“THE WAY COMES ABOUT AS WE WALK IT”:
HUAINANZI AND CLASSICAL DAOIST ETHICS

BY

MATTHEW DUPERON

B.A., COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY, 2003

M.A., CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 2006

M.A., BROWN UNIVERSITY, 2011

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Date __________ ____
Harold D. Roth, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date___________ ____
Henry Rosemont, Jr., Reader

Date___________ ____
Mark Cladis, Reader

Date___________ ____
Thomas A. Lewis, Reader

Date___________ ____
Stephen Bush, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date___________ ____
Peter M. Weber, Dean of the Graduate School

CURRICULUM VITAE

Matthew Duperon was born on December 24th, 1980, in Fredericksburg, VA. He received his B.A. in Religion from the College of William and Mary in 2003, and his M.A. in Asian Studies from Cornell University in 2006. Matthew received an M.A. in Religious Studies from Brown University in 2011. He has also studied at Tsinghua University in Beijing, and National Taiwan University in Taipei. He taught courses in early Chinese religion and philosophy as a Lecturer at Trinity College in Harford, CT in 2009 and 2010. In 2011, Matthew joined the Religious Studies faculty at Susquehanna University as an assistant professor of Chinese religious traditions and ethics.

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TEXTUAL CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

I use Hanyu Pinyin for all Romanized spellings of Chinese words, and provide the characters after each instance of the word(s). In cases where quoted sources use Wade-Giles Romanization, I have converted them to Hanyu Pinyin without further comment. The only exception is in the notes and Bibliography, where I retain Wade-Giles Romanization if it appears in an author's name or the title of a work.

All references to Chinese texts refer to the Chinese University of Hong Kong Institute of Chinese Studies Chinese Ancient Texts Concordance Series, edited by D. C. Lau, and follow the conventional citation format of chapter/page/line. The titles of texts in this series are abbreviated throughout the work as follows:

Text	Abbreviation
Neiye	NY (cited as it appears in GZ)
Laozi / Daode Jing	LZ
Zhuangzi	ZZ
Xunzi	XZ
Guanzi	GZ
Huainanzi	HNZ

So for instance, *Huainanzi* Chapter 1, page 3, line 6 would be cited HNZ 1/3/6.

I also cite the translation used, and note when I have made emendations, or when the translation is my own. For concision, I give a shortened citation for translations, including only the translator and page number. This includes the following "standard" translations, with others noted when used:

NY: Harold Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-Yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

LZ: Victor Mair, *Tao Te Ching: The Classic Book of Integrity and the Way* (New York: Bantam, 1990).

ZZ (Inner Chapters): A. C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzu, The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001).

ZZ (Other): Victor Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of* Chuang Tzu (New York: Bantam Books, 1994).

GZ ("Xinshu" chapters): Harold Roth, *The Resonant Way: Taoist Texts from the* Kuan Tzu (unpublished ms, n.d.).

HNZ: Major et al., eds., *The* Huainanzi*: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

All other references to the secondary scholarship in Major et al. also use the shortened citation. I also follow Major et al. in their division of HNZ chapters into individual passages, and refer to those section numbers accordingly.

All references to works by John Dewey use the page number in John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008). These citations include the volume number, preceded by the appropriate acronym to indicate Early Works, Middle Works, and Late Works. E.g. "LW10" is Late Works, Volume 10, "MW14" is Middle Works, Volume 14, and so on.

CHAPTER I:
Introduction

"That as 'Way' it can be walked is true enough, but we do not see its shape; it has a felt sense but no shape."

Zhuangzi (ZZ 2/4/2)[1]

This dissertation is fundamentally about exploring some of the problems raised by the above quotation. Classical Daoism purports to have a consistent program for how humans can live the best possible lives. Yet, most classical Daoist texts assert that there is no absolute, objective standard for ethics. How can this be? If there really is a consistent path, or Way, that one can follow to lead a good life, then why can we not say for certain where that path leads, or even how to distinguish its shape? If we cannot show others the "shape" of the Way, then how can we even join conversations about ethics? Many classical Daoist texts emphasize the need to remain flexible, be open to all possibilities, and to maintain a supple will. How can such a person consistently choose right or good actions? Does the imperative to be flexible not open the door to arbitrariness, moral relativism, or even nihilism?

