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THE MIND AND BODY IN THE *LAOZI*

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Abstract

The body is the answer to the question of the mind that lost its way. Indeed, the mind, the everyday, discriminating mind, as years go by, becomes entangled almost beyond hope with "the ten thousand things" around it. Almost beyond hope – or beyond hope? For, how can one hope to disentangle one's own heart and mind from the kaleidoscope of things that we see every day, and every year, and every moment of our life, if our mind is unable and unwilling to break free? My research hypothesis is that the body does the heavy work of reconquest of one's lost mind, naturally, by doing nothing. When the mind ignores distractions, it is the body that takes over. Applying Rita Sherma's 'hermeneutics of intersubjectivity' to a close reading of the Laozi *(also known as the* Dao de jing*), the research shows how and why the ontogeny here reviews indeed the phylogeny, but only does so first contrariwise: conscience wanes into consciousness, then into conscientiousness, in order to wax back again, onto a higher level now. The body, that is closer to nature than the mind, can help the mind find its way back, and then onto the Way. Ten thousand things here under heaven unfold according to their nature: we can be one of them, if so we (truly) wish. The* Laozi, *distrustful of the holy, ignoring the divine, is an impassioned paean to the sacred.*

Keywords: body; conscientiousness; consciousness; human nature; *Laozi*.

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'It is the very mind itself
That leads the mind astray;
Of the mind,
Do not be mindless'[2].

1. The mind of the many

My goal in this article is to show how the body can and should help the mind save itself from itself (that is, extricate itself from the myriad distractions that risk to engulf it) in the foundational Daoist text, the *Laozi*. To this effect, I use Sherma's (2011; 2022) "hermeneutics of intersubjectivity", that tries to redress a fundamental imbalance: "Scholars are often called to deconstruct vigorously before

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[2] Takuan, 1986, 44 (Yagyū, 2003, 186, n. 43). The poem is given *ex abrupto* ('In the song it says') by Takuan, a Zen monk, former abbot of the Daitokuji, and future first abbot of the Tōkaiji, as the closing statement of his *Fudōchishinmyōroku*, a long letter/ brief treatise on the Zen mind of sword fighting. The letter dates back to 1632 (Yagyu, 2003, 8) and it is addressed to his good friend Munenori, a *daimyō*, head of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū school, and sword instructor to two generations of Tokugawa shoguns. This poem nicely encapsulates the inner conflict of the mind between distraction leading to confusion and focus leading to edification. The mind not only leads the mind astray, but also the mind can purify the mind that leads the mind astray. In so far as *kokoro* means in Japanese heart, mind, and spirit, this brief comment can be accordingly expanded.

they are called upon to understand deeply" (Sherma, 2022, 483-484). Sherma thus offers a more systematic answer than Van Norden's "hermeneutic of faith"[3] to what he identifies, in the wake of other authors, most notably Ricoeur[4], as a "hegemonic" hermeneutics of suspicion[5]. Sherma lists what she sees as the necessary conditions for a deep, respectful, and culturally sensitive engagement with alien religious experiences and texts.

In the *Chūnqyū*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*[6], one of the Five Classics, the last of the six entries for the year 716 BC reads: 'In winter, the Heaven-appointed king sent the Fan Liege to us on an official visit. The Rong attacked the Fan Liege at Chuqiu and took him home with them' (Durrant, Li and Schaberg, 2016, 45). Puzzling. The *Zuozhuan*, the authoritative line-by-line commentary to the *Chūnqyū*[7], elaborates: 'Earlier, the Rong visited the Zhou court and had distributed gifts to the princes and ministers. The Fan Liege did not treat them appropriately as guests. In winter, the king sent the Fan Liege to us on an official visit. As he was returning, the Rong attacked him at Chuqiu and took him home with them'. The translators also kindly elaborate in a footnote: "Fan was the name of a small domain that was located north of the Yellow River in Henan, and the Fan Liege served hereditarily as a high official in the Zhou court. Chuqiu was located between Song and Cao to the southwest of Chengwu County, Shandong" (*ibid*., 44, n. 111). And this is the story of the tumultuous dealings of the hapless Liege with the impetuous Rong, one of the "four barbarian tribes" that surrounded Early China from every direction[8].

