in both the Bellagio and Tateshina Taoist congresses and edited the papers from the second.¹⁶ At the same time Ed was groping, through his readings and rereadings of T'ang poetry, towards the enlightenment that it was as difficult to understand this poetry without an awareness *and* understanding of Taoism as it would be for a Japanese scholar to understand twelfth- to sixteenth-century European poetry and life without a knowledge of how Christianity works. Vague equations were becoming less and less satisfying to him. He knew of the work of the generation of scholars that was starting to emerge in Paris. His copy of Schipper's work on the Emperor Wu (published in 1965) is copiously annotated, but despite marginal notes on divine hierogamies and jade maidens, he doesn't refer to this book in *The Divine Woman*. By the time of *Pacing the Void* (whose manuscript was finished in England in the fall of 1975), the references to the French school are suddenly everywhere. The fortunate coincidence that did most, I think, to force the crystallization of Ed's own ideas about Taoism was the reading of the work of two much younger scholars in the 1974 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Michel Strickmann and Anna Seidel.

When the *Britannica* came out in late 1974, Ed immediately checked out the articles on things Chinese. I remember the delight with which he pounced on those articles on Taoism. Their pages are worn and annotated. The writers' view of Taoism as an integrated national religion, the only truly Chinese expression of the religious urge, gave him the little push he needed to continue with

¹³"Schafer's Clam Castles," (review of *Mirages on the Sea of Time*), *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* (Kyoto) 2 (1986): 265-267. Russell does not mention that in this book, as in so many others, the vast majority of the footnotes refer directly to primary sources and that the references to Schafer usually lead back to an earlier discussion of primary sources. Ed's books and articles are characterized by this use of the original Chinese text.

¹⁴For example, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Taoist Messianism: Lao tzu and Li Hung," *History of Religions* 9 (1969-70): 216-247.

¹⁵*La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le taoisme des Han* (Paris: Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient LXXI, 1969).

¹⁶With Holmes Welch, *Facets of Taoism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). Although her name appears second on the title page, most of the editing of this volume was done by Anna.

his own crazy ideas, as he sometimes termed them. So the young scholar, Anna, held out the hand at just the right time to the much more mature scholar, Ed.

But how did two such junior people, Michel and Anna, get picked to write these articles? After all, the main article on Chinese religion was written by one Laurence Thompson, and we find other big sinological names like Michael Loewe, L. Carrington Goodrich, Dennis Twitchett — not exactly unknowns. A little research has revealed that around 1970, Seymour Cain, who had studied History of Religion at the University of Chicago, took the job of religions editor for the *Britannica*. For writers on Taoism, he was referred to Norman Girardot. Girardot was aware of the Bellagio and Tateshina conferences and the "new work" being done on Taoism, and he gave Cain a list of names. How the list was whittled down to Anna and Michel, Girardot does not know, but they were on his original short list.¹⁷

By the time Ed wrote the conclusion to *Pacing the Void*, he could write that "Taoist visions of the deities in the sky agreed much more closely with what we know of popular and poetic — that is, heartfelt — views of them than did the colorless and barren abstractions of them approved and purveyed by court ritualists.... We shall not find the real gods of T'ang in the Book of T'ang, that doctrinaire guide to blameless religious thinking..."¹⁸ True believers in the Mystic Jewel (Ling-pao) and Highest Clarity (Shang-ch'ing) traditions "had very clear ideas about how the formless gods behind the stars displayed themselves when they chose to adopt anthropoid masks, and they recorded the points of recognition in their sacred texts — valuable data to which nothing in the official books of ritual corresponds." Even in their concern for the heavens, Taoists could no longer be equated with mere calendrists and compilers of alchemical manuals. This was the one book which Ed dedicated to elucidating the roots and meaning of Taoism, especially its astral features, and it led to his participating in the 1979 Taoist congress at Unterägeri, the only Taoist congress Anna did not attend.

For Ed, the scholar of poetry, Taoism meant beauty and the vision of heavens. In a 1978 review of a book by Bauer, *China and the Search for Happiness*, he criticizes Bauer's tame view of Taoism. He says that his conventional viewpoint is "quite unrelated to the living Taoist religion, whose choreographed rituals, astral pantheons, and glittering temples dominated medieval China."¹⁹ Ed wanted to understand Taoism *correctly*, and did his homework; if you like, in Christian terms, he had studied the Christological debates and the filioque. But it was the Cathedral at Cologne, Dante, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, El Greco's saints, and the music of Ockeghem, Bach, and Messiaen that pulled him, rather than the investigation of their theological underpinnings. He could do this with confidence in his understanding because of the existence of scholars like Anna.

For Anna, Ed was a smile. He gave her his unqualified but considered admiration, and she

¹⁷Personal communication, 15 August 1992.

¹⁸*Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches to the Stars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 224-225. This view is unfortunately distorted by the interpolation suggested by Poul Andersen in his discussion of Ed's views in his article on *pu-gang*. See "The Practice of Bugang," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989-90): 26, n. 23.

¹⁹*Review in Pacific Affairs* 51 (1978): 108-109.

was comforted by this from one of his seniority and standing in the field.²⁰ She loved and admired his books, and when she founded the *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie*, she immediately opened its pages to him, telling him that *anything* he sent her would be published therein. She summarized and publicized the occasional papers he sent out in xeroxed form after his retirement,²¹ and held up the production of the fifth issue to include her sad obituary of Ed.²² From his books she also derived the courage to write in English in a way she never did in French or German. Anna told me that Ed was one of her conscious models for scholarly style. Without knowing this, her brother Michael, an acute reader, told me after reading some of Ed's writing that he could see how Anna was moving towards his kind of clarity.²³

But her work in Taoism was quite different from his. She was teasing out the fundamentals of the religion, the theology, if you like. "Taoism was not a pure philosophy that degenerated into superstition, but a messianic religion of salvation which succeeded in pouring, during a period of crisis, the religious foundations of the Chinese empire into new vessels."²⁴ The religion and the Chinese state were inseparable through many centuries, and she sought and found the political and sociological manifestations of the people's beliefs. She was also interested in thanatology, and the darker side of the post-death adventure. She was fascinated by Taoism as the Asian religion most practically concerned with the dead, the one that offers ordinary people ways to protect themselves from the spirits of the dead as well as a way of passing them through hells. Zwi Werblowsky hazards the guess that this great interest grew out of what he calls her "hang-up" on the figure of Ti-tsang (or Jizo), the savior of souls (especially those of children) from the underworld.²⁵

Thus, one of Ed's latest Taoist articles was on chthonian paradises, heavens under the earth.²⁶

²⁰The warmth of their relationship can be seen in the salutations in their letters: one from her to him, "Dear absolutely inimitable, the effable, ineffable, let's simply say GREAT Ed, the point in the universe around which all our galaxies revolve," and from him to her (in response to a letter in which she had despaired of ever finding a husband!), "Dearest Ultimate Blue-stockings Anna—(and somewhat sexy!)" Anna was very disappointed not to have been included among those invited to contribute to Ed's *Festschrift* and complained loudly about this, as late as last year.

²¹For example, see "Schafer Sinological Papers," with Livia Kohn, *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 2: 269-70.

²²*Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989-90): 457-458. She also included in that volume Hubert Durt's translation of the draft obituary I prepared right after Ed died (pp. 459-460).

²³Among other comments was his reference to Ed's style in *The Divine Woman*: "He was able and willing to write things that explained quite esoteric topics to poor commoners like me, a sign of greatness in a scholar. Anna was just getting to that point." Personal communication, 7 August 1992.

²⁴From the draft translation of *Taoismus, die inoffizielle Hochreligion Chinas* (Tokyo: OAG Aktuell, No. 41, 1990). This translation will appear in the forthcoming volume of Anna's writings on Taoism, from Princeton University Press. Obviously no page reference can be given at this time.

²⁵Personal communication, October 1992.

²⁶"Empyrean Powers and Chthonian Edens: Two Notes on T'ang Taoist Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986): 667-677.

Anna's last, unfinished work was on tomb inscriptions. They looked at the same religion, but concentrated on it differently.

Let us, then, imagine these two great friends in some suitably ecumenical Elysian field with the leisure to continue refining their very different, but mutually admired life's work. Meanwhile, thinking back again to the year 1991, let *us* end with a final quotation from Anna from the end of her essay on Taoism, the unofficial high religion of China. She tells of a western scholar who met a Taoist priest in a Chinese city some years ago. The priest was so impressed with the young scholar's knowledge of his religion that, with tears in his eyes, he told the visitor, "In the camps of the cultural revolution they succeeded in persuading us that we had poisoned the people and that our Taoism had to be exterminated. Your [foreign] interest in and appreciation of our religion has helped us... Please study hard and come back, because in three years time I shall be dead." The visitor responded, "The Taoist Sages always knew in advance the day of their death." "Rubbish," snapped the old priest, "that's superstition!" It *was* superstition in the mouth of the non-believer, and how very Anna, how very Ed, is the old priest's retort!²⁷ Neither of them could have resisted pricking the solemn young scholar's balloon, though they *too* would both have done it with the greatest of love.

²⁷I say this with trepidation, remembering Ed's fury when people misrepresented him or attributed to him opinions he had not expressed. I well remember "Professor Schafer Would Say...", *Journal of Asian Studies* 37 (1978): 799-801, in which he excoriated Jonathan Chaves for presenting a translation of a couplet, prefaced with the words "Professor Schafer would say...." In his rejoinder, he said, "I do not think that Mr. Chaves has any idea what I would say," and then proceeded to show just why. Still, I hope he'll forgive me this small guess about his probable reaction.

**What Is Taoism?
(With Apologies To H. G. Creel)**

Laurence G. THOMPSON
University of Southern California, Emeritus

In April 1956, Professor Herrlee Creel of the University of Chicago delivered the Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society, his topic being "What is Taoism?" This address, published in the Society's *Journal*, was later republished as the title article of a book in which the author collected a number of his papers.¹ A decade after that, Creel gave a paper at the First International Conference of Sinology in Taipei titled "The Changing Shapes of Taoism," which was published in the Proceedings of that conference in 1981.² In this paper, despite the title, there were no significant changes from the view expressed in the earlier article, notwithstanding a quarter century of scholarship in the field of Taoism.

The view to which I allude is that Taoism is divisible into two types, the philosophical and the religious, the first type being further divisible into what Creel calls the "contemplative" and the "purposive." He refers to "religious Taoism" alternatively as "*Hsien* 仙 Taoism." According to him, "'contemplative Taoism' represents the philosophy in its purity, while 'purposive' Taoism was a secondary development."³ Creel's summary of his view is worth quoting in full:

In my opinion philosophic Taoism (including both the "contemplative" and the "purposive" aspects) and Hsien Taoism not only were never identical; their associations, even, have been minimal. At an undetermined date, perhaps around 300 B.C., there arose what we might call a cult of immortality. Also around 300 B.C., and perhaps in the same areas, Taoist philosophy arose. The cult and the philosophy seem to have been almost entirely distinct until perhaps as late as the middle of Former Han times. During the Han dynasty those seeking immortality gradually took over the name of Taoism (perhaps for the respectability it afforded) and much of the jargon of "purposive" Taoism, but they did not take over Taoist Philosophy. In Latter Han times, Hsien Taoists took over Buddhist practices to develop a popular Taoist religion. Although there was some miscegenation, Taoist philosophers have commonly considered the quest for immortality to be fatuous or worse, and some Hsien Taoists have reciprocated the lack of cordiality. The evidence for this hypothesis is voluminous.⁴

¹Herrlee G. Creel, "What is Taoism?," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76 (1956); idem, *What is Taoism? And Other Studies in Chinese Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²See the volume titled *Section on Thought and Philosophy I*: 1-35, published by Academia Sinica.

³Creel, *What Is Taoism?*, 5.

⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

It is pertinent to note that Creel expresses the view that Henri Maspero, the great Western pioneer of Taoist studies, did not understand the crucial separation of the philosophical and religious types. In Creel's words, "I also believe that his preoccupation with Hsien Taoism caused him to overemphasize its apparent resemblances to philosophical Taoism, and to ignore the gulf that separates the two."⁵

I

It is not my purpose to quarrel with Creel's understanding of "What is Taoism," but rather to show that other views are possible. Apparently the nature of Taoism is both more complex and less clearcut than Creel opines. This complexity and ambiguity come across very clearly, for instance, in the summary of Japanese views found in the introductory chapter of the three-volume collection titled, as is the entire first volume, "*Dōkyō to wa nani ka?*" 道教とは何か or (without apologies to H.G. Creel) "What Is Taoism?" This introduction or *Hashigaki* はしがき is by the editors of the volume, Sakai Tadao 酒井忠夫 and Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅. From it we quote, in close paraphrase, their digest of thirteen different answers to the question as given by Japanese scholars:

- 1) *Tao-chiao* is a mixture of the Way of Spirits and Immortal Transcendents (*shên-hsien tao* 神仙道) and the Way of the Masters Designated by the Heavens (*t'ien-shih tao* 天師道) that includes folk beliefs, as well as teachings and rituals deriving from the Buddhist and Literati Traditions. In this religion the Old Master (Lao Tzû 老子) has been divinized. The main goal of the religion is longevity and ascension to Heaven. Various esoteric techniques (*fang-shu* 方術) are used to prevent or ameliorate misfortune.
- 2) *Tao-chiao* is a synthesis of several elements, namely: ingestion of certain foods and nurture of the self by refining (*lien-yang* 練養) as attributed to the Way of Spirits and Immortal Transcendents; governing the mind and nurturing the congenital nature (*hsing* 性) as attributed to *Tao-chia* 道家 philosophy; a pantheon of popular deities; and the ritual of the *chiao* 醮 or communal sacrifice deriving from the incantations of the ancient *wu* 巫 or shamans.
- 3) The Tao is the common possession of both the so-called *Tao-chiao* and the *Ru-chiao* 儒教 (or Literati Tradition). However, the Literati Tradition became the social and political orthodoxy, and that made the *Tao-chiao* heterodox (*Yi-tuan* 異端).
- 4) The mysticism of the *Tao-chiao* as formulated in the hidden, mysterious, obscure thought of the Old Master is opposed to the rationalism of the Literati Tradition as formed by Master K'ung 孔子. *Tao-chiao* is concerned with faith healing (moderating illness by means of incantations) and the conservation of one's natural energy.
- 5) The Old Master explained the theory of the Tao as the One Prime (*Yi-yüan* 一元) of

⁵Ibid.

Nature; whereas in *Tao-chiao*, the highest conception of the Tao is as the highest deity, i.e., Heaven or Shang Ti 上帝. However, Shang Ti has lost its political or administrative character to the *Tao-chiao* concept of the Emperor of Jadelike Augustness (*yü-huang* 玉皇). Subordinate to this deity there are various grades of supernaturals making up a numerous pantheon. But prior to Yü-huang, there is the divinized Old Master who is called T'ai-shang Lao-chün 太上老君 and Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun 元始天尊. In the supreme Triad of the Three Pure Ones (*San ch'ing* 三清)⁶, we have a "troika" that makes *Tao-chiao* different from many other religions based on monotheistic theology.

6) *Tao-chiao* and "temple religion" (*shên-tz'ü ti tsung-chiao* 神祠の宗教) differ in that the latter has many protective deities who benefit the multitudes of people in their various localities. This temple religion is connected with the ancient system of specialists in esoterica (*fang-shih* 方士) and invokers who work in temples. The gods of the temple religion are distinct from those of Buddhism and *Tao-chiao*, mostly being deities of natural forces, animals, and historical personages. Purely *Tao-chiao* deities are few in number.

7) *Tao-chiao* developed out of, or is a development of, the ancient popular beliefs of the Chinese. Its content and form are distinctive in two respects. The first difference is that in *Tao-chiao* there are cloisters (*tao-kuan* 道觀) and professional practitioners (*tao-shih* 道士) constituting an organized religious institution (*chiao-hui Tao-chiao* 教會道教 or *chiao-t'uan Tao-chiao* 教團道教) that carries out Taoist rituals among the people. This has the overall name of "popular Taoism" (*min-chung Tao-chiao* 民衆道教). This second difference lies in the content of *Tao-chiao* which includes: (a) Taoist philosophy; (b) the apocrypha, incantations, yin-yang, immortal transcendence, divination, numerology; (c) avoidance of cereals, ingesting the elixir, breath control, "gymnastics," and "arts of the bedroom," which are part of the medical arts; and (d) popular morality. These contents of *Tao-chiao* have basically become assimilated with Buddhism as a religion of nature (*tzü-ran tsung-chiao* 自然宗教).⁷

8) As the religion of the Chinese people, *Tao-chiao* is comparable with Japanese Shinto and Indian Hinduism. In the cultural intercourse of China and Japan, whereas Japan took both the Literati and Buddhist Traditions, she did not take over *Tao-chiao*. In China, it was a religion suited to all levels of society. This is especially true of the common people, but even at the elite level there was belief in *Tao-chiao*. When intellectuals retired from their official careers to live among the people, they would pursue the principles of *Tao-chiao* according to their individual inclination.

9) *Tao-chia* and *Tao-chiao* have been used interchangeably by the Chinese. If one must differentiate them, then the former refers to philosophy and the latter to religion. In the

⁶ These are Yü-ch'ing Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun 玉清元始天尊, Shang-ch'ing Ling-pao T'ien-tsun 上清靈寶天尊, and T'ai-ch'ing Tao-tê T'ien-tsun 太清道德天尊. All are "nirmānakāya" or "transformation bodies" of the Old Master divinized.

⁷I am not quite sure what is meant by this statement.

religious aspect, the Old Master is divinized as T'ai-shang Lao-chün, or otherwise called by such titles as Hsüan-yüan Huang-ti 玄元皇帝, and as such, is worshiped. With this as the central focus, *Tao-chiao* additionally sacrifices to many deities and has many temples and religious bodies. In other words, it is a religion with temples and cloisters and organizations. One can distinguish in the history of Taoism: (a) original *Tao-chiao*, or "ancient *Tao-chiao*," or the "*Tao-chiao* that preceded K'ou Ch'ien-chih 寇謙之" (who died in 448 C.E.);⁸ (b) old *Tao-chiao*, in which the teachings of the Orthodox One Tradition (*chêng-yi chiao* 正一教) are central; and (c) new *Tao-chiao*, in which the Complete Perfection Tradition (*ch'üan-chên chiao* 全真教) is most important.