Concerns like these have led some commentators to conclude that classical Daoism is essentially "amoral." While it may take a normative stance for or against certain positions, this interpretation holds that classical Daoism ultimately lacks a

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[1] Translation based on Graham, 51 with my emendations. What I translate as "felt sense" is *qing* 情, which Graham translates here as "identity." I discuss *qing* 情 in greater detail below, in my Chapter IV. The sense of the phrase here is that the thing Zhuangzi calls "the Way" can be identified in one's experience, but not in any of the same ways that other things are apprehended, e.g. as sense objects, linguistic propositions, etc.

definitive system of morality. For instance, Robert Eno has argued that, while Zhuangzi strongly advocates skill knowledge or "*dao*-learning" over theoretical knowledge, he "makes no selection among the goals to which [skill knowledge] may apply."[2] Eno maintains that Zhuangzi does make a strong value judgment in characterizing embodied, skillful performance as the conduit to spiritual insight, and discursive theorizing as antithetical to that process, but notes that, for instance, "the *dao* of butchering people might provide much the same spiritual spontaneity as the *dao* of butchering oxen."[3] As long as one subjectively experiences total spiritual absorption in an activity, it is unclear whether there are any other standards for what one should or should not do.

Similarly, Lee Yearley concludes that the highly cultivated activity described in ZZ is "amoral, if normal moral standards are the measure."[4] He concedes, however, that Zhuangzi's cultivated person may, on occasion, submit to certain duties or responsibilities, or even customary moral codes, so long as "they are accepted simply as matters of practical convenience."[5] In fact, Yearley also suggests that Zhuangzi's vision of ideal action hints at a different kind of morality, but he maintains that morality is not a central concern in the text.

Eno and Yearley represent only part of the debate about the supposed amorality of classical Daoism.[6] The greater point here is that, even looking only at ZZ, the nature of classical Daoist ethics is extremely complicated. This may be one reason that Daoism is

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[2] Robert Eno, "Cook Ding's Dao and the Limits of Philosophy," in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, edited by Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 142.
[3] Eno, "Cook Ding's Dao," 142. This alludes to the famous story of Cook Ding, which I explore in detail below in my Chapter III.
[4] Lee H. Yearley, "Zhuangzi's Understanding of Skillfulness and the Ultimate Spiritual State," in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, edited by Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 176.
[5] Yearley, "Zhuangzi's Understanding of Skillfulness," 176.
[6] For this and other issues in classical Daoist ethics, the best collection of scholarship is still Kjellberg and Ivanhoe, *Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. See my Bibliography for other examples.

relatively under-represented in the field of comparative religious ethics.[7] The classical Daoist tradition, however, can contribute enormous insight to a range of topics in comparative ethics, provided it can be properly understood and that sufficient secondary scholarship exists to support research by non-specialists in early Chinese studies.

This dissertation therefore has two related goals: First, I seek to provide a thorough account of ethics in HNZ, so that others working in comparative religious ethics may more readily use HNZ as a resource for engaging Daoist ethics. Second, I wish to begin addressing some of the critical questions outlined above that have consistently been raised in connection with Daoist ethics, so that we can understand more clearly the tradition in general. I focus on the issue of how Daoist ethics can have both a non-relative view of ethics, and yet maintain its singular emphasis on individual experience.

Toward the first goal, I simply give an in-depth account of how HNZ characterizes the possibilities for the best kind of human life. This will center on the ways that humans can live either well or poorly within their social and material environments. It will also include the habits of thought and action that conduce to living well in those environments, and how to overcome other habits that impede living well.

Toward the second goal, I have found it helpful to read HNZ along with the work of John Dewey, whose work has raised some questions similar to the ones I raise above. Along with other figures in classical American pragmatism, notably William James, Dewey had to answer to the charge that the pragmatic theory of truth opened the door to relativism in ethics.[8] Since the pragmatic criterion for truth does not appeal to immutable,

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[7] Daoism is, however, gradually becoming more important in comparative religious ethics. See my Bibliography for several recent contributions.

[8] The pragmatic theory of truth, based on C. S. Peirce's maxim that conceptions should be evaluated by their "practical bearings," equates truth with the measure of certainty achieved through inquiry—ideally,

eternal standards, some interpreters fear that this necessarily means that, for instance, moral standards must "swing free," without any objective grounding. Dewey's response is to navigate a course between the absolute certainty of immutable moral laws and the anarchy of moral relativism.

Gregory Pappas gives the most complete account of Dewey's ethics available, and addresses Dewey's response to the charge of moral relativism.[9] Pappas argues that Dewey avoids both "objectivism" and relativism by focusing on experience.[10] That is, Dewey focuses on the concrete, lived situations in which ethics practically takes place, including both the subjective element experienced by the individual, as well as her physical, social, cultural, and material environment that makes up the necessary context for experience. Pappas argues that Dewey's ethics espouses a fundamental "faith in experience" that relies on the subject-environment interaction to produce the norms by which one lives one's moral life.[11] The norms produced are thus fully contextual and personalized to the individual, but are importantly not subjective, and therefore not strictly relative. Classical Daoist ethics works on a similar structure.