So what? A high official was kidnapped by some "barbarians" while on an official visit. That certainly mattered to the official. A later, and somewhat longer, commentary of a brief entry in an ancient court chronicle turned this into a morality tale of (in)hospitality. Hospitality certainly mattered to the ancients, too. But why should all of this matter to us, here and now? The argument of this paper is that, in a way, in a significant way, we all are Fan Lieges, in danger of the Rong. Who are the Rong, in our case? And why can we all be considered Fan Lieges? Let us turn at this juncture, in search of insight, to another one of the Five Classics, the *Shūjīng*, the *Book of Documents*:

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[3] "Those who use a hermeneutic of faith read texts in the hope of discovering truth, goodness, and beauty. They are open to the possibility that other people, including people in very different times and cultures, might know more about these things than we do, or at least they might have views that can enrich our own in some way" (Van Norden, 2017, 139).

[4] "Three masters, seemingly mutually exclusive, dominate the school of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud" (Ricoeur, 1970, 32).

[5] "I am concerned that hermeneutics of suspicion have become hegemonic in the humanities and social sciences" (Van Norden, 2017, 140).

[6] Covering the late eighth to the early fifth century BC. "I argue that the formally regular core of the *Spring and Autumn* was produced by recordkeepers in the state of Lu, not by a later editor" (Van Auken, 2023, 1).

[7] "*Zuozhuan* is the largest text to come to us from pre-imperial China (i.e., from before 221 BCE). One might also argue that it is the most important text from that era. As such, *Zuozhuan* deserves a place alongside other great histories from the ancient world" (Durrant, Li and Schaberg, 2016, xvii).

[8] 'The people of those five regions – the Middle states, and the Zung [Rong, in Pinyin romanisation], Î [Yi], (and other wild tribes round them) – had all their several natures, which they could not be made to alter. The tribes on the east were called Î [Yi]. They had their hair unbound, and tattooed their bodies. Some of them ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the south were called Man. They tattooed their foreheads, and had their feet turned in towards each other. Some of them (also) ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the west were called Zung [Rong]. They had their hair unbound, and wore skins. Some of them did not eat grain-food. Those on the north were called Tî [Di]. They wore skins of animals and birds, and dwelt in caves. Some of them also did not eat grain-food. The people of the Middle states, and of those Î [Yi], Man, Zung [Rong], and Tî [Di], all had their dwellings, where they lived at ease; their flavours which they preferred; the clothes suitable for them; their proper implements for use; and their vessels which they prepared in abundance. In those five regions, the languages of the people were not mutually intelligible, and their likings and desires were different. To make what was in their minds apprehended, and to communicate their likings and desires, (there were officers), – in the east, called transmitters; in the south, representationists; in the west, Tî-tis [Di-dis]; and in the north, interpreters' (*Liji*, 3.3.14, Legge, 1885, I, 229-230). "The attitude the Ancient Chinese held toward some of their neighbors can be seen in the characters they used to refer to them. For example, 狄 *di* is written with a left component 犬 *quan* that means 'dog', and 蛮 *man* is written with a bottom component 虫 *chong* that means 'insect'. 戎 *rong* and 夷 *yi* fare a little better, their characters being constructed from components that mean weapons of war, namely 戈 *ge* 'spear' and 弓 *gong* 'bow' respectively. Another neighbouring tribe often referred to in Ancient China was the *qiang* 羌, written with a character whose top component 羊 *yang* means 'sheep'. These ethnic labels had to wait till the 20th century for some of them to be written with less discriminatory characters" (Wang, 2013, 8). The story of the earliest extant designation of the Japanese by the Chinese is, also, very instructive in this connection.

Chou Kung said: Oh, what the noble man aims at is to have no pleasurable ease. If you take your ease after first having experienced the hardships of husbandry, then you will understand the sufferings of the small people. When their fathers and mothers have toiled with husbandry, their sons do not know the hardships of husbandry and take their pleasurable ease and rejoice, and finally they become disorderly and overbearing and insult their parents, saying: Those antiquated people have heard nothing and know nothing (Wu yi, 1-3; see Karlgren, 1950b, 56-58, slightly edited for fluency).