10) *Tao-chiao* is an amalgamation of beliefs in incantations, the thought of the Old Master and Master Chuang 莊子, immortal transcendency, and other miscellaneous religious or quasi-religious ingredients. It was first incorporated into religious institutions toward the end of the Han as a result of the prevailing conditions of the rural society and popular beliefs. *Tao-chiao*, in this view, may well be considered the religion of the Chinese people.

11) Popular beliefs coming down from antiquity, tales of immortal transcendency, and the thought of the Old Master and Master Chuang were amalgamated, with the Old Master becoming the Founder, *Tao-chiao* blends the morality (*tao-tê* 道德) of the Literati School and the Buddhist philosophy of karmic retribution, as well as emulates canons and institutions.

12) Like the Literati School, *Tao-chiao* is a synthesis of various cultural elements of Chinese society and Chinese beliefs. It is a compound of philosophy, thought, religion, superstition, and the daily experiences of the Chinese people. It is the upshot of their customs and mores, ethics, literature, arts, and sciences, and is in turn involved in all of these. It has permeated Chinese history and, molded by customs and conditions, has been involved in every aspect of Chinese government, society, and culture. It is the representative religion of the Chinese people during the unfolding of Chinese history.

13) Finally, there is the view that *Tao-chiao* has as its foundation belief in the incantatory techniques of shamanism (the Way of Spirits, *Kuei-tao* 鬼道), i.e., sorcery, coming down from Chinese antiquity, overlying which there are the Way of the Numina (*shên-tao* 神道) and the sacrificial rituals and thought of the Literati, plus the metaphysics of the Mysterious (*hsüan* 玄) and True (*chên* 真) expounded by the Old Master and Master Chuang. Moreover, the principles and rituals of Buddhism entered repeatedly and in a complex way into *Tao-chiao*. By Sui-T'ang times its organization into religious bodies, its rituals, and its theology had attained their culmination. Broadly speaking, its ideal is

⁸ "K'ou seems also to have been the first to use the term *tao-chiao* to describe the traditions of the Celestial masters... Thus we have the ultimate irony that the primitive utopian community K'ou set out to recover became in fact an established church whose primitiveness had come to an end." Richard B. Mather, "K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist Theocracy at the Northern Wei Court, 425-451," in *Facets of Taoism*, edited by Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 122.

"the eternality of the Tao." *Tao-chiao* is the native, traditional religion of the Chinese.⁹

Although there are thus numerous and somewhat disparate Japanese scholarly views of "What Is Taoism?," we might attempt to synthesize them into one grand schema by a hypothetical Japanese scholar. In this way we may see the main points of that "more complex and less clearcut" nature mentioned as an alternative to Creel's opinions. Such a schema might be as follows:

Tao-chiao developed out of the archaic folk beliefs. At the end of the Warring States and in Ch'in and early Han, there occurred the rise to prominence of various occult techniques of cultivating the body and the congenital nature associated with the *fang-shih* or specialists in esoterica. These were blended with the thought of the Old Master and Master Chuang to form the beliefs and practices of the Taoist religion which arose at the end of the Latter Han period. By that time, the Old Master was already divinized, and the text of his book — especially the teachings about emptiness, non-interference, governing the mind, and nurturing the congenital nature — were being interpreted as spiritual techniques. This is the influence of Taoist philosophy. Buddhism, recently arrived on Chinese soil, was very influential in the development of *Tao-chiao*, both in belief and ritual. Thus, *Tao-chiao* combines occultism, the morality of the Literati School, the Buddhist doctrine of karmic retribution and Buddhist-type institutions and texts with the philosophy of the Old Master as religiously interpreted. However, the major rituals of the Taoist religion, in particular the *chiao*, can be traced back to the incantations of the ancient shamans. The development of the concept of deity in *Tao-chiao* distinguishes it from popular religion, which may be called "temple religion," in that it did not conceive of a large pantheon of deities. On the other hand, its notion of a troika of Highest Deities — the Three Pure Ones or *san ch'ing* — gives it a different look than monotheistic religions. But as in Christianity, the Three in actuality reduce to One, the "hypostasis of the Tao" in Lao Tzû.¹⁰ The main goal in *Tao-chiao* remains that of the *fang-shih*, namely, longevity or even immortal transcendency, sought by the practice of techniques. Institutionally, *Tao-chiao* is an organized religion with its cloisters and religious specialists. It may be described as a Taoist religion among the people, a combination of the *kuei-tao* and *shên-tao*, shamanic incantations, sacrificial rituals and their underlying beliefs, the metaphysics of the Mysterious and True, and certain Buddhist doctrines and rituals. More than that, it is the synthesis of Chinese culture that is associated with every aspect of government, society, and culture. It is the religion of the Chinese people.

⁹ The three-volume work from which the above summary material is taken is simply titled *Dōkyō* (*Tao-chiao*), (Tokyo: Hirakawa Shuppan-sha, 1983).

¹⁰ See Anna K. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao Tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris: l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969), 117.

II

Rather than employing a dichotomy of philosophy and religion, a contemporary Chinese scholar speaks of "Taoism" as having both a broader and narrower connotation. It is the broader connotation that is in the mind of Ssû-ma T'an (died 110 B.C.E.), when he writes of the *Tao-tê* School in his essay "On the Essential Ideas of the Six Schools, 司馬談六家要旨":

Taoism enables men to concentrate their generative essence and spirit; to move in harmony with the Formless (i.e. the Tao); to supply abundantly the myriad beings. As to its techniques, it conforms with the great yin and yang; it selects the good points of the Literati and Mohists; it chooses the essentials from the School of Terms and the School of Totalitarians. [The Taoists] change with the times and respond to the transformations of things-and-beings. They have established [the principles of] ordinariness (i.e., simplicity) in handling affairs. There is no [situation] to which they do not adapt. They point out that frugality makes for ease in managing [affairs]; and that when little is attempted much is accomplished.¹¹

This contemporary scholar, Professor Wu Yao-yü, asserts that "Taoism vertically connects several thousand years of scholarship and culture, from ancient through recent times, while horizontally it comprehends the Schools of the Literati, Mohists, Terms, Totalitarianism, and Yin-Yang ... [its] techniques ... by extension led to the School of Military Strategy and Tactics ... [and] also by extension to the School of Diplomacy ... [and] the Eclectic School" (represented in antiquity by *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu* 呂氏春秋 and *Huai-nan Tzû* 淮南子)¹². She points out that:

There is Taoism as used in governing the world ... There is Taoism as used in self-cultivation ... There is Taoism as used in metaphysics ... There is Taoism as used in the study of immortal transcendency ... There is Taoism as used in organized religion ... Aside from these, in the case of such subjects as astronomy, geography, agriculture and sericulture, prognostication, divination, and the arts of pharmacology and nurturing life-Taoism was involved in all of them without exception, to a greater or lesser degree.¹³

This "broader view" corresponds with the Japanese view mentioned above as number twelve, which sees *Tao-chiao* as having been involved in every aspect of Chinese government, society and culture. So far as our question is concerned, however, the "Taoism" that is to be found in all

¹¹Wu Yao-yü, *The Taoist Tradition in Chinese Thought*, translated by Laurence Thompson (Los Angeles, CA: University of Southern California, Ethnographics Press, 1991), 1-2. This is translated from Wu Yao-yü 吳耀玉, *San Chiao Li T'sê* 三教蠡測, (Taipei, 1976) and extensively revised in manuscript.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 3.

these aspects of Chinese civilization is not explained.¹⁴ However this may be, we should at any rate note carefully the statements of Ssû-ma T'an made long before the rise of any supposed Taoist religion, that there existed a "school" (i.e., a recognizably prominent group and historical line of followers) of a Way called The Tao and Its Differentiating Power, which seemed to hold to the major proposals found in the book of that name and was not only adaptable or open to changing situations, but also eclectic and open to the ideas of the other "schools" of the time. Ssû-ma T'an's concise description seems to give us a quite substantive idea as to what Taoism was in early Han.

To return to Professor Wu Yao-yü's view, we take up what she means by the "narrower connotation" of Taoism. She quotes from another bibliographical essay, Pan Ku's 班固 "Memoir on the Arts and Letters" in his *History of the Former Han Dynasty* 漢書藝文志:

The Taoists seem to have derived from the ranks of the official recorders, who gave detailed accounts of victories and defeats, survivals and disappearances, misfortunes and blessings, and the methods used in ancient and modern times. Thereupon they understood that the art of ruling men by facing south lies in grasping essentials, holding to the root, being pure and empty so as to preserve oneself, humble and weak so as to sustain oneself.¹⁵

And further on, Professor Wu explains:

The Tao is substance or essence (t'i 體); *tê* is its functioning (*yung* 用). They are thus two sides of the same coin ... The Tao and *tê* is the cosmology of the Old Master. Applying it to government, the lord of men should comprehend the profound mystery of the Tao and *tê*, preserve himself by purity and emptiness, sustain himself by humbleness and weakness. Then, he can face the south as king, carrying out the technique of management by "ruling the world with robes hanging loose and hands folded across his breast." This is what Ssû-ma T'an referred to by saying, "They have established the principle of ordinariness (i.e., simplicity) in handling affairs. There is no situation to which they do not adapt."

His statement that the Taoists "change with the times" refers to the fact that, with the progress of the times, Taoism was also able to divide into the two aspects of philosophy and organized religion. Five items may be noted in its philosophical aspect: (1) the vogue of eremitism; (2) the lore of the specialists in esoterica, spirits, and immortal transcendents; (3) the governmental techniques of Huang-Lao 黃老; (4) the metaphysical philosophy of Lao-Chuang 老莊; and (5) the techniques of alchemy. As for organized religion, it was owing to the effects of unsettled times and illusory imaginings about spirits

¹⁴This is the problem that Nathan Sivin finds perplexing as he looks for what is "Taoistic" in Chinese science. See his essay, "On the Word 'Taoist' as a Source of Perplexity ...," *History of Religion* 17.3/4 (February-May 1978): 303-330.

¹⁵Wu, *The Taoist Tradition*, 4.

and immortal transcendentals, along with the influence of Huang-Lao and the stimulus of Buddhism, that organized Taoist religion suddenly sprang up during the Eastern Han period.¹⁶

Thus Professor Wu includes what Professor Creel defines as the totality of Taoism -philosophy and religion — only in her "narrower connotation"; furthermore, her concept of "philosophy" includes much that other scholars have considered as "religion" — eremitism, esoteric lore, alchemy and the like, with immortal transcendency as the most striking item. And once again we note that the "philosophical" aspect of Taoism seems to be firmly based on the text of the Old Master.

III

For an explanation of the special connection of the term Tao with Taoist religion, we turn to Ch'ên Kuo-fu 陳國符, well-known for his still highly esteemed pioneering studies of the Taoist Canon. Ch'ên's main concern was particularly with the "techniques" of *Tao-chiao*, whose goal was longevity or even immortal transcendency. It was with this goal in mind that he remarks:

Tao means the techniques of the Tao (*tao-shu* 道術). Because the techniques of the Tao are not all alike, there is the T'ai-p'ing Tao 太平道 of Chang Chüeh 張角 ... which is in fact the Tao of Mr. Kan 干君 (i.e. Kan Chi 干吉) ... the Five Pecks of Rice Tao 五斗米道 of Chang Ling 張陵 ... also called the Master Designated by the Heavens Tao (t'ien-shih tao 天師道), the Po School Tao 帛家道, and the Tao of Mr. Li 李氏道.¹⁷ When Buddhism entered China, at that time people regarded it as nothing more than another kind of Tao ... and they called it the *Fo-tao* 佛道. Note that the techniques of the Tao are also called methods and techniques (*fa-shu* 法術). Hence, *Fo-tao* (or Buddhism) was also known as *Fo-fa* 佛法, while the various kinds of original Chinese Tao were therefore inclusively known as *Tao-fa* 道法. In addition, the *Tao-fa* and *Fo-fa* were called *Tao-chiao* and *Fo-chiao*.

Now the totality of the original Chinese *Tao-shu* or techniques of the Tao were known as *Tao-chiao* (i.e. teachings of *Tao-shu* or techniques of the Tao). With this [are] the

¹⁶Ibid, 6.

¹⁷T'ai P'ing Tao of Chang Chieh (or Chang Chüeh) refers to the so-called Yellow Turban peasant uprising in the late Han; Kan (or Yü) Chi was a Taoist leader in Shantung during the same period; Chang Ling (or Tao-ling) was, of course, the founder of what was to become the longest-lived and still most prominent line of Taoist professional religious. As for "Mr. Po's School," the text may have misprinted *po* 帛 where the correct graph is *po* 伯, and Ch'ên's reference in that case apparently is to Wei Po-yang 魏伯陽, putative author of the Ts'an T'ung Ch'i 參同契, said to be the oldest alchemical treatise. The "Tao of Mr. Li" perhaps refers to the *fang-shih* 方士 Li Shao-chün 李少君, who for a time influenced the First Emperor.

techniques of "gold and cinnabar," "drugs of immortal transcendency," "yellow and white," "profound or mysterious simplicity," "spitting out and taking in" (i.e., breath yoga), "guiding and inducing" (i.e., circulating the Vital Breath), "prohibiting and invoking" (i.e., incantations), [and] "amulets and registers" — none but were completely included.¹⁸

In this view the Tao — which is so commonly interpreted as metaphysical essence or substance, and its orbital movement as function, or as the Way to be followed by man so as to harmonize with the Transcendent Principle — has been stripped of its more or less mystical character and is regarded simply as techniques or methods. Then, the term Teachings of Tao, *Tao-shu* or *Tao-chiao*, just means teachings about techniques or methods of attaining longevity or immortal transcendency.¹⁹

A quite different view is taken by Hsü Ti-shan 許地山, another pioneer among Chinese scholars of Taoism in this century. Hsü looks at the problem in a considerably broader, if slightly cynical way:

... But every time the Taoists (*Tao-shih* 道士) appropriated the theories of another school they believed they already had them. Hence, from the doctrinal point of view one constantly feels [*Tao-chiao*] is a miscellany and not pure. From what Ssü-ma Ch'ien 司馬遷 [actually Ssü-ma T'an] says, we can see that in Han times the *Tao-chia* already had this tendency. The Grand Historian gave high praise to the *Tao-chia* for their adaptability to circumstances. We can see [this adaptability in that] later, [the thought of] the *tao-chia* combined [the theories of] immortal transcendents and specialists in esoterica (*fang-shih*); or [in that] they combined the sacrifice of the *chiao* and the charm-water of the Tao of the Masters Designated by the Heavens; or [in that] they mixed in Buddhism; or [in that] they blended in Manichaeism ... By early Ch'ing, in a text called *Complete Mirror of True [Men] and Immortal Transcendents* (*Chên Hsien T'ung Chien* 真仙通鑑),²⁰ they further made Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul to be among the patriarchs of *Tao-chiao*. Now [Hsü is writing in the early 1930s] there is further a movement to consider the myriad religions [of the world] as one, and among all the foreign religions there is none that has not been appropriated [by *Tao-chiao*]. In ancient times, popular beliefs such as *yin-yang* 陰

¹⁸Ch'ên Kuo-fu, *Tao Tsang Yüan Liu K'ao* 道藏源流考 (*Researches into the Origin and Evolution of the Taoist Canon*), 2nd ed. (Peking: Chung-hua shu chu, 1963), 259.

¹⁹We use the neutral term "teachings" because *chiao*, taken as what Westerners call "religion," is a modern concept, apparently deriving from the Japanese term *shūkyō* (*tsung-chiao* 宗教), coined to meet the need for a term to correspond with that Western concept. Certainly *tsung-chiao* is not in the Chinese vocabulary as recently as *P'ei-wên Yün-fu* 佩文韻府 (published in 1711). As mentioned in a note above, Richard Mather says the term *Tao-chiao* was probably used first by K'ou Ch'ien-chih in mid-6th century B.C.E.

²⁰I haven't seen this book, whose title might alternately mean, *Complete Mirror of Genuine Immortal Transcendents*.

陽 and the *wu-hsing* 五行, *fêng-shui* 風水 and the apocryphal [interpretations of Literati Scriptures] could all be put into the calabash of *Tao-chiao*. How true it is that, "like waters in flood, the Supreme Tao is everywhere. How could it be [limited to] 'left' or 'right' (*Tao-tê Ching* 34)!"²¹

Hsü Ti-shan is obviously thinking of Taoism as religion, a religion whose openness and eclecticism had already been remarked by Ssü-ma T'an. This eclecticism and the all-embracing cultural range of Taoism remind us of Hinduism:

Because it integrates a large variety of heterogeneous elements, Hinduism constitutes a very complex but largely continuous whole, and since it covers the whole of life, it has religious, social, economic, literary, and artistic aspects. As a religion, Hinduism is an utterly diverse conglomerate of doctrines, cults, and ways of life ... In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any ... Hinduism is, then, both a civilization and a conglomerate of religions, with neither a beginning, a founder, nor a central authority, hierarchy, or organization. Every attempt at a specific definition of Hinduism has proved unsatisfactory in one way or another, the more so because the finest Indian scholars of Hinduism, including Hindus themselves, have emphasized different aspects of the whole.²²

The analogous position of Hinduism and Taoism as national religions within their respective civilizations has been pointed out in a Japanese view (see number eight in the summary, where Shinto is seen as the Japanese analog). And by way of underlining this analogous character, we have the fact stated in the last sentence of the article quoted above, that "the finest scholars ... including Hindus [for which read Chinese] themselves, have emphasized different aspects of the whole." Such a situation is, of course, what has led to the ruminations of the present essay.

IV

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty Dumpty, "which is to be master — that's all."²³

The centuries-old effort by Westerners to grasp the nature of Chinese civilization has reflected, of course, the civilizations of the West in their changing characters. One can attempt to

²¹Hsü Ti-shan, *Tao Chiao Shih* 道教史 (*A History of Taoism*), vol.1 (Taipei: Mu t'ung chu pan she, 1976), 9f.

²²*Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia*, 15th ed., s.v "Hinduism." This article is credited to Ja.Ga., an abbreviation I do not find in the index of authors.