Thus, reading Dewey will put us in a good position to appreciate how classical Daoist ethics is non-subjectivist, even though it focuses on transforming individuals' personal experience. Appropriately enough, reading Dewey also supports my first goal, in that it puts us in a good position from which to make connections between HNZ's

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empirical inquiry. See Charles S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" in *Charles S. Peirce: Selected Writings (Values in a Universe of Chance),* edited by Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover, 1958), 128-129. William James gives the fullest account in the several essays in *Pragmatism* and *The Meaning of Truth*. See William James, *Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[9] See Gregory Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

[10] See Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 38-42 and *passim*.

[11] Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 11-13.

explicit cosmological language for ethics and its implicit treatment of practical self-cultivation techniques.

I begin the project in the next chapter by describing my approach to comparative religious ethics, and orienting it to current scholarship in the field. I describe my approach in terms drawn from the early Chinese context—namely, how I read Dewey alongside HNZ in order to arrange a favorable "positional advantage" (*shi* 勢) from which to approach HNZ. I then give a brief account of Dewey's ethics to arrange that positional advantage before moving on to classical Daoist sources.

In my third chapter, I review the background informing HNZ, focusing especially on its place within the classical Daoist tradition of "inner cultivation" practices. I briefly review the historical circumstances of HNZ's production, and examine the issues involved with situating the text in the early Han intellectual landscape. I argue that we should read HNZ as a late entry in a group of texts we now classify as "Daoist" based on their shared background in the inner cultivation tradition. I then review this tradition in its most important extant examples to recover the thread of self-cultivation practices that leads to the developments in HNZ's vision of ethics.

In my fourth chapter, I examine the relationship between HNZ's cosmology and meta-ethics. Starting from the text's organizing "root-branch" metaphor, I trace how the HNZ authors treat *dao* 道 as a central concept in both cosmology and ethics. I then explore several important over-arching concepts that provide the structure for the text's vision of ideal action and the best kind of human life. In this chapter, I conclude that the HNZ authors see ideal action as a matter of following genuine impulses (*qing* 情) that

arise as subtle responses of one's innate endowment of capacities (*xing* 性) to the totality of one's life circumstances (*ming* 命).

In my fifth chapter, I examine ethical self-cultivation in HNZ on the level of individual practices. I review the text's explicit anthropology, then proceed to trace its implicit practical ethics through its account of sagely faculties of perception and judgment, and the properties of sagely experience. Here I come to the most important conclusion of the dissertation—namely, that we should think of *dao* 道 as a fundamentally practical concept, and that its place in individual experience is just as important as its place in cosmology.

Finally, in my Conclusion I briefly return to the questions with which I opened this Introduction, and address some possible concerns with HNZ's view of ethics. I review some responses within HNZ itself to the idea that an ethical program focused on individual experience could authorize morally objectionable behavior. Classical Daoist ethics holds that when one deeply participates in one's life, bringing all of one's resources and attention to bear on as much of one's environment as possible, the result is the mutual flourishing of self and environment. The norms for ideal action emerge out of such deep participation, and depend on both sides of the interaction. This is why Zhuangzi says that "the Way comes about as we walk it."[12]

[12] Graham, 53, ZZ 2/4/24.

CHAPTER II:
My Approach to Comparative Religious Ethics: Reading *Huainanzi* by also Reading John Dewey

This chapter describes my approach to comparative religious ethics (CRE), and the angle from which I address the ethical content in HNZ. I first discuss critical issues in the methodology of CRE to situate my work within the current scholarship. Next, I discuss my particular approach to HNZ, and address why I find it useful to read John Dewey's work on ethics alongside the ethical content in HNZ. Borrowing a concept from the early Chinese context, I argue that reading Dewey gives me a favorable "positional advantage" (*shi* 勢) from which to view ethics in HNZ. I contend that reading HNZ from this angle allows me to elucidate certain implicit factors of the HNZ authors' ethical vision. Finally, I give a brief summary of Dewey's ethical thought, focusing on the features most relevant in my work that follows—namely, Dewey's definition of experience, and the relationship between experience and habits in human ethical life.

In a chapter on my approach to CRE, I should also briefly address just what I take its subject to be. There is a general sense of ethics to which I, Dewey, and HNZ all conform. Bernard Williams alludes to this sense by referencing Socrates' question of "how should one live?"[1] As Williams notes, there are some problems with this formulation, but it indicates the basic normative orientation of ethical questions. For my purposes here, ethics is the reflective study of the best (or simply better) kind(s) of

[1] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 4.

human lives, including thought about what makes some lives better than others, and how humans can hope to improve them. CRE seeks to examine various responses to these fundamental questions, and to put these responses into productive dialogue with one another.