Now, filial piety certainly *is* a most serious affair in ancient China. But what do these lines from the *Shūjīng* have to do with that entry from the *Chūnqyū*? One thing at the very least, I would argue. And that is, unsurprisingly perhaps, their echoes' meeting in the *Laozi* (as the *Dao de jing* is traditionally known by the Chinese by the name of its legendary author[9]). Walking our way through the dense forest of intertextuality in ancient China, let us seek out why we should "have no pleasurable ease", or rather, why we should only have it after quite a (long) while. So reads another one of the Five Classics, the *Zhouyi*, the *Book of Changes*: 'War chariots hiding in tall herbage' (13:3; Rutt, 2002, 236). Hiding from whom? So reads another one of the Five Classics, the *Shījīng*, the *Book of Odes*: 'I have been chastised, and I will guard against future calamities; nobody caused me to be wasp-stung, I have myself drawn upon me this bitter sting; smart indeed are those wrens, they fly up and are birds; I am unequal to the many difficulties of my house, but I sit perched here on the smartweed' (289, *Xiao bi*; Karlgren, 1950a, 249-250, slightly edited for fluency). I sit here on the smartweed, doing exactly what? And one more quote, before I offer a tentative answer to all these questions should they be taken together. So reads the fifth of the Five Classics, the *Lǐjí*, the *Book of Rites*:

It belongs to the nature of man, as from Heaven, to be still at his birth. His activity shows itself as he is acted on by external things, and develops the desires incident to his nature. Things come to him more and more, and his knowledge is increased. Then arise the manifestations of liking and disliking. When these are not regulated by anything within, and growing knowledge leads more astray without, he cannot come back to himself, and his Heavenly principle is extinguished.

Now there is no end of the things by which man is affected; and when his likings and dislikings are not subject to regulation, he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him; that is, he stifles the voice of Heavenly principle within, and gives the utmost indulgence to the desires by which men may be possessed (*Liji*, 17.1.9-12; Legge, 1885, II, 96).

Behold the puzzle pieces falling into place. This, in a nutshell, also is the answer of the *Laozi* to our array of questions asked above. Remember the (in)decorous, destitute Liege abducted by the (dis)heartened, "barbarian" Rong[10]?

The Five Colours blind the eyes.
The Five Tones deafen the ears.
The Five Flavours distort the palate.
Chasing and hunting madden the mind.
Hard-to-get goods trip up the stride (Laozi, 2023, chapter 12).

In my interpretation, here in this paper, the Liege is the ('maddened') mind. The Rong are the Five Colors, the Five Tones, the Five Flavors, chasing and hunting, hard-to-get goods… Indeed, the Rong, potentially, are the ten thousand things under Heaven (that is, all the things there are in our world, in the Chinese traditional worldview), insofar as they risk to blind, deafen, distort, madden, and trip up our stride in their midst. The Rong also are, obviously, 'the desires of the appetite and of the ears and eyes', denounced in the *Lǐjí* (*ibid*.). Indeed, 'there is no end of the things by which man is affected'. 'Hence the greatest achievements of music were not in the perfection of the airs; the ceremonies in the sacrificial offerings were not in the exquisiteness of the flavours' (*ibid*.).

[9] "The title *Dao De Jing* may be translated 'Canonical text (*jing*) on the Way (*Dao*) and virtue (*de*)'. But this now-universal title did not become widely used until the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618 –905), when Laozi was officially regarded as a divine guardian of the dynasty. *Laozi* is the older title, going back almost to the creation of the text" (Laozi, 2001, 3).
[10] There is a (quite very) short story of Jorge Luis Borges (1984, 607), *Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos*, from *El Aleph* (1950), that gives a modern treatment to the ancient theme of venged inhospitality.

For the mass of people are so happy and cheerful,
as if enjoying a great festival,
as if strolling the terraces in the springtime.
I alone seem nervous and circumspect,
unclear about which way to go,
like a clueless newborn not yet able to smile,
all torpid and slack, as if belonging nowhere.