²³Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*.

understand the Other only in one's own terms. Even scholars fall victim to the easy stereotyping that seems to bring a subject under control. Stereotyping is after all another form of definition or categorization, and the logic of defining one's terms is rooted in the Greek origins of Western thought. In Western historical experience, there are certain patterns of social, political, and intellectual behavior and certain institutions in which civilization has been expressed. When confronted by China, where Western historical experience has often seemed not to explain things, these things have often been seen as a manifestation of the Great Wall phenomenon. On the other hand, more recently scholars with a great effort have tried to bring all cultures into a pan-human perspective, and the peculiarities earlier Western observers found in Chinese civilization have been explained as simply variants in the "saga of human civilization." Obviously, the breaching of Great Walls is desirable in this rapidly shrinking world; but, on the other hand, it is questionable that all differences can or should be resolved into what seems congruent with Western experience.

One of the categories of that Western experience is religion, most specifically the highly elaborated and institutionalized religions of The Book. In a less sophisticated age, Western scholars attempted to isolate the religions of non-Western societies, usually with the overt or unexpressed intention of showing that it was necessary for the salvation of those societies that they convert to the Western religion — in particular some specific brand of Christianity or Islam. The lack of religion, here defined by that specific brand, was in itself sufficient to cause and explain the conquest and domination of those societies. Even today, the word "religion" is usually taken by the lay person to mean a specific brand of Western creed, while scholars struggle to manufacture a definition of religion that will be all-inclusive. It seems we cannot comprehend a society without the application of some definition. That is the way the mind grasps the order of things.

Although not as exigent as the problem of religion, there is a similar difficulty in the definition of "philosophy." Here again, the Western tradition accords a premier position to the definitional aspect, called "logic." It is certainly a major problem for the Western scholar to face the fact that Chinese thought, despite (or perhaps because of) an initial dalliance with logic, quickly turned away from it and proceeded down the centuries unfettered or untutored by a discipline considered so indispensable by Western philosophers. In fact, it is one of the things that justify our academic departments of philosophy in ignoring what is condescendingly called "the wisdom of the East."

We may seem to straying away from our topic, but I believe these remarks are quite *à propos*. When Creel opines that Taoist philosophy and Taoist religion are two different animals, he is using Western categories to reduce Chinese phenomena to intelligibility. When he speaks of "contemplative" and "purposive" Taoist philosophy, this is a refinement of the categorization. Here I think he has gone farther than most Western philosophers would accept, in that he has spoken of the thought of the Old Master and Master Chuang as "philosophy." A modern analytical philosopher would hardly find "philosophy" in these texts, except by way of rather tortuous extrapolation. To date there have been two kinds of "philosophy" found in the *Lao Tzu* text, the one an elementary metaphysics very briefly expressed and the other a political program. From the traditional Western point of view, these are not argued logically, but didactically. They therefore partake more of a familiar type of religious pontification than of rational argumentation. It is no wonder this text has appealed strongly to Westerners who like a "mystical" authority rather

than the cold logic of Western philosophy. As for *Master Chuang*, despite the passage in which logic is attacked logically, on the whole its stories appeal rather to the taste for fables.

Probably these pre-Ch'in texts are given the prestigious appellation of "philosophy" because at least they traffic only minimally in magic or the supernatural. They seem to be more or less down-to-earth solutions to political and social problems of their times, by people of keen intelligence who appeal to our reason in refusing to accept the status quo. Still, for all that, it is the "wisdom of the East" rather than the logic of the West.

The second definition given by Creel is "Hsien Taoism," which is his alternative way of indicating what many others call "religious Taoism." Inasmuch as contemporary scholars tend to define "religion" in terms of some sort of "ultimacy," the goal of immortal transcendence certainly is to be included under this rubric. It is not that this goal of Taoism is not religious, but that it is too limited. Attainment of any truly ultimate goal — be it bodhisattvahood, sainthood, or immortal transcendency — is in the nature of the case possible only for a tiny group of the elite and cannot therefore adequately describe what a religion means to most of its adherents. Although myth — the explanation of how things came to be — may be the basic story line and ritual, the language of religions, its true *raison d'être* seems to be the unavoidable existential problems that cannot be coped with by technological or other "practical" means. In other words, in the face of certain situations men adopt what we call "religious" responses, because nothing else can avail. Such situations include suffering, quirks of fate, human inadequacy in vital tasks, the meaninglessness of existence, the omnipresence of evil, authority and submission, and death and salvation.²⁴ If Taoism is a "religion" and not just a quest for immortal transcendency by means of techniques, it must surely be responsive to these problems. At the same time, if it is indeed the religion of a civilization ("the religion of the Chinese people"), it must surely incorporate a code of universal ethics. I have not yet seen a serious effort to "define" Taoism in such terms.

V

Two problems have most often been noted in understanding the basic premises of Taoism and placing it in the totality of Chinese civilization. The first is how to reconcile the calm acceptance of death as part of the natural process with the elaborate range of techniques developed to stave off or even triumph over death. There is no doubt that the first attitude characterizes the relevant passages in the basic Taoist texts of the *Lao Tzú* and *Chuang Tzú*. It is this attitude which gives rise to the view of Creel and others, that those texts are "philosophical," presumably because they represent a more "mature" and intellectually superior acquiescence to the Great Scheme of Things called the Tao.

Certainly acquiescence to the Tao is fundamental in all Taoism, just as obedience to the will of God is an accepted premise in Western religions. However, as we know, even in the deterministic fatalism which characterizes a certain form of Christianity, one also finds the belief

²⁴This view of religion was proposed some years ago in my article, "The Scrutable Chinese Religion," in *China and Christianity: Historical and Future Encounters* edited by James D. Whitehead, Yu-ming Shaw, and N.J. Girardot (Notre Dame, IN: Center for Pastoral and Social Ministry, University of Notre Dame, 1979), 36-61.

that "God helps those who help themselves." This may help us to see why the great goal of attaining immortal transcendence could be Taoistic. That is to say, to conform with the Tao does not mean passively to allow every life-threatening process to have its way with us. The so-called Three Worms, for example, seem to be "natural," but we are not required to submit to their destructive work without undertaking techniques to foil them. To allow disease to shorten our natural lifespan cannot be considered as conforming with Nature (the Tao), if we have the means to overcome it. Hence, medicine is simply another form of Taoism which attempts to prevent *unnatural* frustration of the natural processes of the Tao. From this attitude arise not only the theories and techniques that come to be considered the "healing arts," but also the closely related theories and techniques that come to be considered *Tao-chiao*. Once we see that transcendence of death is logically transcendence of those unnatural obstacles that impede the operations of the Tao, the apparently irreconcilable conflict between calm acceptance and techniques of avoidance is resolved. Every religion expresses in some way this attitude that Death shall not triumph, without which men will hardly find it compelling.

The second problem to which we allude concerns the relationship between the popular religion and Taoism. Some of the best experts have recently emphasized that the distinction is very real. Even to a non-expert like myself, it has become apparent that classificatory clarity requires such a distinction and that a good deal of muddled thinking about Chinese religion has been due to failure to recognize the differences. One can hardly suppress a gnawing suspicion, however, that the undoubted identification of Taoists as communal priests confounds a neat differentiation, and herein lies the problem.

It may be that this problem is more apparent than real, because the Chinese situation is after all not unique; in fact, it seems upon reflection to be quite common in the history of religions. No major religion was ever constituted of the teachings of a single founder or a single book, and a reductionist definition will not help us to grasp *Tao-chiao* any more than any other Great Tradition. Whatever ingredients can be identified in the ancient religion of the Chinese people, they must, above all, have been manifestations of attempts to respond to the existential situations we have mentioned above. In becoming an organized religion, Taoism, while undoubtedly adding something to the ancient religion, would not have thrown out these beliefs and practices, which were indeed part and parcel of the cultural ethos of the Taoists themselves. One must abandon the notion (so common among scholars of the present) that the formulators of Taoistic theory, known to us as the Old Master and Master Chuang, were not men of their time and place.

To be sure Taoism was, in part, a new dispensation. Its practitioners believed in such basic teachings of the *Lao Tzu* book as "preserving purity and emptiness," "holding to humbleness and weakness," "blocking out the distractions of the sense and becoming one with the Tao," and so forth. Looking at the historical situation of the Warring States, we can see that they were an identifiable group, the only group, in fact, whose outlook may be called spiritual as against worldly. The men who clustered about the teachings of the Old Master must have been a literate intelligentsia who, given other ambitions, would have been Literati and gone in for official careers. We are not suggesting that the early Taoists were "mystics" or pure contemplatives; the later development of a Taoist movement, however, led onward to such religious concerns. Testimony to this lies in the vast quantities of "revealed texts" that eventually enabled Taoist religious leaders to form their particular versions of the *Tao-chiao*. As an integral part of such

developments and certainly guided by the example of monastic Buddhism, some of the Taoist religious became eremites or contemplatives, devoting themselves to self-cultivation and the whole technical methodology of breath-yoga, drugs, external and internal alchemy, and so forth — of course, always with the ultimate goal of attaining immortal transcendency.

On the other hand, there were Taoists not inclined to the eremitic life, who, accepting the need of the communities for religious leadership of a more authoritative sort than the often ill-educated or illiterate shamans, exorcists, diviners, etc., took over the priestly functions. They were still Taoists because they knew that popular beliefs could not lead to immortal transcendency, but they must have empathized with a great many of these popular beliefs which were their inheritance as well. However, as they developed appropriate rituals and took over major exorcistic functions, they brought a coherence to the hitherto amorphous religion of the people, who came to recognize their superior official power over gods and spirits.

This division of the professional religious is not, as we remarked, an unusual phenomenon in major religions. One can think, for example, of the parish priest and the monastic contemplative in the Roman Catholic Church, while the same sorts of spiritual divergences are evident in Islam, with its imams and Sūfīs, in Hinduism with its priests and renunciates, and in Buddhism with its missionaries and its self-incarcerated hermits. There are those who practice their religion while "dwelling by the fire," and those who cannot be satisfied except by practicing away from the distractions and temptations of social life.

We shall resist the temptation to wander further in this speculative way, and bring this essay to a close. Along with our "apologies" to H. G. Creel, we offer our thanks for having raised an important question and given it a challenging definition that has certainly been in the back of many scholars' minds for several decades. It is our hope that those more qualified than we may give more satisfactory answers than we have been able to do to the question, "What is Taoism?"

Ghosts and Demons, Law and Order: Grave Quelling Texts and Early Taoist Liturgy

Angelika CEDZICH
University of California, Berkeley

When, in the second half of the second century A.D., Taoist liturgy took shape in northwest China, it did not enter an empty scene. As we know, by that time, there already existed an elaborate official religion, besides a rich variety of officially tolerated and unofficial popular cults; Buddhism, too, was slowly beginning to make its way into the Middle Kingdom. In view of this, what prompted the origin of yet another type of indigenous religion? In what way was this Taoist liturgy in fact new? What specific religious needs did it address, and how did it answer those needs?

The final years of the declining Han dynasty were characterized by political turmoil and social unrest, in the wake of which charismatic religious leaders gathered the masses in direct uprisings against the government. But unlike the Yellow Turbans in the East, the creators of the Taoist Celestial Masters (*Tianshi* 天師) liturgy in Zhang Lu's 張魯 semi-autonomous state in Hanzhong 漢中 made no attempt to overthrow the dynasty. Nor do their own religious convictions show any sharp contradictions with the established beliefs of the Chinese elite concerning the necessary cyclical renewals in an all-embracing system of cosmic, moral, and political order.

Yet, in an essay published some years ago, Michel Strickmann calls the birth of liturgical Taoism a religious revolution. He does so in connection with the Taoist opposition to the gods of Chinese popular religion, the insatiable spirits of the dead, who demanded bloody sacrifices from the people without having the proper right to do so. The Taoists, Strickmann underlines, replaced these bloody offerings to the "carnivorous gods of popular religion" by pure pledges of silver and gold in their own transmission rituals, while they made every effort to reveal the true nature of those impure ghosts worshipped as gods by the people and tried to restrict even the cult of the ancestors.¹

Taoism defined itself in contrast to the cults of popular religion. This had previously been shown by Rolf Stein, though he understood the Taoist opposition to popular cults precisely as a result of the common ground they shared.² In any event, the Taoist condemnation of the sacrificial practices of the people cannot in itself yet be called a religious revolution, nor was it a uniquely Taoist attitude. As Stein has also pointed out, the Taoists, in this respect, referred almost literally to the standard definition of legitimate and illicit religious practice underlying the Han state's policies against popular religion. As the *Liji* 禮記 says:

The Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, to [the spirits presiding over the] four quarters; to [the spirits of] the hills and rivers; and offers the five sacrifices of the house — all in the course of the year. The feudal princes present oblations, each to [the spirits

¹Strickmann, M, "The Consecration Sutra: A Buddhist Book of Spells," In *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. by Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 93.

²R. A. Stein, "Religious Taoism and Popular Religion from the Second to Seventh Centuries," In *Facets of Taoism*, edited by H. Welch and A. Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 53-81.

presiding over] his own quarter, to the [spirits of] its hills and rivers — and offer the five sacrifices of the house — all in the course of the year. [Other officers] present oblations to their ancestors. There should be no presuming to resume any sacrifice which has been abolished [by proper authority], nor to abolish any which has been so established. A sacrifice which is not proper to offer, and which is yet offered, is called an excessive sacrifice. Excessive sacrifices bring no blessing.³

And in a fifth century A.D. Taoist source we read:

The Son of Heaven properly sacrifices to Heaven, the Three Dukes to the five sacred mountains, the feudal lords to the mountains and rivers, and the people sacrifice on the five auspicious *la* 臘 days to their ancestors, and in the second and eighth months to the gods of the soil and the stove. Aside from these there should be no other sacrifices. Whoever sacrifices to the god of the soil and stove on other dates, violates the [prohibition] of excessive cults.⁴

If the opposition against popular religion was nothing new, what then was the novelty brought about by Taoism? The bureaucratization of the pantheon? As a matter of fact, indications that the cultural elites of China saw their gods as deputies of a divine bureaucracy are already found in ancient texts such as the *Mozi* 墨子, the *Guoyu* 國語, and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳.⁵ But the true origins of this systematization of the spiritual world may have to be traced to much earlier times. David Keightley has pointed out that the prominence of bureaucratic concepts in later political and religious thought was already foreshadowed in the bureaucratic way the Shang aristocracy dealt with their ancestors during divinatory and sacrificial rites.⁶

The degree to which bureaucratic metaphors later ruled Chinese religious imagination, particularly in connection with the world of death, has been revealed by tomb excavations in the last several decades. In a number of pioneering studies on various types of grave documents dating from about the first century B.C. to the second century A.D., Anna Seidel has drawn a surprising picture of the beliefs concerning the afterlife, which must have been shared by large segments and different strata of Han society.⁷

³Ibid., 1. 27b-28a. Translation with minor modifications according to J. Legge, trans. *The Li Ki*, Vol. 27, *Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Muller. (London: The Clarendon Press, 1885), 116.

⁴(HY 1119), lb.

⁵See, for example, J. Riegel, "Kou-mang and Ju-shou," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989-1990): 55-83; Jean Levi, *Les fonctionnaires divins* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), 203-234.

⁶D. Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture," *History of Religions* 17, no. 3-4 (1978): 211-225.

⁷A. Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt: Jenseitsvorstellungen in den Graburkunden der späteren Han Zeit," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien*, edited by Gert Naundorf et al. (Wurzburg: Konigshausen und Neumann, 1985); idem., "Traces of Han Religion in Funeral Texts Found in Tombs," in *Dokyo to shukyo bunka*, edited by Akizuki Kan'ei (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha, 1987); idem., "Post-Mortem Immortality or The Taoist Resurrection of the Body," in *Gilgul: Essays on the Transformation, Revolution, and Permanence in the History*

According to these sources, the spirits of the dead and the whole sub-terrestrial realm were governed by a Celestial Thearch (*Tiandi* 天帝) and his Envoy (*Tiandi shizhe* 天帝使者), also called the Heavenly Thearch's Divine Teacher (*Tiandi shenshi* 天帝神師), who directed a well-organized administration with its headquarters located inside the five marchmounts of China's sacred geography. These were places of census and trial, where detailed records of the living and dead were kept and where the deceased were judged, found guilty or released from blame according to a juridical code (*lü* 律) enacted and controlled by the Celestial Thearch himself.

In ordinances written in the name of the Celestial Thearch and his Envoy, the spirits of the soil were informed of the arrival of the departed (i.e., the date of his burial) and asked to avert the curse of his death (*yang* 殃) from the surviving family.⁸ Grave goods were offered to the netherworld in order to exempt the dead from corvée labor and his descendants from responsibility for misdeeds committed by him while alive.⁹ Some of the documents express fear on the part of the living that errors in the otherworldly administration might have caused a family member's premature death. The agents of the spirit administration are exhorted to recheck their records and eliminate confusions between the names of the living and dead in their lists, which implies that there was hope that a person mistakenly called to the world of death might eventually be sent back to life.¹⁰

But as a rule, the registers of life and death had to be kept strictly apart, and so the dead themselves were sternly reminded that, from the time of their burial on, they had to follow the laws of the realm of shadows, from which there was no return to the world of the living.¹¹ No claims and no reproaches should concern any more those who survived them. To make this segregation unmistakably clear, the spirits of the dead were sometimes even given new names.¹² The ritual function of these documents thus consisted not only in ensuring the departed souls a safe passage to the other world, but also in confining them safely to the regions beyond the graves in order to protect the living from any dangers connected with their deaths. For this reason, these various types of tomb documents might conveniently be called "grave quelling texts."

More recently Donald Harper, studying archaeological reports by Li Xue-qin 李學勤 and others, has shown that some elements of this funerary cult are already present in documents excavated from graves of the fourth and third century B.C. These written materials comprise divinatory, astrological, and medical texts that were buried with the dead, but whose ritual significance is less evident than that of the texts analyzed by Seidel.¹³

of Religions; Dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, edited by S. Shaked et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

⁸Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt," 166-167; appendix II.

⁹Ibid., 169.

¹⁰Seidel, "Traces of Han Religion," 31-34.

¹¹Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt," 168.

¹²Ibid., 176.

¹³D. Harper, "Religious Traditions of the Warring States, Ch'in and Han," paper presented at the AAS meeting, Washington D.C., 1992; idem, "Resurrection in Warring States Religion," paper presented at the WCAAS meeting, Tucson, AZ, 1992, forthcoming *Taoist Resources* 5.2.