However, in the present study I focus only on HNZ, so this project is not a full-blown work of comparison. While I have personally noted several areas of productive contact with Dewey's thought in my research, in what follows here I examine ethics in the HNZ and its classical Daoist context exclusively. I engage Dewey only enough to position my inquiry in such a way as to help make clear the implicit practical context of HNZ's vision of ethics. In practice, this will mean reading Dewey on experience and habit, but not addressing greater intrincacies of his own ethical project. I do hope, however, that my work on this topic will further open the classical Daoist tradition of ethics to conversation with other figures and traditions—including Dewey—and I suggest some possible avenues for future research in my Conclusion.

A. *Ad Hoc* Approaches to CRE

The main prerogative of comparative methodology is managing sameness and difference. The exempla compared must have something in common, must be similar on some count; otherwise, comparison becomes incoherent. The exempla must also differ in significant ways; otherwise the comparison becomes a tautology. For comparison to be interesting there has to be some common ground between exempla, to which each nonetheless contributes something novel or different. Comparative methodology deals with approaching exempla in a way that makes clear and precise the area of similarity,

and that makes it clear just how and why their differences are interesting and illuminating.

In conducting a study in comparative ethics I have benefited from the recent efflorescence of quality theoretical work in the field. Scholars are now paying more attention to the possibilities for productive comparisons in ethics, and I take up some of these possibilities in my own theoretical stance. Thomas A. Lewis has presented a useful conceptualization of theoretical approaches as a spectrum from those emphasizing sameness to those emphasizing difference.[2] The most productive approaches, Lewis argues, fall in the middle ground and make appropriate use of both.

One side of the spectrum contains "universalist" theories that find a fundamental similarity or overarching structure in divergent ethical systems, and the other side contains "particularist" theories that adhere to strict relativism and incommensurability between views. The most influential proponents of the universalist view are scholars like Martha Nussbaum, Ronald Green, and the early work of David Little and Sumner Twiss.[3] The most influential proponent of the particularist approach is Alasdair MacIntyre.[4] Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, and Lewis argues that approaches which fall somewhere in the middle make best use of the strengths of each while avoiding the most serious weaknesses.

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[2] Lewis, "Comparative Ethics in North America: Methodological Problems and Approaches" Polylog.org (2000). http://lit.polylog.org/1/elt-en.htm.

[3] See especially Martha Nussbaum, "Non-relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach" in *The Quality of Life*, edited by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), 242-270; Ronald M. Green, *Religious Reason: The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and David Little and Sumner B. Twiss, *Comparative Religious Ethics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

[4] See especially Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); and "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues" in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*, edited by Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 1991), 104-122.

The major strengths of universalist approaches are predictive power and wide applicability. That is, by looking for the same features in many different cases, universalist theories can ostensibly build up evidence for how any given case will work and then efficiently apply that model to whatever new cases one comes across. The major weakness of this approach is that it sets up in advance all of the relevant topics for inquiry, meaning that it will necessarily miss any data that do not fit neatly into the predetermined categories. Setting up topics in advance also tends to shut down productive dialogue between traditions because it imposes a foreign structure onto at least one tradition, instead of allowing the structure of the inquiry to be determined as a part of the dialogue between traditions. This imposition tends to distort at least one of the exempla.

The major strength of particularist approaches is much greater perception and appreciation of the nuanced internal structure of traditions. That is, in focusing on difference, particularist approaches are less likely to impose categories that will distort the reality of how a tradition actually functions, and thereby apprehend better its unique contours. The major weakness of particularist approaches is that they tend to shut down dialogue by frustrating attempts to bring traditions together on common ground. If each tradition is incommensurable as such, it is difficult to see how dialogue could even begin.

Lewis describes approaches in the middle ground between universalism and particularism as those that are, "optimistic about cross-cultural dialogue, but [which] do not ground it in a single universal."[5] He describes his own approach in terms of "*ad hoc* frames of comparison," and while scholars sympathetic to this attitude do not necessarily

[5] Lewis, "Comparative Ethics in North America."

use the term *ad hoc*, I find it useful for describing this kind of approach.[6] In these cases, the terms of the inquiry and the methods used are worked out on a case-by-case basis, and are therefore *ad hoc* in the sense of being non-generalizable solutions to particular problems, but *not* in the sense of being formulated haphazardly as stop-gap solutions. *Ad hoc* approaches take seriously the unique combinations of differences embodied by various exempla and take care to respond sensitively to them. But they do so in a way that nonetheless finds some area of similarity in which to bring the various exempla together for fruitful interaction.