The mass of people all have more than enough.
I alone seem lost and abandoned,
my mind the mind of an idiot,
a mass of muddle this mind of mine.

The ordinary folks are so bright and lucid.
I alone seem to be so dark and so dim.

They are so precise and clear.
I alone am confused and bewildered,
drifting around on what seems an ocean,
blown along as if utterly unmoored.

The mass of other people – they act with such *purpose*.
I alone am a thing so dense and inert, so base and so low.

I alone, unlike the others,
see no value in anything
but feeding at the breast
of the mother (Laozi, 2023, chapter 20)[11].

The contrast is sharp indeed between the mind of the many ('the mass of people'), 'so bright and lucid' – and the mind of the few ('I alone'), 'so dark and dim'. The 'mass of people' takes their pleasurable ease (unlike the 'noble man' of the *Shūjīng*): 'so happy and cheerful, as if enjoying a great festival, as if strolling the terraces in the springtime'. But, 'like a clueless newborn not yet able to smile' (and unlike the 'disorderly and overbearing' sons from the *Shūjīng*, who 'insult their parents, saying: Those antiquated people have heard nothing and know nothing'): 'I alone, unlike the others, see no value in anything but feeding at the breast of the mother'.

Who is this mother, anyway? Or should I ask perhaps, *what* is this mother?

Nameless, undetermined:
any beginning of the ten thousand things.
Determined with a name:
'the mother of the ten thousand things' (Laozi, 2023, chapter 1)[12].

The 'mother of the ten thousand things', the 'mother of the world' (Laozi, 2023, chapter 52)[13], and the 'mother of the nation' (Laozi, 2023, chapter 59)[14] are all alternate names for the *dao*, the way. It is also noteworthy that the *Laozi* favours the feminine over the masculine.

[11]"Lastly, despite various opinions about the meaning of *simu* 食母 ('nourishing mother') in the last line, most agree that it is related to the nourishment of our life. Zheng Xuan understood this term as indicating 'wet nurse' in his interpretation on *Records of Rite* (*Liji zhushu*, 115: 583a), and Wu Cheng and Jiao Hong followed him. 'Nourishing mother' is a woman who nurtures babies despite her lower and abandoned social status. *Laozi*'s strategy becomes clear here: it values a nourishing mother rather than a noble lady who might feel harassed by her luxurious but confined life" (Kim, 2012, 221). However, by pitting the 'nourishing mother', a wet nurse, against the mother, "a noble lady who might feel harassed by her luxurious but confined life", the question then indeed becomes, who exactly is this "noble lady" in the *Laozi*, and why should we even postulate two "mothers" instead of one?

[12] Kim (2012, 160-161) argues cogently, on historical grounds, against the interpretative tradition of the 11th century distinguished scholars and rival chancellors of China, Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, that motivates Chen's "more philosophical" translation of this excerpt. *Cf*. Laozi, 2023, chapters 11 and 40.

In caring for the people and ordering the nation,
can you remain free of all knowledge?
In opening and shutting the gates of heaven,
can you take the role of the female?
In seeing clear through all the four directions,
can you keep on doing nothing at all?

This is the birthing and rearing of things
that never possesses what it produces,
never expecting anything from its deeds,
growing things but never controlling them –
the obscure power of remaining obscure (Laozi, 2023, chapter 10)[15].

'Growing things but never controlling them'… Why is that? Why should this be the (only) way of the sage in the *Laozi*?

Every attempt to seize the world and control it
shows us that it simply cannot be done.
The world cannot be stopped.
The world is a numinous vessel
beyond anyone's making, beyond anyone's control.
To control it is to wreck it.
To hold it is to lose it (Laozi, 2023, chapter 29)[16].