Most spectacular among these is a report of presumably 269 B.C., addressed by the administrator of the region of Di 鄙 to the Royal Scribe of the Qin state. This report, which was found in a late Warring States or early Qin tomb in Fangmatan 放馬灘 (Gansu), recounts the story of a man named Dan 丹, who, around 300 B.C., committed suicide after stabbing another man. His corpse was exposed in the market for three days before it was buried outside the village where he had died. However, his patron, the famous Wei general Xi Wu 席武 (died in 293 B.C.),¹⁴ was convinced that Dan had not finished his natural lifespan and submitted a plaint to the Scribe of the Director of Lifespans (*siming shi* 司命史) in the underworld. This scribe is identified in the document as Gongsun Qiang 公孫強, known from Chinese history as a key-figure in the extinction of the state of Cao 曹 in 487 B.C.¹⁵ Following General Xi Wu's protest and fully three years after his suicide, Dan was indeed resurrected from his grave. He stood on his tomb for three days until the Scribe of the Director of Lifespans, came to take him to the North. Four years later, Dan was able again to hear and to eat human food, although his body still showed all the traces of his death: he had a scar on his throat, his eyebrows had partly fallen out and looked inky, and his four limbs were stiff. Yet, he could give advice to the living on how they should take care of their dead.¹⁶

This document still leaves a number of important questions open — first of all it is not clear why, twenty-four years after Dan's resurrection, the administrator of Di sent this report to the Royal Scribe of Qin and why a copy of the document was placed in a grave whose occupant was apparently not Dan himself.

But the account shows that a number of beliefs that became extremely important later in both the Han funerary cult and in religious Taoism existed already in the fourth century B.C. Apart from the idea of the possible resurrection of the physical body, the text reveals that the notion of a bureaucratically structured other world staffed with well-known figures from China's historical past was already familiar. Moreover, the living had means to deal with the netherworld authorities in orderly legal procedures.

We also see that it was already common practice by that time for local administrators to send reports concerning cases of death in their jurisdictions to superior official institutions. The circumstances of Dan's suicide and subsequent resurrection were of course extraordinary, but as Harper has also pointed out, an elaborate system of record-keeping concerning births, deaths, and other significant population data was already maintained by local officials in the late fourth century B.C. in Chu. Administrative documents excavated from a tomb in Baoshan 包山 (Hubei), for example, comprise a daily register of legal complaints presumably lodged by the populace with local officials. Four entries in this register concern the non-reporting of a death, and two of them concern the same death. The second complaint in this case specifies that the place of residence, name, and clan of the deceased was not properly delivered to the capital.¹⁷ Though this practice

¹⁴On Xi Wu, see *Zhanguo ci* 戰國策, *Yi Zhou ci* 西周策 and *Wei ci* 魏策.

¹⁵*Chunqiu Zuo chuan zhengyi*, 春秋左傳正義 in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 58; 8a-9a.

¹⁶Li Xueqin, 李學勤 "Fangmatan jian zhong de zhiguai gushi," 放馬灘簡中的志怪故事 *Wenwu* 文物 4: 43-47; Harper, "Resurrection in Warring States Religion," 2-5.

¹⁷Harper, "Resurrection in Warring States Religion," 6.

certainly served secular administrative purposes, the fact that all these documents were found in graves could suggest that the data were already considered important for otherworldly administrators as well. To put it in other words, rather than concerning only the administration in this world, the information contained in these texts was also directed to the more or less bureaucratically conceived institutions of the world of death.

Harper stresses that among the administrative texts found in Han tombs, four examples were memoranda from Han bureaucrats informing the authorities in the netherworld of the arrival of a newly deceased person. The letters, as Harper says, were placed in the tombs as a kind of passport to the underworld, just like the documents required for travel between administrative districts in the Han realm.¹⁸

These archaeological finds confirm Jean Levi's thesis of the deeply religious aspect of traditional Chinese officialdom. Levi's observations are based on a close study of the received literary sources of China's ancient and medieval past.¹⁹

But beyond that, the ideas expressed in these ancient administrative documents found in tombs also bear striking similarities to the fundamental notions underlying Taoist liturgy. Death, or to be more exact, the diverting of its adverse effects, illness and misfortune, was the focus of Taoist rituals which were based on the concept of a supernatural administration accessible to functionaries of this world. It is clear then that the perception of the divine realm as a legal institution was not a Taoist invention, but a wholesale borrowing from a pre-existing mortuary cult which, far from being eclipsed by the new religion, lived on more or less independently through the Chinese middle ages down to late imperial times.

And yet early Taoism stands in contrast to this religion of tombs in at least three respects: the elaboration and systematization of the basic tenets, an integrated communal and clerical organization, and a distinctive liturgy. Although the proto-Taoist funerary tradition was certainly distinct from the ecstatic sacrificial cults of the illiterate masses, it lacked all characteristics of an independent religious system. We have no idea whether it was in fact carried on only by the representatives of Chinese officialdom or whether there existed a class of specialized ritualists beside them, nor do we know much about the rituals themselves. The Taoist innovation consists, in my opinion, precisely in the successful incorporation of the older beliefs into a coherent doctrinal, organizational, and liturgical framework. Moreover, Taoist soteriology also substantially changed some of the original concepts adopted from the pre-Han/Han cult of the dead. I will now try to illustrate this.

Chinese historiographers and Buddhist apologists referred to the first Taoist communities as adherents of a demonic religion (*guidao* 鬼道). New initiates into this religion, so they claim, were called "demon soldiers" (*guizu* 鬼卒); more advanced members were styled "demon clerks" (*guili* 鬼吏).

And, in fact, demons and ghosts were the main concern of the Early Celestial Masters. Demons were seen by the majority of Chinese society as the immediate source of evil in this world; only some skeptics such as Wang Chong 王充 (27-97) really doubted that plagues, social unrest, wars, and natural catastrophes were the results of demonic work. The literate classes rationalized their beliefs by explaining the actions of demons in ethical, socio-cosmological terms. Bad rule, so it was believed, disrupted the cosmic harmony; as a consequence demons appeared like boils on the surface of an ailing body causing suffering and disaster. But these symptoms

¹⁸Ibid., 5.

¹⁹Levi, *Les fonctionnaires divins*, 219-268.

would disappear if the ruler re-adapted his virtue to the principles of universal order and meticulously performed the prescribed rites to maintain its rhythm — or if Heaven bestowed its mandate upon a new, worthier Son. Thus demons were considered a mere secondary phenomenon dependent on higher ethical and cosmological rules and could to a certain extent be ignored.

However, to the ordinary people, ignorant of the powerful magic of the higher Confucian rites and excluded from their performance, demons were a concrete threat that lurked everywhere: in the earth, in mountains, rivers, and lakes, inside stones, trees, animals, and even in worn-out household objects. A particular danger was the spirits of the dead, the ghosts of those who had died a premature or violent death, especially those who had committed crimes while alive, and all those who after their deaths had fallen into oblivion. These wretched shadows turned back against the living. Speaking through the mouths of mediums or afflicting their descendants with diseases (*zhu* 注),²⁰ they demanded compensation — offerings and sacrifices — food that would enable them to resist complete disintegration and to avenge the loss of their rights and identities. These were the fears haunting the people and expressed in the proto-Taoist grave-quelling texts, and these were the spirits appeased by the people in sacrificial cults, but condemned by the social and cultural elites, including the Taoists.

The established religion of the ruling classes offered no provisions for eliminating the threat of these lowly demons and ghosts. The dead of the higher classes were turned into ancestors and expected to behave in the same cultured manner that had characterized their lives. The ancestor cult of the Han was a highly formalized religion in which the proper performance of rites outweighed the original meaning of sacrifices. "The spirits relish the virtue, not the flavors [of sacrificial meals]," comments Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (128-169) in a passage in the *Liji*.²¹

Although the Han formally allowed commoners to worship their own ancestors,²² it is questionable whether the people also understood and performed the cult in the way perceived as appropriate by the elite. "The rites do not extend to the common people," says the *Liji*,²³ and it states in another passage, "Small officers and ordinary people have no ancestral shrines, when they are dead they are called ghosts."²⁴

Unlike the people's cult to their ancestors, which was tolerated despite the doubts it raised with the ruling class, the popular cults to all the other unlucky ghosts were viewed as clearly incompatible with ritual propriety. Offerings and sacrifices to these spirits — called "eating and drinking demons" (*yinshi zhi gui* 飲食之鬼) or "blood-eating demons" (*xueshi zhi gui* 血食之鬼), because they were in constant search for nourishment²⁵ — were classified as "excessive" and proscribed. Thus, the people were left alone with their fears of the demons and dead. What to do about them?

²⁰For the concept of *zhu*, see also Liu Zhaojui, 劉昭瑞 "Tan kaogu faxian de Daojiao jiezhu wen," 談考古發現的道教解注文 *Dunhuang yanjiu* 敦煌研究 4: 51-57.

²¹*Liji zhengyi* 21, 7a.

²²*Hanshu* 25A, 1193-1194.

²³*Liji zhengyi* 3, 4b.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 46, 6a-b.

²⁵See, e.g., (HY 1208), 2.17a and 18b.

The grave-quelling texts show that the problem was recognized and addressed. Instead of placating the hungry ghosts with illicit sacrifices, the Han mortuary cult attempted to subject the spirits to law and order. The statutes of the Heavenly Thearch were meant to make the dead renounce their claims on the living. Their plaints should be dealt with by the legal instances of the other world, which was strictly divided from the realm of the living. On this legalistic approach, the Taoists modelled their own liturgy which — like the older funerary cult — was devised, albeit by more efficient means, to bridge the gap between illicit sacrificial practice and the persistent fear of demons and the dead among the people.

The Taoists not only shared the official view concerning the restriction of sacrificial rites, but also the rationalistic interpretation of demons as portents of cosmic disharmony. On the other hand, they recognized the urgent need for proper ritual forms to disperse the wide-spread fear of demonic evil. The principal answer to this dilemma was provided by the mortuary cult — law and order instead of sacrifices and ecstatic celebrations.

To the Taoists this law was materialized in the three celestial breaths of Laozi's divine body, hence its name, "Correct Law of the Three Heavens" (*Santian zhengfa* 三天正法). What it basically meant is already expressed in the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Laozi*, a text of the early Celestial Masters tradition, "The Correct Law of the Heavens does not consist in sacrifices and prayer cults. The Tao therefore prohibits such practices by severe penalty. Sacrifices and prayer cults are considered heresies."²⁶

This law was administered by a tribunal known as the Three Bureaus (*Sanguan* 三官), where the newly dead were judged with respect to their conduct during their lives, but conversely, the ghosts could also sue the court for any injustice they suffered. If it was found that there was indeed a crime that still had to be punished, the court sent out spirit-constables (*Kaoli* 考吏)²⁷ to investigate among the living descendants of the defendant until the case was solved. Bad dreams, illness, social and economic decline indicated to the living that a lawsuit was going on beyond the tomb of a forebear (*zhongsong* 塚訟). In the fourth century A.D., the aristocratic southern Chinese Xu 許 family, adherents of the Way of the Celestial Masters and promoters of the elite textual tradition of Shangqing Taoism, became involved in such plaints.²⁸

Thus far the Taoist ideas agree largely with the beliefs documented in the excavated tomb ordinances, apart from some new or peculiarly Taoist names and terms like Laozi, the *Sanguan*, etc. We notice, however, that the division between the worlds of the living and dead emphasized in the tomb quelling documents was evidently not in force; the living still had to fear being held responsible for the sins of their dead.²⁹ At this point the founders of Celestial Masters Taoism

²⁶Rao Zongyi, 饒宗頤 *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaojian*, 老子想爾注校籤 (Hong Kong: Tong Nam Printers and Publishers, 1956), 34.

²⁷See, e.g., (HY 1208), 1.5a and 1.15a.

²⁸(HY 1010), j.7 and 8; the documents are discussed in M. Strickmann, *Le Taoisme du Mao Chan: Chronique d'une révélation* (Paris: Memoires des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1981), 144-166.

²⁹It appears indeed that in ancient and early medieval religious thought guilt could be expiated only on earth. The dead were harassed by earth spirits, who were offended by the polluting corpses, or could be accused at the otherworldly court, but neither in the proto-Taoist grave-securing writs, nor in the texts of the early Heavenly Masters and Shangqing traditions do we read anything about the physical punishments inflicted on them. The idea of hell tortures appears first in Taoism in the Buddhist-influenced Lingbao scriptures of the 390s A.D. Do

referred to another device already anticipated in the earlier funerary traditions, which they, however, considerably systematized. They established a direct link between the other world bureaucracy and their own organization on earth.

Just like the officials in the pre-Han and Han administrative systems, the priests in Zhang Lu's semi-autonomous state in late second-early third century A.D. Hanzhong (comprising the southern and northern parts of today's Shaanxi and Sichuan) fulfilled both secular and religious functions. Zhang Lu himself, who derived his authority from a revelation of the god Laozi to his grandfather Zhang Daoling 張道陵, claimed the title of a third Celestial Master (*Tianshi* 天師). As Wu Rongzeng 吳榮曾 and Anna Seidel have suggested, this title was probably a direct borrowing from the Han mortuary cult. The Divine Teacher of the Heavenly Thearch (*Tiandi shenshi* 天帝神師) of the grave-securing writs was now a Celestial Master (Tian[di shen]shi) on earth.³⁰

Zhang Lu divided his territory into twenty-four administrative units, or parishes (*zhi* 治), each of which was headed by a so-called Grand Libationer (Zhitou da jijiu 治頭大祭酒) who, in turn, supervised a number of delegate priests, called *jijiu* 祭酒. In their double-function as local administrators and as priests, these *jijiu* collected taxes (five pecks of rice per household per year), kept records on the populace, and performed rituals on behalf of the people.

The census in Zhang Lu's state was not only a necessary administrative provision, but had a far-reaching religious significance. Three times a year each household belonging to Zhang Lu's organization was expected to report births, deaths, and marriages in the family to the Grand Libationer, who then updated his own records in the parish center. Moreover, it was believed that emissaries of the heavenly administration also participated in these parish assemblies (*san hui* 三會) to compare and rectify the files on the living and dead kept in the Three Bureaus.³¹ The important records of life and death in the other world were thus inseparably bound up with this-worldly registration. The responsibility for errors in the heavenly lists determining each individual's lifespan had been assumed by humans, but this responsibility also meant control.

The files kept in both this and the other world also served as a basis for the expulsion of illness and misfortune resulting from lawsuits beyond the graves. The *jijiu* in the Celestial Masters' church-state acted as attorneys of defense for those involved in trials at the Three Bureaus. In such legal cases, the dossiers in the parish furnished a *jijiu* with the necessary information about the defendants. Another register, the *Manual of the 1,200 Officials* (*Qian erbai guanyi* 千二百官儀), provided him with the names of spirits to be asked for help against the concrete symptoms of an otherworldly plaint. Each of the spirit-officials listed there was responsible for a specific kind of disease or misfortune.³² With this information, the priest retired to his "calm chamber" (*jingshi* 靜室) to compose and submit a petition (*zhang* 章) on

we have to conclude from this that Chinese religion owed the concept physical punishments after death indeed to Buddhism?

³⁰Wu Rongzeng, 吳榮曾 "Zhenmuwen zhong suo jiandao de Dong Han Daowu guanxi," 墳墓文中所見到的東漢道巫官係 *Wenwu* 3: 81 and Seidel, "Geleitbrief an die Unterwelt", 178.

³¹See (HY III9), 2a.

³²On the *Manual of the 1,200 Officials*, see (HY 421), 3.14b-23b and U.A. Cedzich, "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen" (Diss., Würzburg, 1987), 35-41; 131-149.

behalf of the accused in a solemn ritual.³³ When the jijiu's colleagues in the other world received such a writ, they double-checked their own files and then passed a judgment, which (hopefully) pardoned the accused and liberated his descendants from further afflictions. Therefore, it was of paramount importance that the records kept on both sides agreed; any discrepancies would have made the jijiu's intercession a futile attempt.

As the Taoist record-keeping thus had an intrinsic religious significance, Taoist ritual was in its essence a bureaucratic act. Its purpose was the absolution of the unshriven souls of the dead through orderly legal procedures. This type of ritual precluded offerings and sacrifices that would have smacked of bribes. Thus, not even the pledges (*gui* 鬼, or *xin* 信) of paper, ink, brushes, etc., promised to the supernatural officials for their help were really meant as offerings. They served as an indicator for the merit to be gained by the spirits during the ritual. After a case had been successfully settled, the priest reported the merit (*yangong* 言功) of all the helpful spirit-officials to the divine authorities so that they could be promoted in rank; the pledges were then redistributed in the parish.³⁴

It appears natural that in a system so exclusively based on legalistic and bureaucratic conceptions, the notions of rank, merit, and promotion played an important role. This brings me to my last point. What happened to the dead after their absolution? In what way could they benefit from the merit acquired through ritual?

Early Taoist sources leave no doubt that Taoist believers were not content with separating their deceased forever from life by turning them over to the netherworld authorities; they rather hoped that they might live on after death and become themselves officials in the other world. Thus, a petition formula, presumably dating from the Six Dynasties period, appeals to the heavenly offices for giving out orders to:

release forthwith the *hun* and *po* spirits of so-and-so (name to be filled in), to return his corpse to him and reassemble his bones, to discharge him from the suffering of penal servitude and let him ascend and join celestial officialdom in the Land of Harmony and Joy. Shut off all sickening miasmas [affecting the living descendants] and strike his name from the registers of the dead.³⁵

The preface to the *180 Prescriptions of Laojun* (*Laojun bai bashi jie* 老君百八十戒), a code of the Celestial Masters tradition compiled in the fourth century A.D. or earlier,³⁶ regards such post-mortem appointments in the invisible world as even more desirable than mere physical immortality:

³³For a reconstruction of the petition-ritual of the early Heavenly Masters tradition, see particularly Cedzich, "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister," 61-105.

³⁴For the *yangong* ritual, see *Ibid.*, 58; 100-102.

³⁵(HY 615), 6. 12a-b; translated in A. Seidel, "Post-mortem Immortality," 234. On the *Chisongzi zhangli*, see Cedzich, "Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister," 15-17.

³⁶On this code, see H.H. Schmidt, "Die hundertachtzig Vorschriften von Lao-chün," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien: Festschrift für Hans Steininger*, edited by G. Naundorf et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985. (1985), 149-159.