The *ad hoc* approach works out to be a pragmatic solution to problems raised in the comparative enterprise.[7] This pragmatic sensibility resonates strongly with Dewey's work. Dewey and other figures in classical pragmatism consistently hold that we always conduct inquiry toward some real human end—to seek a solution to a real life problem. *Ad hoc* methods of comparison take this feature of inquiry seriously in that they embrace the intentionality inherent in the comparative process—and indeed inherent to all inquiry—and specially tailor their method to the problems or questions the inquirer wants to illuminate. These approaches are also pragmatic in that they mirror how we practically go about comparison in day-to-day life. In encountering diverse accounts of ethics, *ad hoc* theories attempt to find ways to make the unfamiliar intelligible, but also to allow the unfamiliar to influence one's own understanding of the features and content of ethics. This is similar to the dialogic process of inter-cultural exchange, at least in its most productive forms.

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[6] Lewis, "Frames of Comparison: Anthropology and Inheriting Traditional Practices" in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33 no.2 (Fall 2005), 225-253.

[7] None of the figures I discuss below use the term pragmatic or ideas derived directly from pragmatist philosophy, but I find that many of themes in their work share certain pragmatic sensibilities.

For instance, Lewis sets up frames for comparison "defined by a common question, to which different thinkers can be seen as offering complementary and/or competing responses."[8] Inspired by Hegel's own comparative enterprise in his philosophy of religion, Lewis sets up the frame in order to imagine Hegel and Xunzi responding to a similar question about the process of transmitting traditional practices. He acknowledges the fact that this defining question may not be one that any of the figures imagined to give responses would have actually asked, and so emphasizes how the articulation of the frame must always be open to revision.[9] The frame is also a heuristic device and is not designed to express a particular kind of basic human concern or universal problematic. Lewis admits that, "some frames may aim for inclusivity (and be revised so as to become more inclusive)," but the important point is that they not be taken as universally inclusive before comparison begins, because claims to universality often delay or obscure actual comparison.[10] The important lesson from Lewis' approach is that we can set up a comparative inquiry in a way that directly addresses some question or feature of human life that we feel needs clarification without establishing that that question or feature is important as such. Each comparison can be "framed" in a way that allows for productive dialogue, without shutting down dialogue with other sources by claiming universal applicability for the framing question(s). This approach allows us to draw insights from diverse sources, increasing the possibilities for novel solutions, without a theoretical framework that would discard or overlook certain sources because they do not fit as well in to the framework.

[8] Lewis, "Frames," 226.
[9] Lewis, "Frames," 229.
[10] Lewis, "Frames," 229.

Another approach to bringing disparate sources together for comparison relies on the use of "focal terms" or "bridge concepts." Lee Yearley introduced the concept of focal terms in his landmark study comparing Mencius and Aquinas on the virtue of courage, and Aaron Stalnaker developed the idea into bridge concepts for his study of Augustine and Xunzi on spiritual exercises.[11] Yearley uses the idea of focal terms to establish the basic, systematically related ideas relevant to his study of human excellences. Because his exempla have their own, unique ways of relating these ideas to others, the content of the terms grounding the inquiry must be continuously adjusted—refocused—as he conducts the comparison.[12] The initial definition of a focal term comes from one's home tradition, and then one adjusts that definition based on how well or poorly it fits a given case, and adjusts again with each subsequent case. Refocusing expands the comparer's awareness of which secondary meanings can be associated with the focal term, and thereby allows her to see new possibilities for understanding each case in the comparison, as well as her home tradition. It is important to note that Yearley strikes a tone here that deeply influences later comparative theory. His account is based on the comparer skillfully utilizing "analogical imagination" to effectively choose and adjust focal terms, and this emphasis on sensitive, individualized engagement becomes important for later *ad hoc* theories of comparison.

Stalnaker's bridge concepts are "general ideas . . . which can be given enough content to be meaningful and guide comparative inquiry yet are still open to greater

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[11] Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990); Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006). NB: Stalnaker does not explicitly identify focal terms as the inspiration for bridge concepts, and indeed there are many other ideas that contribute to his methodology.
[12] See especially Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas*, 190-195.

specification in particular cases."[13] In practice, bridge concepts are similar to focal terms in that they provide a point of contact between disparate exempla, but retain nuanced differentiation on either side of the "bridge." Moreover, the comparer chooses appropriate concepts to use as bridges through sensitive reading of each case and makes connections through imaginative analogies. Both focal terms and bridge concepts differ from Lewis' frames in that the connecting concepts do not collectively frame a question or issue to which each figure responds, but rather form a basis for describing how each figure handles his project individually, as well as a way to imaginatively bring the projects together. Stalnaker also emphasizes how the selection of concepts with which to build bridges should be based on the actual comparative work. This means that in comparing, one delves deeply into the thought of each figure and only afterward formulates the structure that best expresses the connections and contrasts that one identified as most salient. This points to another key feature of *ad hoc* approaches: the inherently open-ended and revisable nature of the inquiry.