So reads indeed the *Zhouyi*, the *Book of Changes*: 'War chariots hiding in tall herbage'. War chariots hiding in our dreams. War chariots hiding in our plans. War chariots hiding in our bid for control. They hide from us, they hide the world from us, they hide ourselves from us. War chariots spelling trouble, danger, crisis. War chariots spelling waging war, unwanted war, unnecessary war. So reads indeed the *Shījīng*, the *Book of Odes*: 'I have been chastised, and I will guard against future calamities; nobody caused me to be wasp-stung, I have myself drawn upon me this bitter sting; smart indeed are those wrens, they fly up and are birds; I am unequal to the many difficulties of my house, but I sit perched here on the smartweed'. What does the poet actually do 'perched here on the smartweed'? Precisely the thing that the poet had *not* done before, precisely the thing that the wrens are *not* doing now, and that is, I think, doing nothing at all. The poet as a sage? Perhaps. Perhaps not. For, 'unequal to the many difficulties of my house'!? Then, at the very least, a person wiser with experience. A person looking back on this experience, a person looking up for wrens, down at the smartweed, pondering the 'many difficulties of my house', but not looking forward far into the future… Which is a good thing, in the *Laozi*. Not looking backward far into the past, into the origin of things… Which is a bad thing, in the *Laozi*. Not looking inward, either, or rather, not really. Not looking far beyond the things, onto the *dao* (alternatively, beyond beings, to the Being, in Heidegger's technical terms (*vd*., *e.g*., Heidegger, 2010). Not looking through the things and their *actuality* (or presence) into their *potentiality* (or absence), in Aristotle's own technical terms, (*vd*., *e.g*., Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1045b27-1051b1). Not taking the next step with inner-found, well-founded confidence. So reads indeed the *Lǐjí*, the *Book of Rites*: 'when his likings and dislikings are not subject to regulation, he is changed into the nature of things as they come before him; that is, he stifles the voice of Heavenly principle within, and gives the utmost indulgence to the desires by which men may be

[13] 'That all in the world has a beginning –/ take that itself as the mother of the world.// Having found the mother,/ know thereby her children.// Having known the children,/ maintain and protect their mother'.
[14] No direct connection to Elena Ceaușescu, Eva Peron, or Imelda Marcos. *Very* indirectly, however, all such modern political figures obviously tap into an extremely deep and powerful symbolism that has been with our species for many millennia, at the very least.
[15] For the importance of female beings in the *Laozi*, *cf*. Laozi, 2023, chapters 6 and 61. *Cf*. also the second endnote to *ibid*., chapter 42: "'The darkness of shadow' and 'the brightness of sunlight' translate 'yin' and 'yang', here used not as the full-fledged philosophical vocabulary they would become in later times, but still as a live metaphor, literally the shady and sunny sides of a single entity. This is the only appearance of yin and yang in this text".
[16] Chen (2020, 199) notes: "Heshang Gong comments: '*Qi* 器 [utensil, instrument] means things, and human beings are the sacred things in the world. The sacred things enjoy tranquillity and cannot be governed through purposeful action'".

possessed'. 'He is changed into the nature of things as they come before him': one is reminded at this juncture of Hodder's (2011; 2012; 2016; 2018) entanglement theory in archaeology.

Thus, the mind is always in danger of losing its focus and becoming entangled with "the ten thousand things", that is, all things under Heaven. What is to be done?

2. The work of the body

In the *Zhouyi*, it says: 'Frost underfoot again'[17]. And, in the *Laozi*:

A tree that fills a man's embrace begins as a tiny sprout.
A nine-story tower begins as a lump of soil.
The journey of a thousand miles begins underfoot (Laozi, 2023, chapter 64).

It also says, in the *Laozi*:

Powerful are those who conquer others.
Strong are those who conquer themselves (Laozi, 2023, chapter 33).

The body is the answer to the question of the mind that lost its way. Indeed, the mind, the everyday, discriminating mind, as years go by, becomes entangled almost beyond hope with "the ten thousand things" around it. Almost beyond hope – or beyond hope? For, how can one hope to disentangle one's own heart and mind from the kaleidoscope of things that we see every day, and every year, and every moment of our life, if our mind is unable and unwilling to break free? My research hypothesis is that the body does the heavy work of reconquest of one's lost mind, naturally, by doing nothing. When the mind ignores distractions, it is the body that takes over.

So it is that the sage
tends to the stomach,
not to the eye –
"Discarding that over there,
they take up this over here" (Laozi, 2023, chapter 12)[18].