A person may live up to 10,000 years; yet if he does not follow the statutes and prescriptions, he is just like an old tree or weather-worn stone. It is better, therefore, to obey the prescriptions every day without intermission so as to become a man of the Tao and its Virtue, who after death will be appointed a heavenly official, and who, liberated from his corpse (*shijie* 尸解), will ascend to the realms of the immortals."³⁷

In the fourth century A.D. Shangqing 上清 tradition, these ideas were fully developed. According to the materials collected in Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 (456-536) *Zhengao* 真誥, the ranks in the administration of shadows were all filled by deceased members of the society of this world,³⁸ among them also some libationers of the Way of the Celestial Masters such as Li Dong 李東, the former jiji of the Xu family.³⁹ The *Zhengao* also contains the interesting information that such mortals-turned-spirit-officials could actively participate in the legal procedures between the living and the dead and thereby gain merit for further promotion. In one passage of the text, the Xu family is exhorted to reward four "ghost marshals" (*guishuai* 鬼帥) for helping avert a sepulchral plaint. Tao Hongjing adds in his comment that these marshals had all been libationers during their lives.⁴⁰

As we know, the elite Shangqing Taoism was initially developed and practiced by members of the higher social strata in southern China. It is no wonder, therefore, that the ranks of the Shangqing pantheon were almost exclusively filled by former members of China's upper class, whose names and worldly positions were still proudly remembered after their post-mortem promotion into the celestial hierarchies. There is every reason to believe that in the original Celestial Masters organization the same system of promotion was open to all the Taoist dead, regardless of whether or not they had occupied any high clerical or social rank during their lives. Significantly, the terms used in early medieval Celestial Masters sources for the rituals performed by the jiji priests on behalf of the dead are *qianda* 遷達, "promotion," *qiantu* 遷渡, "salvation through promotion," or *qiangong* 遷功, "promotion according to merit."⁴¹

We probably also have to see in this light the text of a stele found in Sichuan, one that has long puzzled scholars in China, Japan, and the West. The inscription is dated 173 A. D. and states that on the first of the third month of this year, a "demon-soldier of the heavenly troops" (*tianzu guibing* 天卒鬼兵) named Hu Jiu 胡九 had attained the Tao and entered a contract with six jiji, whose names are all listed, that he would henceforth spread the law of the Tao of the Celestial Masters without limit.⁴² Since, as we have seen, early historical sources maintain that neophytes in the early Celestial Masters organization were commonly called "demon soldiers," the inscription has traditionally been understood as a document of the initiation of a new member into

³⁷(HY 785), 4a.

³⁸(HY 1010), j.15 and 16.

³⁹On Li Dong, see (HY 1010), 13.1b-2a.

⁴⁰Ibid., 7.6b-7a, translated in Strickmann, *Le Taoisme du Mao Chan*, 147-148.

⁴¹See e.g., (HY 784), 7a and 10b; (HY 615), 4.24b.

⁴²*Jinshi lubu* 金石錄補 in *Congshu jicheng* 3, 28-29.

the movement. But why should the initiation of a so obviously ordinary person as Hu Jiu (Hu, Number Nine) call for the erection of a memorial stone? Couldn't this inscription be seen in another, more appropriate and important context? Moreover, is the assertion of the early Chinese historians that newcomers in the early Celestial Masters tradition were styled "demon soldiers" really convincing? Wouldn't it be more reasonable to assume that this title rather referred to dead members of the Taoist communities upon their entering the otherworldly service? Although the rank of a "demon soldier" was certainly not high, its occupant would thus nonetheless have been a divine figure, whose installation could well have been commemorated in a stone inscription.

It appears that the priests of the earliest Taoist communities in Hanzhong already commanded vast numbers of spirit helpers during their rituals. Thus, we face the question of where all these divine forces were originally recruited. In the following centuries, the hundreds of spirits listed on the registers that determined the authority and the rank of both lay members and priests in the Celestial Masters organization were explained as pure crystallization of the countless pneuma of the unfathomable Tao. Accordingly, those spirits had no real names, but were rather called up by entirely abstract titles. By contrast, the divinities listed in one of the earliest prototypes of such registers, the aforementioned *Manual of the 1,200 Officials*, which goes back to the very origin of the tradition in second-third century A.D. Hanzhong, do have names that don't fit at all into that later schema. To be sure, these names are not human names either; seemingly defying every logic, they often appear to us as purely fantastic creations. But were they really merely invented? I conclude my reflections here with an idea, which, as it remains to be substantiated by clear evidence, I shall express in form of a question. Is it possible that among these 1,200 Officials, we would find former meritorious members of the living Taoist community? Could they be the spirits of dead who had already been promoted above the rank of mere "demon soldiers" to more responsible positions, and who, like some of the shadows in the proto-Taoist funerary cult, had received new spirit names? But whereas the demon names given to the newly deceased in the older mortuary cult were intended to separate them forever from the world of the living, the names of the Taoist spirits would have served rather to incorporate them into the otherworldly half of a single, integrated system.

Thus, the Taoist salvation of the dead went far beyond the thoughts expressed in the grave-quelling texts. Whereas the latter hoped to banish the ghosts forever from human society, Taoist ritual not only redeemed the deceased (and their descendants) from sin, but also opened the way for their integration and promotion in the hierarchies of the invisible realm. The otherworldly bureaucracy was closely linked to a symmetric organization on earth, whose representatives, the jijiu priests of the Celestial Masters tradition, had the power to influence directly the proceedings on the other side. The spirit-administration became an inseparable part of a greater whole managed by a this-worldly clergy. The spirits of the dead were bound into a system that not only satisfactorily explained and addressed the fears connected with death, but also provided a plausible interpretation for the phenomenon of death itself — *post-mortem* immortality and promotion instead of the obviously illusionary hope for physical persistence. If the substitution of a universal law for the exclusive Confucian rites was the novel solution offered by the proto-Taoist mortuary cult, the Taoist innovation consisted in setting this fundamental idea to work.

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Traces of Early Celestial Master Physiological Practice in the *Xiang'er* Commentary

Stephen R. BOKENKAMP
Indiana University

Over the years, Ōfuchi Ninji has provided us with valuable insight into the nature of the *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Laozi*, focusing especially on its references to precepts or admonitions of the Tao 道誠. Perhaps because of the excellence of Ōfuchi's work, there is a danger that we will ignore other aspects of the text. Anna Seidel, in her study of the *Laozi bianhua jing* 老子變化經 presents, by contrast, a more balanced approach to the text. She chose the following parable from the *Xiang'er* commentary to express its focus: "The precepts might be compared to the depths, the Tao to water, and the people to fish. Once fish leave the depths and depart from the water, they die. When people do not practice the precepts and thus fail to maintain the Tao, the Tao departs from them and they die." (lines 566-67; Rao, 49) She concludes that this parable exemplifies the *raison d'être* of the commentary, with its allusions to the precepts: "one who follows them will be rewarded with good health, longevity, even immortality; will escape illness, premature death, and — according to later texts — suffering in the hells." The doctrine expressed by the text is, by this account, *both* moral and practical.¹ The present study represents my attempt to bring back into focus some of the "practical" aspects Seidel noticed in the text.

The *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Laozi* 老子 is an infuriating text.² The commentary is attributed to Zhang Lu 張魯 in several early sources, and most scholars now regard it as an

¹ See Anna K. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao-tseu dans le taoïsme des Han* (Paris: Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, 1969), 77.

² The Tunhuang manuscript containing the *Xiang'er* is designated Stein #6825. Only a portion of the scripture is preserved, corresponding to sections 3-37 of the *Laozi*. A clear photolithographic reproduction of this manuscript is to be found in Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Tonkō dōkyō zurokuhen* 敦煌圖錄編 (Tokyo, Fukubu shoten 福武書店, 1978), 421-34, while the most convenient edition to consult is Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng* 老子想爾注校證 (Hong Kong: Tong Nam 東南, 1956; repr. Shanghai, 1991). A concordance to the text has been produced by Mugitani Kunio 麥谷邦夫. See Mugitani Kunio, *Rōshi sōjichū sakuin* 老子想爾注索引 (Tokyo: Hōyū shoten 朋友書店, 1985). Unfortunately, both Rao and Mugitani have not only punctuated the text, but divided it into the standard chapters of the received *Laozi*. The manuscript is not so divided, so this amounts to an act of interpretation which silently valorizes the received text. I will refer to citations from the manuscript by line number, provided in Ōfuchi (1978) and, for the benefit of the reader who may not have access to this reproduction, follow this with the page number in Rao (1956) on which the passage appears.

authentic product of the Early Celestial Masters.³ We should thus be able, through comparing it with other early texts and historical references, to arrive at a fairly detailed picture of the beliefs and practices of the first Celestial Masters. The *Xiang'er* commentary frustrates this expectation. It makes no mention of the things we most want to know. There is no reference to *jjiu* 祭酒 or to other offices of the Celestial Master organization; no reference to the "responsibility huts" 義舍 where foodstuffs were set out for the indigent; no reference to parishes; and no mention of meditation chambers, the marriage rites of "merging breaths" 合氣, confession of sins, covenants, or hand-scripts to the Three Offices 三官手書. Even the practice that gave the movement its alternate name, that of pledging five pecks of rice as a faith-offering, is strikingly absent.

Perhaps because of such thoughtless "omissions" on the part of the *Xiang'er* commentator, those who have studied the text have been most concerned with placing it in Taoist history through demonstrating its affinities with other texts, such as the *Taiping jing* 太平經, the *Dadao jialingjie* 大道家令戒, the *Heshang gong* 河上公 commentary to the *Laozi*, or other early historical references to the Celestial Masters. All of this is necessary and important work, but often motivated more by what we want the text to tell us than by what it actually says. The result has been that, as with other important texts of Taoism, certain key passages examined and re-examined in various contexts, have come to stand for the *Xiang'er* text as a whole.

A more balanced approach is the comprehensive study of the *Xiang'er* of Ōfuchi Ninji, now updated and gathered in a single volume.⁴ Ōfuchi writes, "As anyone reading through the *Xiang'er* will notice, the term 'precepts (or admonitions) of the Tao' and related expressions appear repeatedly."⁵ Following the suggestions of Chen Shixiang, he goes on to identify two texts in the Taoist Canon which contain lists of precepts which seem to be derived from the *Laozi* and from the *Xiang'er* commentary.⁶ There are nine prescriptive precepts, taken from the *Laozi* itself, and twenty-seven proscriptive precepts, divided into three groups of nine. Many of the proscriptive precepts are alluded to in the *Xiang'er*, some in language identical to that found in

³ On the controversies surrounding the authorship of the *Xiang'er*, see Ōfuchi Ninji 大淵忍爾, *Shoki no dōkyō* 初期の道教 (Early Religious Taoism) (Tokyo: Sōbunsha 創文社, 1991). Two dissenting opinions on the date and authorship of the text are those of Mugitani Kunio 麥谷邦夫 ("Rōshi sōjichū ni tsuite 老子想爾注について," *Tōhō Gakuhō* 東方學報 57 (1985): 75-109), who dates the text to the latter half of the fifth century and Kobayashi Masayoshi 小林正美 (*Rikuchō dōkyōshi kenkyū* 六朝道教史研究 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha 創文社, 1990), 296-327), who dates it to the Liu-Sung dynasty. I do not intend to explore their hypotheses here. Ōfuchi, in reworking his earlier work on the question, has, it seems to me, successfully dealt with their objections to an earlier dating of the text.

⁴ Ōfuchi's work on the *Xiang'er* originally appeared in several articles. These are now reprinted, together with some emendation, in Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*.

⁵ Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*, 252.

⁶ Chen Shixiang 陳世驥, "Xiang'er Laozi daojing Dunhuang canjuan lunzheng," 想爾老子道經敦煌殘卷論證 *The Ts'ing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, n.s., 1.2 (1957): 50-56.

the canonical lists.⁷

By Ōfuchi's account, then, the *Xiang'er* is primarily a moral treatise. He writes, "I think that the *Xiang'er* was a commentary written by Zhang Lu...primarily for the purpose of urging adherence to his regulations — the Taoist precepts — for the lives of Taoists and, at the same time, to maintain the purity of their beliefs..."⁸

This is undoubtedly part of the reason for the composition of the *Xiang'er*, but the precepts do not appear to be the main point of the commentary. They are mentioned in passing (though never by number) or are presented in such phrases as "this is why the Tao admonishes us to..." While it is difficult to imagine that some version of the *Xiang'er Precepts* did not exist at the time the commentary was composed, they seem to form a sort of deep subtext rather than the *raison d'être* of the commentary. If there was a list of precepts practiced by the early Celestial Masters that is being reinforced by the *Xiang'er* allusions, they would have required extra-textual presentation and explanation. This can be seen most easily from the fact that without other texts as a guide, we would be hard-pressed to reproduce more than two or three of the twenty-seven precepts which are tied to the commentary.

There is a real danger that, through overemphasizing the place of the precepts in the work, we will neglect references to other concerns of the early Celestial Masters which might be equally well hidden in the *Xiang'er* commentary. As we search for other "messages" in the text, we need to keep in mind the form in which it appears. There are certain sorts of information the *Xiang'er* cannot be expected to provide. The *Xiang'er* is clearly not an independent meditation manual or a moral treatise, but a commentary on the *Laozi*.⁹ Through close reading and interpretation, the commentary finds in the *Laozi* philosophical grounding and, indeed, metaphysical warrant for Celestial Master precepts and practices to which it alludes but on which it does not expound in any great detail. Undoubtedly, there were oral instructions and perhaps other texts, such as those Ōfuchi has identified, spelling out the precepts, which fulfilled this closer didactic function. Even without such external aids at our disposal, though, it is possible to discern the outlines of meditation and other practices in the text.

The reading of the text that follows represents my attempt to highlight some of the

⁷ Given that we have only the "Tao" section of the commentary, beginning in the middle of *chang* three and extending through *chang* 37, the identifications Ōfuchi makes are entirely convincing. There can be no doubt that the "twenty-seven precepts" are somehow related to the commentary. This does not prove, however, that the specific list of twenty-seven precepts we now have predates the *Xiang'er*.

⁸ Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*, 350.

⁹ By this, I do not mean to imply that the central concern of the *Xiang'er* commentary was to explicate the "original meaning" of the *Laozi* text. Instead, it treats the text as a "scripture" into which the Tao had, in an ahistorical way, inscribed its intent for humanity. The recovery of this intent, buried beneath the mere surface of words, is the goal of the commentary. We might more readily compare the exegetical strategy of the *Xiang'er* to Cabalistic interpretation of the Torah than to modern hermeneutics. This exegetical strategy is directly comparable to (and undoubtedly influenced by) that adopted by commentators with respect to the Confucian scriptures. Among the recent studies of traditional Chinese hermeneutics, see especially Steven Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

physiological practices to which I find allusion in the *Xiang'er* commentary. While it is manifestly impossible for me to read the text without reference to things I know of Taoism from other sources, I want to try, insofar as possible, to limit my analysis to the *Xiang'er* itself. In doing so, I will make little reference even to the text the commentary purports to explain. This is not because I think that the author of the *Xiang'er* commentary reinterpreted the *Laozi* to any greater extent than did Heshang Gong or Wang Bi (who had their own concerns in reading the text); rather, I do not think that we have any very good idea of what the *Laozi* "really meant" to its original author(s). Any such proceeding would require further work on the *Laozi* and, given my limitations, would quickly dissolve into the fruitless exercise of comparing the *Xiang'er*'s reading to that of some other commentator with an entirely different agenda — or worse yet, to my own reading of the *Laozi*.¹⁰

We will begin by analyzing the *Xiang'er*'s prognosis on the fallen state of humanity — the reasons it gives for offering its particular remedies, whether moral, social, or physiological. This will provide us with a background for understanding its criticisms of other teachings. The fact that the text criticizes "deviant ways" 邪道, including Confucianism and even several Taoist techniques, has excited the curiosity of researchers ever since Rao Zongyi's seminal 1956 study on the principle that, by identifying the source of variant practices mentioned in the text, it might be possible to place it in Taoist history. Here we will adopt another approach. Assuming that wherever the *Xiang'er* criticizes a practice it is because it has a cognate practice to propose, we will examine its proscriptions with an eye to recovering its prescriptions. Through this analysis, the techniques we will discover to be more or less explicitly defended in the *Xiang'er* are morning and evening practices for the ingestion of pneumas 食氣, "Embracing Unity" 守一, and the Celestial Master sexual rite called "Merging pneumas" 合氣. Finally, we will see how these various practices interrelate in terms of the justifications the *Xiang'er* provides for them.

The key terms in the *Xiang'er*'s discussion of human failings are *xie* 邪 "deviant" and *wei* 偽 "fabricated, artificial, counterfeit". These terms are employed most often with regard to rival teachings. Before looking at such examples, however, we might profit by trying to figure out just what the terms connote in this text.

In high antiquity when, as the commentary states, "the Tao was employed", humanity was without artifice. The human will was entirely in accord with that of the Tao, which acted through people to such an extent that the Tao, the nameless, "took humanity as its name."¹¹ This continued roughly through the time of the Yellow Thearch 黃帝 when, through events that are not spelled out in the text, deviance arose as a consequence of the willfulness and desire of humanity:

The Yellow Thearch was a humane sage and knew the inclinations of later generations, so he plaited straw to make a dog and hung it above the gate, desiring thereby to indicate that within such gates in later generations, all would be straw-dogs. But people did not

¹⁰ In this, I entirely agree with the late Edward H. Schafer, whose apt characterization of the *Laozi*, that book of "ambiguous gnosis and elastic paradoxes," is likely to endure. See his *Mirages on the Sea of Time: The Taoist Poetry of Ts'ao T'ang* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 3-4.