The above approaches to comparison deal with at least two exempla, and we can read them as adding the perspective of the comparer as a third term. Other approaches take the comparer's home context as one term and another figure as a second. Comparison in this case occurs when we "read" the second figure using terms and concepts drawn from our own tradition. This is a stance developed by Jonathan Schofer and one that I found especially useful in conceptualizing my project.

Schofer examines rabbinic ethics using conceptual categories derived from modern critical theory. Drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault, and others, Schofer sets up a general theoretical account of ethics focusing on self, subject

[13] Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil*, 17.

formation, subordination, internalization, and “the authoritarian other.”[14] He uses these categories to draw a broad outline of the kinds of issues this model of ethics addresses, and then examines those issues in *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. None of his starting categories appear as direct translations in *Rabbi Nathan*, but one can nonetheless imaginatively describe how concepts native to the text can be seen in those terms.

For instance, while the authors of the text would not describe the process of studying Torah and humbling oneself to learn at the foot of a sage as a case of a self forming itself as a subject through subordination to an authoritarian other and thereby internalizing the norms of the tradition to itself, such a description can be accurate if we imagine how the text would speak to those issues on its own terms. This approach requires some imaginative skill and to be done effectively one must be able to demonstrate that in postulating the text’s theoretical response one is not simply imagining ideas in the text that are not really there. It should yield an imaginative reading, but not an imaginary reading.

The benefit of such a reading, however, is that it allows Schofer to bring his theoretical resources to bear on the text to understand the logic of its ethical program in a way that a straightforward translation could not accomplish. It also gives the text a vocabulary, as it were, with which to speak to contemporary issues in the study of ethics. In this respect, Schofer’s work is both a critical reading of early rabbinic ethics and a constructive engagement with issues about the role of discourse and subordination, and subject-formation in ethics broadly conceived. Approaching the text in this way opens a dynamic tension and conversation between ancient text and contemporary theory that enriches both sides of the inquiry. Like other *ad hoc* theories, it also refrains from

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[14] Jonathan Wyn Schofer, *The Making of a Sage* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 17.

treating its subject matter as universal, focusing only on the particular issues identified for the course of the study.

It is important to note, however, that the elements of discourse and subordination that Schofer describes using terms drawn from critical theory are already present in the text whether one reads them that way or not. That is, Schofer's study focuses on a close reading of the internal logic of *Rabbi Nathan's* view of ethics; only afterwards, as it were, does he provide a gloss using critical theory. In examining the text as situated in the social and ritual context of late antique Jewish communities, Schofer finds that the text actually does emphasize the role of discourse and authority in the process of subjection and internalization that leads to the construction of sagely character. Schofer's choice of a theoretical vocabulary that also takes these concepts as central is therefore fitting. This is not to say that this theoretical vocabulary is somehow objectively "the best" one to use, but only that it is very apt. There may be other theoretical resources that would better illuminate other relationships within the text, but given the content of much of *Rabbi Nathan*, as well as Schofer's own stated goals, he picks the right tools for the job.[15]

My approach is also *ad hoc*, and I attend to many of the same issues as Schofer, Lewis, Yearley, and Stalnaker.[16] However, in the progress of my research I found that my process of comparison could be described better using some ideas drawn from the early Chinese context. Like Schofer's analysis of late antique rabbinic Judaism, my project aims, at first, only to better understand the classical Daoist vision of ethics found

[15] Schofer identifies the overarching questions of the study as addressing "what people are at origin or by nature, what ideal people are and do, and processes of transformation from the given to the ideal." He identifies this set of questions as deriving from the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics, but engaging issues beyond that context. Schofer, *Making of a Sage*, 10-11.
[16] In developing my own approach I have also benefited from the work of Mark Berkson in his "Conceptions of Self/No-Self and Modes of Connection" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33no2 (Fall 2005), but I do not make explicit use of it here.

in HNZ. In my Conclusion below, I address some of the possibilities for dialogue between classical Daoist sources and modern ethical theory, but the primary object of my study is HNZ.

In that respect I depart from the approaches outlined above. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, theory in CRE is primarily a matter of managing sameness and difference, and most other *ad hoc* approaches focus on sameness and difference on the local level, as they apply to individual exempla. In the present study, I do not fully engage Dewey's ethics, but only make tentative suggestions for ways insights from the classical Daoist tradition could interact with his work. In that respect, my study is only the first part of a comparison. Still, I have had to think carefully about how to bring Dewey and HNZ together to shed light on the latter. In doing so, I have come to think of reading Dewey as a helpful companion practice to understanding HNZ on its own terms.