While the mind follows the eye, and indeed, the five senses, and wanders the world, the body (with its centre, the stomach) is the "condition of possibility", in Kant's terms (A24/ B39; 1998, 158), of the mind's recollection, self-overcoming, and homecoming. As mentioned in a previous paper (Popescu, 2021, 639-640), it is an unsolved problem in philosophy whether Aristotle meant his categories to describe the workings of respectively, mind, language, or reality:

Of things said without any combination, each signifies either substance or quantity or qualification or a relative or where or when or being-in-a-position or having or doing or being-affected. To give a rough idea, examples of substance are man, horse; of quantity: four-foot, five-foot; of qualification: white, grammatical; of a relative: double, half, larger; of where: in the Lyceum, in the market-place; of when: yesterday, last-year; of being-in-a-position: is-lying, is-sitting; of having: has-shoes-on, has-armour-on; of doing: cutting, burning; of being-affected: being-cut, being-burned.

None of the above is said just by itself in any affirmation, but by the combination of these with one another an affirmation is produced. For every affirmation, it seems, is either true or false; but of things said without any combination none is either true or false (*e. g*. man, white, runs, wins) (Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 1b25-2a10).

As further stated in that paper, I suggest that there are seven categories of our world:

- 1. matter;

[17] 'Solid ice comes soon' (2:1; Rutt, 2002, 225).
[18] *Cf*. Moeller, 2006, 94: "The *Laozi* does not clearly differentiate between states of the body, the mind, and society, and its attempt to eliminate addictive desires refers to all three realms".

- 2. energy;
- 3. information;
- 4. life;
- 5. conscientiousness[19];
- 6. consciousness; and –
- 7. conscience.

Again, I suggest that these are not only categories of reality, but also of both mind and language (and that, of the seven, *conscience* emerges with humans). Now, in this paper, I suggest that ontogeny in the *Laozi* reviews indeed phylogeny, but only does so first contrariwise: conscience wanes into consciousness, then into conscientiousness, in order to wax back again, onto a higher level now. The body, which is closer to nature than the mind, can help the mind find its way back, and then onto the Way[20]. And this process continues until one becomes like a newborn yet again:

A newborn infant:
weak of bones and soft of tendons,
yet firm of grip.

Indeed, this process continues until one becomes like a howling newborn:

Howling all day long,
yet never growing hoarse –
such is the ultimate harmony (Laozi, 2023, chapter 55; *cf.* Laozi, 2023, chapter 10).

Such also are the limits of the *Laozi*, two of them, at the very least. 'A newborn infant: weak of bones and soft of tendons, yet firm of grip': for all the obvious individualism of the *Laozi* (and of the *Zhuangzi*, its fellow classic of Daoism), the newborn's grip is in its search for otherness, for outer, other things, for other people, for his mother. 'Howling all day long, yet never growing hoarse – such is the ultimate harmony": this newborn, howling all day long, is not so happy after all, he might be hungry, thirsty, cold, hot, wet, dirty, scared, perhaps he has a sore, and anyway, he is in need of care, of love, also of company, he is emphatically neither autonomous, nor self-sufficient.

A classic of "Rúism"[21] (Confucianism), the *Mengzi* concurs with the *Laozi* (and the *Zhuangzi*, *vd*. Ziporyn, 2020, 188) on more than one point. 'Mencius said, "The great person is one who does not lose the child's mind"' (4B12; Ivanhoe, 2009, 88). More pointedly, he also spoke of 'losing one's original mind' (*vd*. 6A10; Ivanhoe, 2009, 128), and then having to seek it:

Mencius said, "Humaneness is the human mind. Rightness is the human path. To quit the path and not follow it, to abandon this mind and not know enough to seek it, is indeed lamentable. If a man has chickens and dogs that become lost, he knows enough to seek them. But when he has lost his mind, he does not know enough to seek it. The way of learning is none other than this: to seek for the lost mind" (6A11; Ivanhoe, 2009, 128)[22].