¹¹ *Yi ren wei ming* 以人為名, l. 244 in Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 24.

understand what the Yellow Thearch meant to imply. They merely copied this practice without reforming their evil hearts. This is certainly a great evil.¹²

Once deviance enters, the nourishing Tao departs and people begin to die.¹³ Deviance sometimes is morally defined, but at base it is a twisting and perversion of the pneumas of the Tao. Two sorts of examples are provided in the text. On the macrocosmic level, storms, stellar anomalies, and violent destruction are the result of perversions of the Tao's life-giving pneumas. In the human being, false views, moral failings, unrestrained emotion, social disorder, and even death itself are listed as "deviance." Interestingly, it is human willfulness which is at the root of all of these calamities, both terrestrial and celestial. Chief among the human deviances are the ritual practices and beliefs specifically criticized in the text, often introduced with the cumbersome phrase, "Those mortals who practice false arts in the mortal world (all declare)..." (今世間常偽伎 [悉稱])

As can be seen from these examples, this is not a tale of an ancient struggle between good and evil, but one daily renewed. Each person, possessed of will, has the ability to cling to the Tao or, once it has departed, make way for it to return. This is explained in fairly simplistic terms:

The heart is a regulator. It may hold fortune or misfortune, good or evil. The abdomen is a sack for the Tao. The pneumas [of the Tao] constantly wish to fill it. When the heart produces ill-omened and evil conduct, the Tao departs, leaving the sack empty. Once it is empty, deviance enters, killing the person. If one drives off the misfortune and evil in the heart, the Tao will return to it and the belly will be filled.¹⁴

The reference to the heart as the "regulator" is significant. Insofar as the *Xiang'er* prescribes any specific meditation practice or describes in any way the methods for achieving Transcendence, the heart is always the focus: "One's heart should regulate and control the myriad affairs, thus it is called the "three paths of the Luminous Hall" 明堂三道. While dispersing deviances of *yang* and injuries of *yin*, [the heart] should hold to the center and correctly measure out the pneumas of the Tao."¹⁵

¹² Lines 40-47; Rao, 8-9.

¹³ Line 567; Rao, 49.

¹⁴ Lines 4-6; Rao, 6.

¹⁵ Lines 328-329; Rao, 29-30. The image of this ritual building, a model of the cosmos through which the king moved in harmony with the movement of celestial pneumas, is here adapted to portray the way in which the heart, king of the five viscera, was to induct the three pneumas (*yin*, *yang*, and centrally-harmonious) through the adept's body. As Rao notes (p. 80), the image appears already in the *Taiping jing*, where we read, "The triply luminous is the heart. It is in charge of ordering the Luminous Hall, which communicates with the rays of sun and moon and is named the 'completed paths of the three luminaries.'" See Wang Ming 王明, ed., *Taiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校, Vol. 114, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, 1979), 596. Other texts, including the "outer" *Scripture of the Yellow Court* 黃庭外景經, commonly describe the Mingtang as a palace in the head. See K. M. Schipper, *Concordance du Houang-t'ing king*, Vol. 104, (Paris: Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême

The commentary stipulates that one should eradicate desire, artifice, and violent emotions, the deviant tendencies of the heart, to embrace "clarity and stillness" 清靜, a term we shall explore in a moment. The models in this pursuit are those well-known already from the *Laozi* itself — the woman, the infant, and water — together with a fourth, found only in the commentary, the Transcendent Noble 仙士. As might be inferred from these models, this stillness is not inaction (*wuwei* 無為).

William Boltz has pointed out a key passage in which the *Xiang'er* text interpolates the concept of "*wuwei*" into the *Laozi* where the term does not figure in the Mawangdui manuscripts.¹⁶ This is not yet the *wuwei* of Wang Bi, however. The *wei* 為 of *wuwei* is in this text to be understood in terms of its close cognate *wei* 偽 "artificial, contrived, fabricated." Thus, "trade goods are humanly contrived" 有為, and the *wuwei* of an infant comes about because it does not yet "know how to control itself" 不知自制.¹⁷ Adherents are not enjoined not to act, but to still their hearts, quiet the winds of passion, and to make the movements of the Tao their own through following its precepts.¹⁸ They are enjoined from acting in evil ways, which for this text are "contrived" ways that derive from the human will and passions.¹⁹ Given Chinese physiological beliefs, quieting the passions is in fact the same thing as "controlling pneuma," since

Orient, 1975), 1; lines 32-35.

¹⁶ The interpolated line is 道常無為而無不為 for 道恒無名 of the Mawangdui manuscripts. See William G. Boltz, "The Religious and Philosophical Significance of the 'Hsiang Erh': *Lao tzu* in the Light of the *Ma-wang-tui* Silk Manuscripts," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 45 (1982): 102-104. In fact, the *Xiang'er* gloss on this famous line says nothing of "inaction", or to use Boltz' etymologically precise translation, "minimalizing action." It reads, in its entirety: "The nature of the Tao is such that it does not perform 為 evil deeds. Thus it is spiritual and is creative of all things. Taoists should take this as their model." (Lines 572-573; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 50.) The same is true of other occurrences of *wuwei* throughout the *Xiang'er*. Interestingly, at chapter 10 of the received version, where we read "are you able to be aware of the four reaches of space, yet lack knowledge?" (明白四達能無知乎), the *Xiang'er* text reads instead: "as your awareness reaches the four quarters, *wuwei*" (明白四達而無為). The commentary to this passage says: "Those of higher attainment have open minds and naturally increase their knowledge. Knowing evil, they discard it; knowing good, they are able to practice it. You should not dare to perform evil 勿敢為惡事也." (Lines 119-20; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 14.) This reinforces Boltz' contention that it was Taoist readings of the *Laozi* which imported the notion of *wuwei* into the text, but shows that the reasons for which they did so may have had little to do with the way Heshang Gong and Wang Bi interpret the term.

¹⁷ Line 142; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 16 and line 113; Rao, 13, respectively.

¹⁸ The term for this sort of action is 為人為戒 "to be human and perform the precepts", which occurs at line 205; *Ibid.*, 20 and line 360; *Ibid.*, 32. The context in which the term appears is significant. Each time this aspect of being human is contrasted with the status of heaven and earth which, lacking the ability to "perform the precepts" are endlessly subject to violent weather and cosmic change.

¹⁹ See especially the latter passage cited in footnote #16 above.

the emotions were thought to result from excesses of *qi* 氣 issuing from one of the five viscera.²⁰ For *wuwe*, then, I propose for this text a translation such as "uncontrived," "lacking human artifice," or even "lacking human willfulness" over more wieldy but less precise translations such as "inaction" and "non-intervention."

Clarity and stillness, then, refer to the stilling of emotions necessary to receive the life-giving pneumas of the Tao.²¹ Some sort of meditation practice involving the ingestion of celestial pneuma was certainly involved, but the descriptions given are less than explicit. The attainment of "clarity and stillness" somehow involves the "pneumas of morning and evening" ascending and descending within the human body, where they should be joined into one so that they are evenly distributed throughout. This technique is described as the "most vital" and as having been established by "the Master" for morning and evening practice.²²

Elsewhere in the text we read that "those who employ pneumas and pantingly inhale and exhale do not accord with clarity and stillness and will not long endure."²³ From this injunction, I think, we can assume that the early Celestial Masters had their own methods — methods which presumably did not involve "panting" 喘. That the early Celestial Masters knew something of ingesting pneumas is confirmed in another passage that also criticizes a practice of other Taoists and, by the way, contains the only mention of grain in the portion of the text we possess: "Commoners eat grain and when the grain is gone, they die. The Transcendent nobility eat grain when they have it and, when they do not, they eat pneumas."²⁴

²⁰ This is discussed in lines 17-26 of the commentary. Rao, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaozheng*, 7-8.

²¹ See line 391; Rao, 35: "Taoists should value their essence and [corporeal] spirits. Clarity and stillness are the basis [for accomplishing this]." "Clarity and stillness" refer specifically to the condition of the heart/mind, as in the following passage: "Those who seek long life...do not follow the common run of people in their shifts and turns; instead, their thoughts are perfectly directed to the Tao. While they are learning to be clear and still, their thoughts will temporarily be as if confused and turbid; but since they are confused and turbid, they have maintained simplicity and will reach their goal. Finally, in clarity and stillness, they will be able to observe all of the subtleties." (Lines 197-200; Rao, 20.) This state of confusion and turbidity mirrors that of the undifferentiated pneuma of the Tao. Humans who lack clarity and stillness are compared to heaven and earth when they are beset by violent storm. That is, their pneumas are not integrated, and so the pneuma of one viscera lashes forth in violent emotion. The attitude displayed here concerning "clarity and stillness" is closest to that found in the teaching verse of Wuchengzi 務成子 in *Zhuangzi yinde* 11:36: "You must be still; you must be clear./ Do not belabour your body./ Do not excite your seminal essences./ Thus will you live long." See A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), 176-178, for a discussion and translation of the entire verse.

²² "Through constantly striving after lucidity and stillness, the dews of morning and evening will ascend and descend [within them] and the vapors of the human body will be uniformly distributed. The Master has established morning and evening [practices aimed at] lucidity and stillness as the most essential." (Lines 203-204; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaozheng*, 20.)

²³ Lines 367-68; Rao, 33.

²⁴ Lines 319-20; Rao, 28. The avoidance of grain and ingestion of pneumas to achieve corporeal transubstantiation figures in the *Liexian zhuan* 列仙傳 accounts of many Transcendents and is ridiculed by Wang Chong 王充 (See *Lunheng* 論衡, *Zhuji jicheng* 諸子集成 edition, 24:73). In later Taoist

Some early Taoist texts connect the practice of ingesting pneumas to the creation and nourishment of internal spirits, regulators of the body's functions. Is there any reference to this belief in the *Xiang'er*? Ōfuchi does not directly address the question. He skips over passages which might provide evidence of this, and when he encounters the term "beneficent spirits" 善神 in a context where it cannot refer to anything else but corporeal spirits, he provides the rather unsatisfactory gloss, "These spirits seem [or "This spirit seems...?] to be the essential part of an individual's life force."²⁵ I am not certain what he means by this, but clearly his attention is directed elsewhere, to the moral aspects of the text.

Kobayashi Masayoshi is not so reticent. He argues that the *Xiang'er* commentary specifically criticizes meditation practices for envisioning the corporeal spirits.²⁶ His basis for this contention is found in the following three passages:

1) Those who forever practice false arts in the mortal world point to [one of the] five viscera and call it "the One." They close their eyes and practice meditation, hoping by these means to seek good fortune. This is wrong. They depart ever farther from life [in so doing].²⁷

2) Now those who practice false arts in the mortal world point to shapes and call them the Tao. They assign to these shapes variously colored garments, names, appearances, and heights. This is false. Such things are entirely deviant fabrications.²⁸

3) Those mortals who continually practice false arts thus promulgate their teachings, pointing at forms and calling these the Tao. They hold that [these forms] have a residence, garments of a specific color, and a specific height, so that one might thereby meditate upon them. In so doing, they bring intense suffering upon themselves without propitious recompense, since it is all empty trickery.²⁹

I have translated these passages to accommodate Kobayashi's argument. When we consider the context in which these words occur, however, it becomes clear that what the *Xiang'er* criticizes is not the notion of internal spirits as emanations of the Tao, but any attempt to locate *the Tao itself* within the human body. In each case, it is the Tao which the deviant practitioner is accused of visualizing, not corporeal spirits, as Kobayashi holds. Thus, preceding the first fragment Kobayashi cites, we find the explicit statement that "the One [= the Tao] does not reside within

texts, the dietary prohibition is severe. Numerous vegetable substances, such as pine-nuts and calamus, were proposed to replace grains. Such a prohibition is unlikely to have been in effect among the early Celestial Masters, in that they were known as the "Way of the Five Pecks of Rice" and received faith-payments in grain at the three assemblies held each year at the parishes.

²⁵ Ōfuchi, *Tonkō dōkyō zurokuhen*, 332 and 364, n. 23.

²⁶ Kobayashi, *Rikucho dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 311-314.

²⁷ Lines 106-108; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 13.

²⁸ Lines 177-178; Rao, 18. This is the source of #6 of the twenty-seven precepts, "Do not practice false arts or point to any shape and call it the Tao."

²⁹ Lines 212-214; Rao, 21.

the human body...it comes and goes within the human body, that's all. It is there everywhere within your skin, not just in a single spot." And the second passage reads in its entirety: "The Tao is of the highest worthiness. Hidden away in subtlety, it has no shape or physical image. Since it cannot be seen or known, one can only follow its admonitions. Now those who practice false arts in the mortal world point to shapes and call them the Tao. They assign to these shapes variously colored garments, names, appearances, and heights. This is false. Such things are entirely deviant fabrications."³⁰

Ōfuchi, while correctly noting that these passages refer to the nature of the Tao, argues that the target of the *Xiang'er's* attack may include certain passages in the *Taiping jing* 太平經 and the *Zhou i cantongqi* 周易參同契 which deal with the spirits of the five viscera 五臟神,³¹ but these early passages do not speak of the Tao as the One which "resides within the human body." One of the *Taiping jing* passages in fact corresponds rather closely to the view the *Xiang'er* wishes to defend: "The pneumas of the five phases come and go within the bellies of humans in accord with the four seasons as the seminal spirits of the five viscera...."³²

This description accords well with the *Xiang'er* claim that the "Tao comes and goes within the human body" and may even be a more precise way of expressing the same concept. Further, the *Taiping jing* goes on to advocate that the seasonal movement of the pneumas through the five viscera might be computed according to the *wangxiang* 王相 system which is also the strategy advocated by the *Xiang'er* for the same purpose.³³ In short, while the *Xiang'er* nowhere mentions the spirits of the five viscera, its teachings on these points, far from attacking the *Taiping jing*, seem to follow it.

A more probable candidate for the "false arts" mentioned in the three passages cited by Kobayashi has been identified by Chen Shixiang.³⁴ Ge Hong 葛洪 (ca. 283-343) records the following in his *Baopuzi*:

Lord Lao said "Undifferentiated. Vague. — Within are images. Vague. Undifferentiated. — Within is a thing." [citing *Laozi* 21] It is the One of which he speaks. Thus, a Transcendent Scripture states: "If you wish long life, you must be clear on maintaining the One...The One has both surname and by-name and clothing of a certain color. In males it is nine inches long; in females six. Sometimes it is 2.4 inches below the navel in the lower Cinnabar Field. Sometimes it resides in the Scarlet Palace, within the Golden Porte below the heart. This is the central Cinnabar Field. Sometimes it resides between the eyebrows. Proceeding from the surface into (the head), one inch in is the Luminous Hall, two inches the Cavern Chamber, and three inches the upper Cinnabar

³⁰ Lines 176-78; Rao, 18.

³¹ Ōfuchi, *Tonkō dōkyō zurokuhen*, 357, n. 2.

³² Wang Ming, ed., *Taiping jing hejiao*, ch.72. The passage goes on to explain how to form mental images of the five spirits, mentioning that the colors of these images should match the seasons according to the *wangxiang* system.

³³ See lines 17-28; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 7-8. Rao's explanation of the *wangxiang* system and demonstration of the *Xiang'er's* relation to the *Taiping jing* is to be found on pp. 70-71 of his work.

³⁴ Chen, "Xiang'er Laozi daojing," 55-56.

Field." All of this information is valued by Taoists, who have orally transmitted the names generation after generation, drawing blood [to seal their oath of secrecy].³⁵

If this unnamed "Transcendent Scripture" is not the one attacked in the *Xiang'er*, it is a close descendant, for it literally places the One, that is the Tao, within the human body, providing its secret names, colored garb, and dimensions. These are the very beliefs that the *Xiang'er* derides.

Interestingly, Ge Hong's citation describes one version of that early Taoist meditation method called "holding the One" 守一, while the first of the contra-"false arts" passages given above contains, in its full form, the only mention of 守一 in the *Xiang'er*. The precise phrase is 守戒不諱即為守一 ("to keep the precepts and not transgress them is precisely to practice holding the One"). This phrase, I will argue, does not indicate that early Celestial Master practice had no meditation for "holding the One." Instead, on the principle that when an author bothers to criticize something it is probably because the belief he attacks is close to something he wishes to defend, I wish to propose that the *Xiang'er* is making a more subtle argument.

There are at least two ways in which we might understand the term 守一, which is to say that it has a certain multiplicity of referents in Chinese. We may understand 守一 to mean either "holding the One," as it is usually translated, or "maintaining Unity." In the former sense, the One, or the Tao, might be understood to reside in the human body, as in the passage cited by Ge Hong. In the latter sense, the One might be thought of as physico-spiritual wholeness, the state in which a human being rejoins the Tao through reintegrating its pneumas throughout the body. In both cases, the "One" refers to the Tao, but in the former the Tao is replicated in only one part of the human body, while in the latter the Tao is "everywhere within the skin." The *Xiang'er*, I will argue, defends the latter understanding against the former.³⁶

For the author of the *Xiang'er*, the model for maintaining unity within the human body is the undifferentiated Tao. Just as the Tao contains within its single body essential concretions 精 of its life-giving pneumas, the spirits 神 of the macrocosm, so too might the human being, through correctly regulating the pneumas of the Tao within the body, form "essential" corporeal spirits 精神. The following passage makes this parallelism clear:

One should not slight the Tao because it is invisible. In its midst are the great spirit pneumas, that is why it is likened to a bellows' sack...Within the Tao's vast precincts are its essences. These are apportioned out to the ten thousand things so that the essences of the ten thousand things all have a single root...These [essences of the Tao] are the officials of life and death. Since the essences are fully realized, you should treasure them...The ancient Transcendent nobles treasured the essences to gain life. Today's people lose the essences and die. These are its eminent tokens of faith!

Now, is it so that one can, merely through congealing the essences, obtain life? No. It is essential that all of the practices be fulfilled. This is because essence is a variant form of the pneumas of the Tao. It enters into the human body as the root and source.

³⁵ *Baopuzi* 抱樸子 (*Zhuji jicheng* edition) 18:92. For another translation, consult James R. Ware, trans., *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 301-302.

³⁶ I am not concerned here with the issue of whether or not the *Xiang'er* commentator is correctly presenting his adversary's practices.

What happens when one holds only half of it I have already explained.³⁷ Whoever desires to treasure the essences needs to practice one hundred sorts of actions and accomplish ten-thousand sorts of merit. One should harmonize the five phases and banish all joy and anger. When, on the left tally of the celestial officers, one has a extra counts of life, the essences will maintain them.

When evil persons treasure their essences, they trouble themselves in vain, for they will not remain to the end, but must certainly leak away. One's heart should regulate and control the myriad matters, thus it is called the "three paths of the Luminous Hall." While dispersing deviances of *yang* and injuries of *yin*, it holds to the center and correctly measures out the pneumas of the Tao.³⁸

Jing 精, the word I have consistently translated "essence" above, also refers, in the human body, to the semen in males and to menstrual fluid in females. These sexually-exchanged liquids represented the apparent agents of procreation and thus the most palpable manifestation of the human life-force. As the Tao is extolled as the agent of life, it is understandable that the early Celestial Masters might have regarded these liquids, possibly among other essential concretions of pneuma, to be "variant forms of the pneumas of the Tao."