B. The "Positional Advantage" (*shi* 勢) of Reading Dewey with HNZ

Shi 勢, like most important conceptual terms in early China, is subject to reinterpretation based on a writer's philosophical prerogatives. The early Militarist writers first make it a term of art used to describe tactical advantages and disadvantages on the battlefield.[17] In this sense, it means something like "a position of strength/weakness," both in terms of high/low ground on the battlefield and in terms of the preparation and equipment of one's troops. Legalist thinkers later adopt the terminology of *shi* 勢 to metaphorically describe situations of comparative political

[17] Roger Ames provides perhaps the most useful overview of the development of *shi* 勢 as a conceptual term. See Roger Ames, *The Art of Rulership: A Study in Ancient Chinese Political Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 1983), 65-94.

advantage. In that context, it means something more like "political purchase," as when one describes whether a certain political maneuver has support from the necessary quarters.[18]

In both cases, *shi* 勢 describes the arrangement of factors in a situation that tend to lead to certain outcomes. That is, in Militarist usage, well-trained, well-equipped troops occupying the higher ground on the battlefield, and led by competent officers will tend to be victorious. If any of those factors is out of place, it will affect the army's chances of success. Similarly, if a ruler enjoys support from the powerful factions in his government, then his subordinates will likely carry out his will swiftly and decisively. If he has failed to successfully manage rancor and infighting in certain areas, however, his policies are less likely to succeed. In this broader sense, *shi* 勢 refers to something like "the propensity of a situation" or "the arrangement of factors relevant for success in a given area."

This is the sense most often used in HNZ.[19] For example, HNZ 1.7 notes that "round things always spin, / [and] hollow things excel at floating, / due to the natural arrangement of circumstances."[20] Here, the HNZ authors link *shi* 勢 to propensities governed by natural properties. When the situation is such that something hollow is

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[18] For this sense of *shi* 勢, see also A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Dao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), 278-280. Ames also uses the translation "political purchase" in Legalist contexts. See Ames, *Art of Rulership*, 72ff.

[19] *Pace* Ames, who argues that, at least in HNZ Chapter 9, "*Zhushu* 主術" or "The Ruler's Techniques," *shi* 勢 takes on a Legalist meaning, modified by certain Confucian qualifications on the base of political power. See Ames, *Art of Rulership*, 106-107. I do not address this issue in my analysis below, as it is more relevant to political thought than ethics, but I find that *shi* 勢 in HNZ generally conforms to the common "arrangement of factors" usage, with some contexts involving military or political applications. Even in "The Ruler's Techniques," however, the emphasis remains on the sage-ruler's ability to gracefully navigate situations by responding sensitively to their *shi* 勢. Occasionally, the authors use *shi* 勢 as part of a set phrase in which it means military/political power more precisely, as in HNZ 1/7/16: *you shi wei wan cheng* 有勢為萬乘 "to have the power of [a state with] ten thousand chariots."

[20] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 56 with my emendations, HNZ 1/3/16.

positioned above a depth of water, this “arrangement of circumstances” (*shi* 勢) will proceed “naturally” (*ziran* 自然) to the result of the hollow object floating.[21] Similarly, HNZ 9.10 notes that “for boats to float on water, / and carts to go on land, / naturally results from the arrangement of circumstances.”[22] In these examples, the world simply works such that things arranged in a certain way tend to lead to a certain result. This is similar to the analogy used for *shi* 勢 in earlier Militarist texts that likens it to a boulder’s propensity to roll down a hill once set in motion.[23]

In this sense, I use *shi* 勢 to describe setting up the context for my analysis by adding Dewey as a part of the “arrangement of circumstances” that attends my project. When reading Dewey and HNZ in the same inquiry, certain themes “naturally” stand out more clearly than if I did not read Dewey, or if I read some other source. I have found that, given the goals of my inquiry, reading Dewey with HNZ creates very favorable circumstances for understanding HNZ’s view of ethics.

However, the above examples may seem to suggest that arranging the circumstances of my inquiry this way will lead to necessary or foregone conclusions. That is, if *shi* 勢 is also the propensity of the situation to work out in a certain way, would reading Dewey as part of my *shi* 勢 when approaching the HNZ force me to draw only certain conclusions? In a sense, the *shi* 勢 of a situation does constrain the possibilities for how that situation can play out, but it does not rigidly determine them. The *shi* 勢 of

[21] I discuss the term *ziran* 自然 in much greater detail below, in Chapter V. It means “natural” in the sense that what it describes is “so of itself,” without any extra intervention to make it so. In the current example, round thing spin and hollow things float simply because that is how the world works. Nobody made it that way; it is so of itself (*ziran* 自然).

[22] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 303 with my emendations, HNZ 9/69/22.