[19] A brief note is in order here: I use 'conscientiousness' not as the psychological trait, but rather as a metaphor for the vertical transmission of features (including genes) in organisms, as opposed to their horizontal transmission in progenotes, postulated in biology by Woese and colleagues (*e.g.*, Woese and Fox, 1977a; Woese, 2002; *cf*. also, for the bigger picture, Woese and Fox, 1977b; Woese, Kandler and Wheeler, 1990).

[20] *Cf*. the poem quoted in Takuan 1986, 67: "At the Bay of Iki/ On branches grown thick/ With pears that ripen, with pears that do not;/ Are they not faithful/ Even in sleep?".

[21] "Thus, contrary to the 'common wisdom', *ru* is not an exact or unproblematic match for the English words 'Confucians' or 'Confucianism'. Such terms as *ru*, *rusheng* 儒生, *ruzhe* 儒者, and *rujia*, refer to followers of Confucius only in certain circumstances; in many instances, for well over a millennium after the death of Confucius in 479 B.C.E., these words denoted men especially trained in certain matters having to do with the past practices and precedents. Let us appreciate, then, the implications of the astonishing fact that no special Chinese name exists for what is usually regarded as the main current of thought in ancient China – that which is properly or improperly labelled 'Confucianism' in Western languages. This absence certainly calls into question the very notion of discrete 'schools of thought' in early China, as others have observed' (Zufferey, 2014, 129).

[22] Legge (1970, 322, n. 11) comments: "The Chinese sages always end with the 'recovery of the old heart'; the idea of a 'new heart' is unknown to them". *Cf*. Takuan (1986, 38-39): "When one is in training, it is good to keep Mencius' saying,

Thus, to seek for the lost mind is the way one should follow in the *Laozi*, too, except that, in a clearly anti-intellectualist Daoist classic, this might more naturally be considered as the way of unlearning, rather than the way of learning so precious to the Confucians.

3. The mind of the few

And then, once he had found the lost mind? He becomes like the sages of old:

Ready for anything, as if crossing a frozen stream in winter.
Tentative and unsure, as if fearing their neighbors on all four sides.
Serious and respectful, like strangers who were only passing through.
Pliant and fragile, like ice just about to melt.
Solid and weighty, like raw blocks of unhewn wood.
Broad and open, like empty mountain valleys.
Muddled and mixed, like pools of muddy water.
Does anyone still know how to be muddy like that –
so muddy that through stillness
all slowly comes clear?
Does anyone still know how to be settled like that –
so settled that through long waiting
fresh motion slowly emerges? (Laozi, 2023, chapter 15)

'A frozen stream in winter', 'ice just about to melt', and 'pools of muddy water' is part of the aquatic imagery, which is powerful in the *Laozi*: 'The highest good is like water' (Laozi, 2023, chapter 8)[23].The *Lúnyǔ* 9.17 (the *Analects* of Confucius; Confucius, 2003, 92) and the *Mengzi* 6A2 (Ivanhoe, 2009, 121), its fellow classic of Confucianism, both speak with eloquence of water, and of its never-ending flow. As Roberts notes, the *Laozi* is the rival of the *Lúnyǔ*, and Daoism and Confucianism are the *yin* and *yang* of Chinese culture (Laozi, 2001, 8). And yet, rivals or not, the *Lúnyǔ* and the *Laozi* share the core concept of the "way" (*vd*. Hinton, 2013, 226-230). And they share even more, indeed. So reads the *Lúnyǔ*, 15.5: 'The Master said, "Is Shun not an example of someone who ruled by means of wu-wei [wuwei]? What did he do? He made himself reverent and took his proper [ritual] position facing south, that is all"' (Confucius, 2003, 175)[24]. So reads the *Laozi*:

Doing nondoing,
all is ordered,
everything heals (Laozi, 2023, chapter 3).

"Doing nondoing" is the English translation of the Chinese term *wu-wei*. Beyond outer things and inner desires, the body, kept to its original kernel, helps the mind, restored to its original kernel, back onto the way. Ten thousand questions rise in search of answers as an ancient forest, insofar as the *Laozi* is an epitome of laconism and ambiguity. Ten thousand answers later came along the way, many of them concerned specifically with the body, but this need not detain us here. "The mind and body in Daoism", and its bimillennial history, is certainly off-topic for this paper. "The body is the centre of Daoist practice" (Cheng, 2017, 56); "in Taoism there is a certain priority of the human body in relation to the rest of the universe" (Schipper, 1978, 357); this should suffice here at this juncture.