The reference to those who "congeal their essence" in vain should also be understood in this sense. Elsewhere, the *Xiang'er* is more explicit concerning the object of this criticism. It names specifically the writings attributed to the Yellow Thearch 黃帝, the Dark Maiden 玄女, Gongzi 龔子, and Rongcheng 容成 and criticizes the practices of returning the semen to fortify the brain and stealing *yin* essence from the woman in the following words:³⁹

The Tao teaches people to congeal their essence and form [corporeal] spirits. Today, there are in the world false practitioners who craftily proclaim the Tao, teaching by means of texts attributed to the Yellow Thearch, the Dark Maiden, Gongzi, and Rongcheng. They say that during intercourse with a woman one should not release semen, but through meditation return its essence to the brain to fortify it. Since their (corporeal) spirits and their hearts are not unified, they lose that which they seek to preserve.⁴⁰ Though they engage in these practices to control their delight, they may not treasure it for long.⁴¹

³⁷ This refers to the passage at lines 102-113, which will be discussed below.

³⁸ Lines 319-329; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 29-30. The ellipses represent the passages from the *Laozi* glossed by these lines.

³⁹ The Yellow Thearch, Rongcheng, and the Dark Maiden figure in the *Su'nü jing* 素女經 (Classic of the Plain Woman), a version of which has been preserved in Japan in Tamba Yasuyori's *Ishimpō*, compiled ca. 983. See Douglas Wile, *Art of the Bedchamber: The Chinese Sexual Yoga Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 83-100. Gongzi is unknown outside of the *Xiang'er*.

⁴⁰ "Unified" here stands for being one with the One, that is the Tao. The sense is that these practitioners of the sexual arts are not wrong in seeking to control ejaculation, only in the reasons for which they do it. Their practice is not for the purpose of giving birth to corporeal spirits, but to "control their delight."

⁴¹ Lines 86-89; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 12.

From their reading of such passages, Ōfuchi Ninji and Kobayashi Masayoshi have argued that the *Xiang'er* commentator could not have favored the Celestial Master practice of *heqi* 合氣 (merging the pneumas). While their arguments differ somewhat, both stem from their readings of other texts and insufficient readings, if not misreadings, in this one.⁴²

The *Xiang'er* does indeed advocate retention of the essence (sperm), allowing for reproduction only among the young (since the Tao loves humans and wishes to see the species continue). At the same time, the text is quite explicit on where "essence" was thought to come from and on its importance in forming corporeal spirits.⁴³ Furthermore, essence itself is composed of the pneumas of the Tao and, once it has formed beneficent spirits within the body, serves as the matrix by which more pneuma may be received and the body gradually perfected. To echo the text's crude metaphors, pneuma is volatile, insubstantial, and easily transferable. Essence in the form of semen and menstrual blood is physical, liquid, and apt to leak away. None of this precludes *heqi*, which, as the name implies, should have nothing to do with exchanging gross, physical substances.

In fact, the text explicitly makes room for *heqi* practice. In its discussion of sexual organs, which need hardly have been included were there not some need for it, both the penis and the vagina are called "the root". Males are enjoined to model themselves on the feminine, whose sexual organ is "the comptroller of life and death." Further on, the commentary contains this rather enigmatic statement: "When the pneumas of the Tao return to the root, it is extremely important to maintain clarity and stillness...Knowing how to treasure the root in clarity and stillness is the constant method of restoring destiny [=life]."⁴⁴

Now, why should the pneumas of the Tao return "to the root" if the role of the sexual organs in early Celestial Master physical practice is merely to leak away vital essence? We might also note that this "clarity and stillness" is the same quality required of the heart as it receives and correctly apportions the pneumas of the Tao. While this is certainly not sufficient to prove that the early Celestial Masters practiced "merging of the breaths," it indicates that they might well

⁴² For example, while it is certainly justified, from the point of view of the *Xiang'er*, to characterize the techniques of recycling semen to fortify the brain, stealing *yin* essence from the woman, and unbridled sexual intercourse as *fangzhong* 房中 ("bedroom arts" or "sexual practices"), a portmanteau term, it does not do to so characterize the practice of *heqi* ("merging the pneumas"). Clearly, for those who practiced *heqi*, it was not likely to be so characterized, for the practice was a Taoist ritual, not a bedroom art. Even if this point is contested and one wishes to argue, as Ōfuchi does, that *heqi* clearly grew out of the various sexual practices called *fangzhong* by the bibliographers, it remains true that neither term shows up in the *Xiang'er*, so we simply cannot know how its author might have responded to this bibliographical classification. Worse, the use of the general term *fangzhong*, perhaps dictated by modesty, leads Kobayashi and Ōfuchi to construct the following false syllogism: The *Xiang'er* criticizes practices for recycling semen. Recycling semen is one of the sexual practices. Thus the *Xiang'er* criticizes sexual practices. Yes it does, but not necessarily *all* of them.

⁴³ The preferred option is described as follows: "Those of higher virtue possess iron wills and are able to desist from making love and reproducing, so they cut off their seed when they are young. Moreover, in this way they are able to sooner form beneficent [corporeal] spirits. These are called 'essences of the Tao.'" (Lines 60-62; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 10.)

⁴⁴ Lines 219-20; Rao, 21. The ellipsis represents the *Laozi* passage that the second of these phrases glosses.

have done so without betraying the precepts of the *Xiang'er* and even that the practice is fully consonant with other physiological methods of transcendence mentioned in the text.

The physiological practices we have been discussing are all alluded to in the following rather lengthy passage, a gloss to the enigmatic phrase 載營魄抱一能無離 of the *Laozi*. As we have seen, Kobayashi excerpts this passage, along with others criticizing those meditants who visualized the Tao as having a certain appearance, height, and clothes of a certain color, to assert that the *Xiang'er* lacks a notion of corporeal spirits.⁴⁵ Ōfuchi cites only part of the passage to discuss the commentator's notion of the Tao.⁴⁶ Taken as a whole, the passage provides us with some idea of how the various physiological practices we have been discussing might have been coordinated in Celestial Master Taoism:

The *po*-souls are white in color. For this reason, essence [=semen] is white, the same color as primal pneuma. The body is the vehicle of the essence and, since essence tends to fall from it, you should carry and manage it [carefully]. When the [corporeal] spirits are formed, pneumas will come to carry and manage the human body. If you wish to complete this task, do not depart from the One. The One is the Tao.

Now, where does the Tao reside in the body of a person? How can a person hold it fast? The One does not reside within the human body. Those who say that it entrusts itself to the body are the same ones who are forever practicing false arts in the mortal world. Theirs is not the true Tao. The One exists beyond heaven and earth. Entering into the space between heaven and earth, it comes and goes within the human body, that's all. It is there everywhere within your skin, not just in a single spot. The One disperses its form as pneuma and gathers in its form as the Most High Lord Lao, whose permanent rule is on Mount Kunlun. What is sometimes called "void nothingness," sometimes "the self-actualizing," sometimes "the nameless," are all alike the One. Now that the precepts of the Tao are spread abroad to instruct people, those who keep the precepts and do not transgress them have maintained Unity [守一]. Those who do not practice the precepts will lose Unity.

Those who forever practice false arts in the mortal world point to the [one of the] five viscera and call it "the One." They close their eyes and practice meditation, hoping by these means to seek good fortune. This is wrong. They depart ever farther from life [in so doing].⁴⁷

By now we have read enough of the text to recognize the lineaments of what seems to be one of the primary messages of the *Xiang'er* commentary. The human body is perfectible, but only when its grosser elements have been charged with the pneumas of the Tao and converted into corporeal spirits. Among the physical constituents of the body, the semen and blood which join to make life are the most vital and easily discerned of the loci where the pneumas of the Tao move. Semen especially tends to "leak away," and there are, further, dangerous techniques urging sexual practices that work only for the benefit of the male partner; thus, these dangers are highlighted. Physical transformation, unavailable through such deviant methods, depends on the correct working of the heart, the "Luminous Hall," which must merge *yin* and *yang* pneumas into

⁴⁵ Kobayashi, *Rikucho dōkyōshi kenkyū*, 311-314.

⁴⁶ Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*, 312-315.

⁴⁷ Lines 102-113; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 13.

a harmonious whole that will fill the viscera. When this life-giving blend of pneumas is apportioned to the sexual organs, it is especially important that they be properly managed. To aid humanity in accomplishing these tasks, the Tao has promulgated precepts which enjoin one to abandon willfulness, anger, and greed and to prepare the heart and other bodily organs in clarity and stillness.

As can be seen from the above passage, the practices we have been analyzing in no way stand in opposition to the precepts Ōfuchi has so carefully explicated. It is finally not a matter of deciding whether the *Xiang'er* is a moral text, or a meditation text, or a political text.⁴⁸ All of these aspects are alluded to and interrelate with one another. This can be seen clearly in that several of the precepts refer directly to physiological practice and that the practices themselves depend on keeping the precepts.⁴⁹ The *Xiang'er* insists on this element of unity in its explanation of the Tao with these words: "The aspects of the Tao which might be separately examined are so many that there is not enough bamboo and silk to write of them all. Consequently, we go back to its reversion to the One. What would be the harm in analyzing one of its many aspects? The Tao may not be analyzed because, in so doing, we falsify its simplicity, lose its undifferentiation, and diffuse it to the extent that it joins the deviant."⁵⁰ Clearly, in trying to analyze the text at all, I have placed myself firmly among the deviates.

⁴⁸ I have not dealt at all with the political and social aspects of the *Xiang'er*, but it is worth noting that the method described here works not only for the heart, the ruling organ of the body, but for the emperor, the ruling organ of the kingdom, as well. If the emperor will abandon striving and deviant desire, his officials will mimic him and the people will mimic them. Confucian virtues will be practiced quite effortlessly, and the kingdom will thus be ruled of itself.

⁴⁹ See especially the third ("practice maintaining the feminine") and fifth ("practice clarity and stillness") of the nine precepts and numbers 2, 3, 7, and 18 of the twenty-seven precepts in the appendix.

⁵⁰ Lines 170-72; Rao, *Laozi Xiang'erzhu jiaozheng*, 18.

Appendix

The *Xiang'er* Precepts⁵¹

Keyed to the *Daodejing*:

- 1) Act without intervening.
- 2) Practice flexibility and weakness.
- 3) Practice maintaining the feminine. Do not initiate actions.
- 4) Practice being nameless.
- 5) Practice clarity and stillness.
- 6) Practice good deeds.
- 7) Practice desirelessness.
- 8) Practice knowing how to cease with sufficiency.
- 9) Practice yielding to others.

Keyed to the *Xiang'er* Commentary {All begin "You are admonished..."}:

- 1) Do not delight in deviance. Delight is the same as anger.
- 2) Do not waste your essence and pneumas.
- 3) Do not injure the ascendant pneumas.
- 4) Do not consume beasts which contain blood, delighting in their flavor.
- 5) Do not envy the achievements and fame of others.
- 6) Do not practice false arts or point to any shape and call it the Tao.
- 7) Do not neglect the law [ritual practices] of the Tao.
- 8) Do not act recklessly.
- 9) Do not kill or speak of killing.

- 10) Do not study deviant texts.
- 11) Do not covet glory or seek it strenuously.
- 12) Do not seek fame.
- 13) Do not be deceived by your ears, eyes, or mouth.
- 14) Place yourself in a humble position.
- 15) Do not slight [the Tao] or become agitated.
- 16) Consider carefully all undertakings and do not be flustered.
- 17) Do not pamper your body with good clothes and fine foods.
- 18) Do not allow [your emotions and essences] to overflow.

- 19) Do not, through poverty, seek strenuously after wealth.
- 20) Do not commit any of the various evil acts.
- 21) Do not overly observe the interdiction and taboos.
- 22) Do not pray or sacrifice to demons and spirits.
- 23) Do not be obstinate.
- 24) Do not consider yourself inerrant.
- 25) Do not contend with others over right and wrong. When you meet the contentious, flee them.
- 26) Do not proclaim the Sage or contribute to the fame of the mighty.
- 27) Do not delight in warfare.

⁵¹Based on the collated text of Ōfuchi, *Shoki no dōkyō*, 251-257.

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Reason, Spontaneity, and Awareness: A. C. Graham's Account of the Roots of Logic and Moral Action

Lisa RAPHALS
Bard College

Unreason Within Reason: Essays on the Outskirts of Rationality. By A. C. GRAHAM.
LaSalle Illinois: Open Court, 1992. 293 pages.

Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China. By A. C. GRAHAM.
LaSalle Illinois: Open Court, 1989. 502 pages.

Was philosophical argument in ancient China on the outskirts of rationality? If so, in what way? What are the outskirts of rationality, or to put it differently, what is its center? *Disputers of the Tao* and *Unreason Within Reason* differ in their subject matter, organization, and audience, but both address the same basic questions. Since its publication in 1989, *Disputers of the Tao* has emerged as perhaps the preeminent consideration of early Chinese thought in the field. Written for the general reader, but no less useful to the specialist, it summarizes in a closely structured form some thirty years of widely respected, if sometimes controversial, scholarship on Chinese philosophy, grammar and textual criticism.

Graham's work in ethics and moral philosophy is less widely known. It includes *Reason and Spontaneity*, an inquiry into the problem of fact and value, and a number of essays, some of which appear for the first time in *Unreason Within Reason*. While its publication is posthumous, its content and organization were largely determined at the time of Graham's death in 1991. The book's fourteen essays cover a wide range of subjects: linguistics, ethics, history of science, moral and political philosophy, mythology, and mysticism. Some originally appeared in philosophical journals such as *Rationalist Annual* and *Mind*; four are previously unpublished.

For all these differences, both books share two central concerns: the nature and limits of rationality and the grounding of moral action in spontaneous awareness. One major concern is the place of rationalism and what he calls anti-rationalism (as opposed to irrationalism) in Chinese philosophical inquiry. In both books, Graham emphasizes the importance of correlative thinking, a term he locates in the work of Marcel Granet (Granet 1934). Correlative thinking is based on "pre-logical" chains of opposed images, or concepts, which he argues informed not only early philosophical inquiry in both China and Greece, but also the perceptions of the mystic. Finally, both books are centrally concerned with the importance of spontaneous "awareness," on the one hand as a means of creating a bridge between fact and value and on the other as a basis of mystical perception.

Disputers of the Tao

Disputers of the Tao, as its title suggests, avoids the anachronism of treating the "Hundred Schools" of Warring States China as a *mise en scène* for the development of later Confucian ideologies. It takes "following Tao" as the common concern and major debate of all early Chinese thought and traces the progress of that debate, through a wider range of voices and with greater attention to the philosophical arguments at stake than do some other treatments of the same materials. The book is organized into four sections and several appendices. After an introductory chapter that summarizes the cultural and historical background of the Spring and Autumn period, the first section describes the intellectual response to the social crisis of the breakdown of the Zhou political and social order. Titled "The Breakdown of the World Order Decried by Heaven," it begins with the "conservative" attempt of Confucius to return to Zhou social and political norms. From there it proceeds to his initial critics and competitors. The Mohist reaction is a "radical" attempt to reshape society on a utilitarian and meritocratic basis. The "privatist" Yang Zhu and the "utopian" Shen Nong agriculturalists both seek political solutions by eschewing the political world, one by "preserving the original nature intact," the other by idealizing small, agricultural non-centralized communities. The remaining two chapters deal with the "rationalist" reaction of such "sophists" as Hui Shi and Gongsun Long, a reaction more to Confucius, perhaps, than to the late Zhou political order per se. The final chapter of this section introduces a "subjective" reaction to the decline of the Zhou state, an explicit division of "inner" and "outer," and a shift of attention toward the "inner" life, as represented by Song Xing and the anonymous author of the "Inward Training" (*Nei ye*) section of the *Guanzi*.

In its extended treatments of these Yangist, Shen Nong, Sophist and subjectivist responses, this section of the book abandons the "three schools" approach to Warring States intellectual debates. Its nuanced presentation relies on Graham's meticulous reading of passages both for grammar and for argument, and elements of this reformulation are based on his textual studies. Some of his readings of Yang Zhu, Shen Nong, and Hui Shi are drawn from received editions of such sources as the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Huainanzi* and *Liushi Chunqiu*; others come from his own reconstructions of the *Zhuangzi* and the Mohist canon. By contrast, there is no detailed account of the textual history of the *Analects*.

The second section, "From Social to Metaphysical Crisis: Heaven Parts from Man," moves from a socio-political arena in which a relationship between the human world and "Heaven" is still assumed, to an increasingly philosophical debate in which the moral grounding of the human world is open to serious question. In this section, Mencius introduces an explicit theory of the inherent goodness of human nature. The chapters on the neo-Mohists and Zhuangzi closely follow Graham's own reconstructions of these texts. His discussion of the neo-Mohists, drawn largely from *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Graham 1978), shows their logical sophistication, including extended definitions of key terms, and breadth of inquiry, which included not only logic and ethics, but optics, mechanics, and economics. The section on Zhuangzi takes up the authorship dating of the *Zhuangzi* text, which Graham breaks down into five main layers (p.173): writings by the historical Zhuang Zhou (c. 320 B.C.E.); a Zhuangzi "school"; a "Primitivist" layer (209-202 B.C.E.) which rejects morality as the basis of social order; Yangist chapters (from the same period); and a "Syncretist" stratum (2nd century B.C.E.).

This section introduces several problems that occur in the *Zhuangzi* that are also central to Graham's own philosophical interests. These include his account of Zhuangzi as an "antirational," but not irrational response to neo-Mohist logic; "spontaneity," a key element in both the *Zhuangzi* and Graham's account of "awareness" in *Reason and Spontaneity*; and finally, the status of language and the question of linguistic relativism.

Of the three responses to the metaphysical crisis posed on the second section, only one, that of Mencius, was able to reunite humanity with Heaven. The third section, "Heaven and Man Go Their Own Ways," addresses a third century view that processes outside of human control are also outside of human morality (p. 213), with the result that Heaven can no longer serve as the basis for either individual morality or government. This response appears in the *Dao De Jing* (which Graham dates to about 250 B.C.E.), Xunzi, and the Legalists. A major contribution of this section is its account of two "political heresies": a criticism of the principle of hereditary monarchy in the *Ho Guanzi* and the question of "Chinese anarchism" (p. 299) in the *Dao De Jing*, and the "primitivist" sections of the *Zhuangzi*.