'Seek the lost mind', in mind. The ultimate, however, is within Shao K'ang-chieh's, 'It is essential to lose the mind'". *Cf*. also Yagyū (2003, 126): "A verse by Manorhata goes: 'The mind follows the ten thousand circumstances/ and shifts accordingly;/ It is the shifting that is truly undefined'".

[23] Chen (2020, 86) writes: "Wing-tsit Chan (Chen Rongjie) 陈荣捷 (d. 1994) notes: 'Water, the female, and the infant are Laozi's most famous symbols for the Dao. These symbols are essentially ethical in nature, and not metaphysical. It is highly intriguing that for the ancient Indians, water was related to creation. For the Greeks on the other hand, it was a natural phenomenon. By contrast, ancient Chinese philosophers, both Laozi and Kongzi, preferred to approach water as a source of moral guidance. Generally speaking, these different approaches each gave shape to a distinguishing feature of Indian, Western, and Chinese culture'". *Cf*. also Laozi, 2023, chapter 78.

[24] Brooks and Brooks (1998, 131) date this passage to 305 BC, and make it contemporary with the chapter 39 of the *Laozi*. Ni (2017, 354) comments: "While the Daoist *wuwei* is to do things naturally and spontaneously, the Confucian *wuwei* is understood as accomplishing intended results by ritual proprieties enlivened by their virtue".

Ten thousand things here under heaven unfold according to their nature: we can be one of them, if so we (truly) wish. The *Laozi*, distrustful of the holy (*cf*. Laozi, 2023, chapter 60), ignoring the divine[25], is an impassioned paean to the sacred[26].

What is there still to be said? Perhaps this verses of Du Fu, in Tang China: 'The ancients grow farther day by day,/ yet the words in the green histories do not perish' (Owen, 2015, 111). Or, perhaps, this line of Ion, in Classical Greece: 'A dolphin's strength is worthless on dry land' (fragment 58, Cropp, 2019, I, 97). Lost in the midst of a kaleidoscope of outer sights, sounds, and smells, of things, of tastes and touch, of inner desires, the strength of our original mind is worthless, too, the *Laozi* points – unless, that is, 'bundled' to the strength of our original body: as a couple of poems from the *Shījīng*, the *Book of Odes*, would have it, arguably[27].

Thus, the *Laozi* contends that the mind is easily led astray by outer things and inner desires attaching to them, that one must recover the innocence of a newborn in order to free oneself from this secret bondage, and that the body is instrumental to getting (finally) in charge of one's own life.

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[25] "As for religion in the sense of a deity interactive with humans, Laozi ascribes no consciousness to the Way" (Laozi, 2001, 9).
[26] "*Enfin hierós* [sacred] *et hágios* [holy] *montrent clairement l'aspect positif et l'aspect négatif de la notion : d'une part ce qui est animé d'une puissance et d'une agitation sacrées, d'autre part ce qui est défendu, ce avec quoi on ne doit pas avoir de contact. Voilà comment se distribuent dans le vocabulaire de chaque langue ces deux qualités, illustrant les deux aspects d'une même notion : ce qui est rempli d'une puissance divine ; ce qui est interdit au contact des hommes*" (Benveniste, 1969, II, 207).
[27] *Vd*. poems 68 and 92 (Karlgren, 1950a, 46 and 60). On a similar structure – '(Even) stirred waters cannot float away firewood [or, thornwood, in the second poem] that is bundled', '(Even) stirred waters cannot float away thornwood [or, firewood, in the second poem] that is bundled', '(Even) stirred waters cannot float away willows [missing line in the second poem] that is bundled' –, the theme of the first poem is a plea from a husband for spouses to stick together despite military campaigns; the theme of the second poem is a plea from a brother for brethren to stick together despite deceitful others.

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