The fourth section deals with the entry of cosmology and "correlative thinking" into the Han syntheses of earlier philosophical discourse. *Disputers of the Tao* ends with two appendices that address several of Graham's ongoing philosophical concerns in moral philosophy and philosophy of language. One introduces what he calls the "quasi-syllogism" as a feature of Chinese moral philosophy. His premise is that "Chinese ethical thinking starts from the spontaneity of inclination and the value of wisdom" and "follows an implicit logical form approximating to the syllogism, applicable directly to concrete situations" (p. 383). The argument seems to be that, based on spontaneous inclination toward wisdom and one's own awareness of factors relevant to the practical situation at hand, one is spontaneously moved to a course of action with the same inexorability as the conclusion of a syllogism follows from its premisses. Using the quasi-syllogism as the basis for Chinese ethical reasoning, he describes the schools of early China as "offering a full range of answers to the questions raised by the quasi-syllogism" (p. 384) as to the nature of wisdom, spontaneity (including its relation to selfish desires), the bases for action, given maximum awareness, the problem of how to educate others, and the relation of human and extra-human spontaneous processes.

The second appendix addresses the problem of the relation of thought and language. In it Graham attempts to refute a variety of generalizations about Classical Chinese that disregard its grammar and start from antiquated assumptions (p. 406). As an alternative, he introduces summary accounts of several of his own linguistic studies. His discussion of verbs for "being" in Chinese is drawn from an earlier essay, "'Being' in Western Philosophy compared with *shilfei* and *yu/wu* in Chinese Philosophy" (Graham 1959), which explores some of the ramifications of language for ontology. His treatment of the relationship of conceptual categories also comes from an earlier work, "Relating Categories to Question Forms in Pre-Han Thought" (Graham 1986). Starting from Émile Benveniste's study of interrogative pronouns in Aristotle (Benveniste 1966), in which Benveniste correlates Aristotle's "categories" of thought with the interrogative pronouns of Greek, Graham uses Chinese interrogatives to tentatively elucidate Chinese categories of thought. Later versions of both studies are printed in full in *Unreason Within Reason*.

A major contribution of this work is its discussion, and in some cases, reconstruction, of lesser-known doctrines, schools, and works. In some cases there are discrete texts and names to

be found, for example, the *Guanzi*, the *Ho Guanzi*, and the *Gongsun Longzi*. But in other cases, such fragments as we have of the views of a thinker or school are to be found embedded within another work. Examples include Neo-Mohist writings in the *Mo jing* and the doctrines of Yang Zhu, Hui Shi, and Song Xing in the *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, *Huainanzi* and *Lushi Chunqiu*. Any such reconstruction implicitly involves interpretation, especially when dealing with hostile accounts. For example, Mencius describes Yang Zhu as merely, but thoroughly, self-centered: "If by plucking out one hair he could benefit the world he would not do it." (p. 54) Graham draws on other accounts of Yang Zhu in the *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Lushi Chunqiu* to provide a plausible account of a doctrine of keeping the original nature intact.

A second major strength of the book is its many rigorous, careful and fresh translations of both familiar and unfamiliar passages, which allow Warring States debates about dao to emerge in their own voices. For the student or general reader, this book provides an introduction to Chinese thought that is thought-provoking, rigorous, fresh, and authoritative. For the specialist, its detailed and clear citations of primary sources and secondary literature make it a valuable resource.

Unreason Within Reason

Unreason Within Reason consists of fourteen apparently independent essays and a brief introductory "intellectual autobiography." Rather than elucidating a consistent argument or historical progression, these essays explore the wide range of Graham's interests. Yet all, or most of them, return to Graham's central concerns in epistemology and ethics. Some use Chinese philosophical sources to explore the nature of rational inquiry in early societies ("Rationalism and Anti-Rationalism in Pre-Buddhist China"; "China, Europe and the Origins of Modern Science"; and "Poetic and Mythic Varieties of Correlative Thinking"). Others take up the issue of linguistic relativism, the relation of philosophical inquiry to the language in which it is posed ("Conceptual Schemes and Linguistic Relativism in Relation to Chinese" and "'Being' in Linguistics and Philosophy"). Several essays concern the relation of fact and value. Of these, "A Chinese Approach to the Philosophy of Value: *Ho-kuan-tzu*" relies entirely on Chinese sources, while "Value, Fact and Facing Facts" deals exclusively in Western sources. Other essays on Nietzsche, the doctrine of original sin, Marx, and Bataille also concern themselves entirely with Western sources.

"Value, Fact and Facing Facts" recapitulates Graham's arguments for the "quasi-syllogism," as an account of moral action that grounds value in fact. How, he asks, can we establish a rational basis for moral choice, independent of external imperatives? Moral choices, he argues, are not based on rational weighing of means or ends, but on spontaneous "pre-logical" inclinations. These spontaneous predispositions to one or another course of action are guided by our awareness of "all spatial, temporal and personal viewpoints which are relevant to the issue" (p. 23). If one is maximally aware, one will be spontaneously and genuinely drawn toward "right" choices. One is reminded of the Socratic maxim that no one who knows good ever does ill.

This idea was originally developed in *Reason and Spontaneity* (Graham 1985). It also appears as the basis for early Chinese ethical reasoning in the first appendix of *Disputers of the Tao*, and seems to derive from his account of an illumined and spontaneous awareness as a basis

for moral action in the *Zhuangzi* (p. 191-94). According to Graham, an ethic grounded in the imperative to "Be aware" has the advantage of the neutrality claimed for fact (p. 22) and abolishes the priority of the self (p. 23). Yet this account of the quasi-syllogism is silent on several important questions: (1) How can we be sure that such spontaneous inclinations, however broadly informed, will move *everyone* toward right actions, or even the same actions? and (2) Can we be sure that enough of the necessary "facts" are knowable enough to correctly motivate human action? To put the problem another way, if one lacks sufficient information, or awareness, is one necessarily predisposed toward "wrong" actions? A theory of the inherent goodness of human nature would solve the first problem, but Graham, unlike Mencius (or Plato), seeks to avoid any such commitment (p. 27). The second problem introduces issues of the nature of knowledge, perception, and cognition, which Graham (unlike Zhuangzi or the later Mohists) does not take up.

The meaning of the term "nature" and its relation to spontaneity reappear in the third essay "Natural Goodness and Original Sin." The context is not Xunzi's familiar critique of Mencius, but the Enlightenment rationalist critique of the doctrine of original sin and its attendant notion of natural goodness. Graham examines, and reformulates, the understanding of the term "nature" from "innate" to "spontaneous." This move allows him to reinterpret assertions that human nature is good, or evil, as appeals to spontaneity, or discipline (p. 54), thereby moving even farther from a commitment to any theory of human nature.

In "Perspectivism vs. Relativism in Nietzsche" Graham takes up some of the work of a thinker he elsewhere describes as an irrationalist (p. 109) and argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism is not simply a reformulation of relativism. For Graham, Nietzsche's perspectivist epistemology presents "a way out of the dichotomy of absolutism and relativism" (p. 29). Whereas the relativist holds that any and all viewpoints are equal, the perspectivist holds that her view is the best for her. Differences between perspectivism and relativism become acute and important when we confront the values of another society. As an example, he discusses two incidents in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: the case of a man who helps fellow-villagers kill his adopted son at the behest of the village oracle, and the case of twins who have been left to die by exposure in the forest (p. 41). Part of what interests Graham in these stories is Achebe's ability to present the multiple perspectives of the stories without revealing his own preferences.

In "Conceptual Schemes and Linguistic Relativism in Relation to Chinese" Graham argues that the conceptual schemes are based not on conflicting sets of propositions but on distinctive pairs of names. He uses semiology, rather than philosophy, to approach this "pre-logical patterning of names" (p. 62), drawing extensively (as he does elsewhere as well) on the linguistic studies of Roman Jakobson, especially his distinction between four types of relation between words: paradigm, syntagm, metaphor, and metonym. Paradigmatically related words are similar (white and light) or contrasting (light and darkness). Syntagmatic relations are the words we combine in actual speech (She saw only light; he saw only darkness). Analogous paradigms can substitute for one another as metaphors (Light is to dark as good is to evil). Analogous syntagms can substitute for one another as metonyms (She is to light as he is to darkness). Such chains of words and associations, according to Graham, reveal the beginnings of conceptual schemata and characterize correlative thinking in China and elsewhere. Yet this view of conceptual schemes is not equivalent to linguistic relativism. These patterns of names are neither true nor false, and factual statements depend on them for meaning, not for truth (p. 72).

Two other essays deal with the role of correlative thinking in the development of science and myth. "China, Europe and the Origins of Modern Science" takes up the "Scientific Revolution" problem that underlies Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China* (Needham 1954): why did Europe have, and China lack, the "Scientific Revolution" of the seventeenth century? Like Nathan Sivin (Sivin 1982), he eschews the historical fallacy of *expecting* such a revolution after the fact, and redefines the issue by exploring several related questions: the status of "natural laws," the development of logical argument and proof in Chinese thought, and the contrast between modern science and the correlative thinking that underlay ancient and medieval science in both Europe and China. In "Poetic and Mythic Varieties of Correlative Thinking." Graham returns to the theme that all analysis, whether scientific or mythological, "has its starting-points in the pre-logical underground of thought - in concepts born from spontaneous correlations" (p. 207). In exploring some of the variety of correlative thought, he shows how complex chains of analogies based on correlative associations of binary pairs can lead to very problematic classification systems (for example, some European accounts of racial characteristics), discusses the correlative thinking of such diverse figures as Kepler, Rimbaud, and Conrad, and describes the role of correlative thinking in myths such as the Garden of Eden.

"'Being' in Linguistics and Philosophy" also takes up the issue of linguistic relativism. In this essay (the source for the second appendix of *Disputers of the Tao*), Graham contrasts the Chinese, Arabic, and Greek verbs "to be." Chinese (as does Arabic) has two verbs "to be", one to indicate the copular relation X is Y (*shi*) and one to show existence (*you*, X exists). Greek, by contrast, does not distinguish between the existential and copular functions of *einai*, "to be." Thus Greek, the original language of Western philosophy, is prone to confuse existence and essence, and this confusion persists in the philosopher's tendency to insist that the abstract noun "Being" has only one meaning. But Graham's argument is not the linguistic determinist's claim that the characteristics of Greek force us to confuse essence and existence, but rather to show how such ambiguities leave their traces in our living philosophical language.

"Rationalism and Anti-Rationalism in Pre-Buddhist China" surveys varieties of early Chinese thought and argues that the mainstream of early Chinese thinking was correlative, with certain exceptions. The pure rationalism of the Sophists and later Mohists exalted and detached analytic reasoning from correlative thinking. He makes an important distinction between the anti-rationalism of the *Zhuangzi*, which denies that reason is the right way to see things as they are (p. 99), and *irrationalism*, which exalts subjectivity and heightened emotion (p. 109). Irrationalism, while characteristic of Western Romantics and Nietzsche, was unrepresented in early China. (p. 116) While the anti- and ir-rationalist distinction is an important one, Graham's discussion of anti-rationalism depends on reading *Zhuangzi* as an anti-rationalist, which, I believe, is open to question or qualification.

Two other essays offer different (and not always effective) perspectives on the problem of fact and value, which first appeared in the first essay. In "A Chinese Approach to the Philosophy of Value: *Ho-kuan-tzu*," Graham returns to the problem of fact and value and explores spontaneous preference based on wisdom as the basis of the ethics in the *He Guanzi*. The "sage" of the *He Guanzi*, unlike *Zhuangzi*, does not stop with reacting spontaneously; upon arriving at a spontaneous preference for a wiser course of action, he takes it as a standard by incorporating it in law (p. 128). The problem of fact and value also reappears in "Liberty and Equality," which

explores the moral and logical premisses behind Locke and Rousseau's arguments for liberty and equality, and concludes that we have mistakenly focused on the part of doctrine of the Rights of Man, the assumption that libertarian and egalitarian arguments start from moral premisses. (p. 165)

The latter essays in this volume provide insightful interpretations of several key thinkers and problems of twentieth-century philosophy and cultural critique through the lens of several of Graham's philosophical interests. "The Question Behind Marx's Concept of Alienation" takes up no less a problem than "how to live fruitfully in the twentieth century" and "the revitalization of ends" (p. 200). Graham argues for the revival of Marx's original concept of alienation, as put forth in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and the *German Ideology*, both written before, but published after, the *Communist Manifesto*. Graham argues that "the word 'alienation' won its wide circulation by multiplying and debasing its meanings, but in the thought of Marx the concept is both simple and of great explanatory power" (p. 191). Graham places Marx at the birth of "two fundamentally different radicalisms directed to incompatible ends" (p. 187). The first is the socialism for which he is best known, "the fossilizing Marxism of the first half of the twentieth century" (p. 188). The second is the anarchism of the *German Ideology*, in which alienating institutions are replaced by voluntary cooperation (p. 187).

In "Bataille as Myth-Maker and as Philosopher of Value" and "Two Perspectives of Present Mythopoeia," Graham takes up the question of the nature of myth and mythopoeia in the contemporary world and the relation of economic humanity to both. "Where," he asks, "in the disintegrated communities of the present can a myth be acted out to make it real?" (p. 233). In Bataille's equation of valuable activity with loss, waste and destruction, Graham finds a test-case for the viability of an uncompromising philosophical relativism. Returning to the central problem of "Perspectivism vs. Relativism in Nietzsche," he argues that to understand Bataille we must renounce both the relativism his view of life would invite and the absolutism that would reject it outright in favor of the multi-perspectival awareness of "perspectivism" (p. 235). Bataille, Graham argues, "has seen better than anyone various implications of the non-Kantian assumption which he shares with Nietzsche and also with the Chinese, that *ends are not rational concepts* [*italics mine*], but activities to which we find ourselves spontaneously inclined irrespective of consequences" (p. 241). The argument of "Present Mythopoeia" is that modern myth "relates us not to eternal order but to disruption and change" (p. 261) and provides examples of a very different turn from that of some would-be present-day mythologists.

The final essay, "Mysticism and the Question of Private Access," asks how individuals of reason, in a culture oriented to means rather than ends, economy rather than value, and technology rather than appreciation, come to terms with mysticism and ranges of experience outside the public domain. It proposes alternatives to Herbert Fingarette's suggestion that psychoanalysis provided a direction from which to make sense of mystical discourse (p. 267; Fingarette 1963). Its basic questions and his own personal responses are powerfully formulated, but the essay is silent on both the varieties and differences among mystical experiences and the vast literature on the subject.

Breadth of vision is both a strength and a weakness in *Unreason Within Reason* and may render it unsuitable for the narrow academic specialist. It is, however, well worth reading for anyone who is curious about the connections of key issues in Chinese philosophy with the most deeply-felt problems of the contemporary world.

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COMMUNICATION

Translations in *The Taoist Experience*

Livia KOHN
Boston University

The Taoist Experience, an anthology I compiled of Taoist texts arranged in topical order, has recently been withdrawn from the market due to insufficient acknowledgments of earlier translations used in the book. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest apologies to authors inadvertently wronged by my work and explain how this situation came about.

The Taoist Experience was conceived as a resource tool for the study and teaching of the Taoist religion that would provide easy access to some of its basic documents and studies in Western languages. It was meant to present both newly translated materials of a more esoteric nature and classical passages, to contain mythological descriptions, philosophical discourse, and practical instruction, thus giving an integrated picture of Taoism beyond the boundaries of historical periods and sectarian divisions.

To this end, the book contained a total of fifty-eight selections taken from altogether forty-eight Chinese texts. Half of these were my own translations, either published here for the first time or reprinted from earlier works. The other half were available in Western languages. Of these, one was reprinted with permission, some were found in German or French, others were based on different original versions from the ones I used, and in two cases I only became aware of the other translations after I had completed my own.

This left a total of sixteen texts, in the rendition of which I consulted earlier English translations. In all cases, I made the original text my main reference point and chose a terminology consistent with the texts translated in the book for the first time. In some instances, I ended up modifying and developing earlier renditions; in others, I completely retranslated the original.

Sometimes earlier translations were so powerful, their wording so close to the tenor and feeling of the originals, that any alteration could only have created an inferior product. In particular this is true of the outstanding works of Suzanne Cahill, Richard B. Mather, and Thomas E. Smith. Their pioneering effort has opened dimensions of excellence in Taoist translation that will lead to a better and broader understanding of the religion. Rather than spoiling what had been done with such acumen and superb quality, I retained their work with some adjustments.

I also relied on translations by other scholars whose renditions are eminently accurate and excellent in their choice of English equivalents. In reworking original texts translated by Stephen Bokenkamp, Lionel Giles, James Ware, Burton Watson, and Percival Yetts, I applied my own terminology to bring out the Taoist religious content. While I occasionally saw a different meaning in the text, there were also passages where their superb choice of vocabulary and phrase left me at a loss for improvement.

In yet other cases, such as the earlier translations by Thomas Cleary, Ilza Veith, and Tao-chung Yao, I found inspiration and help in rendering obscure and difficult passages. Yet again there were some renditions, such as those prepared by Poul Andersen, David Hawke, and Edward H. Schafer, which used significantly different viewpoints and language to require a complete retranslation of the materials. Even these works were very helpful in clarifying my own vision and choice of terminology.

Faced, thus, with a large number of previous works whose impact on the book was significantly different and frequently working in the gray zone between close adaptation and total rewrite, I was not sure about the proper procedures in recognizing the contribution of these works. I decided to acknowledge them all in the exact same way in brief references. Consultation with colleagues on the matter did not teach me otherwise. The references were intended to indicate that the works mentioned had been used in developing my own reading, in the same way as we learn from the work of others in everything we do.

Using this manner of acknowledgment was not due to a lack of respect for others' work or to willful and intentional abuse. On the contrary, especially where my adaptation was rather close, I was full of admiration for the acumen and exactitude of the scholars concerned. Choosing the neutral form of acknowledgment, I did not want to diminish anyone's contribution. I acted in good faith and never tried to hide my reliance on earlier works.

I realize that I should have consulted more colleagues about my insecurity and that I should have proceeded with a great deal more care. Formal acknowledgments and permissions as well as a more detailed description of what exactly I did with each work should have been included in the book — and will be in the next edition. I feel terrible about the disturbance the book has caused and would like to extend my heartfelt apologies to all those whom I have inadvertently wronged by using their work in this manner.