[23] For this and similar examples, see Ames, *Art of Rulership*, 67.

the boulder on the hill is such that it must roll down, and not up the hill, but that in no way determines where it will end up. The *shi* 勢 of that situation simply makes it easier and more felicitous for the boulder to end up somewhere at the bottom of the hill. My goal is to end up with a clear understanding of HNZ's ethics, and reading Dewey makes this project easier and more felicitous.

Moreover, even though the *shi* 勢 of a situation influences which outcomes are possible, individual outcomes are always affected by how one responds to unfolding circumstances. HNZ 13.11 deals with the sagely ability to gauge the *shi* 勢 of difficult situations and find the best "expedient" (*quan* 權) response. I discuss the term *quan* 權 in more detail in Chapter V, but for now it suffices to note that it refers to the cultivated ability to respond to the various factors of a situation by balancing competing demands. In that sense, the arrangement of factors in the situation (*shi* 勢) "establishes the basis for expediency."[24] *Shi* 勢 establishes the basis in that the cultivated individual responds only to the present circumstances of the situation, and not to preconceived notions of what "ought" to happen. Sages, the HNZ authors note here, "are not bound by the path of [a single line] of footprints, becoming fixed and rigid so as to fail to transform."[25] This attentiveness to circumstances results in "their unsuccessful affairs being few, / and their successful affairs being numerous."[26] Attentiveness to contextual detail is the key to effecting the best outcomes in any given situation.

This example illustrates well the *ad hoc* nature of my approach. I certainly do not presume to be a sage, but I have tried to attend closely to the arrangement of factors in

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[24] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 507, HNZ 13/125/27.
[25] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 508, HNZ 13/126/2-3.
[26] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 508 with my emendations, HNZ 13/126/3.

my inquiry, and have made conclusions based on how those factors play out. My approach is therefore *ad hoc* in that it addresses the concerns of this particular project alone. I have found that the propensity of my situation with both Dewey and HNZ involved has led to a more successful inquiry into the nature and detail of HNZ's ethical vision, but this may be a very unfavorable arrangement for other areas of inquiry. Likewise, having Dewey involved in the arrangement of circumstances when examining some other figure or text could theoretically obstruct the inquiry. Even the HNZ authors admit that the sage's expedient solutions lead to a few "unsuccessful affairs."

It is also important to note that adding Dewey to my *shi* 勢 is only helpful insofar as it makes it possible to clarify things in HNZ that would exist regardless of my approach. That is, I find it helpful to read Dewey along with HNZ because there are many details of HNZ's ethics which the authors leave implicit. However, that detail would exist whether I clarified it and made it explicit or not. Adding Dewey simply gives me the positional advantage of being able to "connect the dots" more clearly, painting a more accurate picture of the full range and implication of HNZ's vision of the best kind of human life.

Specifically, I find that thinking about ethics in the ways that Dewey thinks about ethics makes it easier to see how the different parts of HNZ's ethical project fit together. Thus, Dewey does not supply theoretical "tools" that can correct a deficiency in HNZ, nor is his work a theoretical "lens" through which we gain an augmented view of HNZ. Instead, reading Dewey along with HNZ simply changes the perspective of the inquirer such that the implicit features of HNZ's ethical program can appear in more explicit detail. My contention is not that Dewey's thought fills in gaps in HNZ, but that a person

who reads Dewey is in a better position to understand how HNZ's ethical vision fits together than someone who does not. However, I also do not wish to imply that Dewey will be universally helpful in reading all early Chinese texts, or that reading Dewey is the only way to put oneself in a favorable position to approach HNZ. I maintain only that reading Dewey changes the arrangement of factors in my particular situation in helpful ways.

In HNZ, *shi* 勢 as "the arrangement of factors in a situation" is related closely to the term *qing* 情 "the essential qualities" of a situation, or the "genuine responses" of a person to a situation. The most important kind of *qing* 情 for HNZ's ethical project is *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情 "the essential responses of one's nature to one's destiny." I discuss all of these terms in much greater detail in Chapters IV and V, but for now we can understand *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情 as the responses one has to the totality of factors in a situation, based on the totality of one's personal resources, including natural inclinations, acquired abilities, life history, etc. So, one's "nature" (*xing* 性) and "destiny" (*ming* 命), along with the *qing*-reactions produced therefrom, constitute some of the most important factors within the *shi* 勢 of a situation.

Whether it contributes to my suite of acquired abilities, my overall life history, or some other element of my situation, reading Dewey will necessarily affect my *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情. That means that my reactions to an encounter with HNZ will be different because I have also encountered Dewey's thought. Those modified reactions work to clarify and make explicit some of the more obscure and implicit aspects of HNZ's ethical program.

Finally, we should note that the idea of *shi* 勢 also implies the possibility that certain outcomes will be impossible or extremely unlikely under certain circumstances. This means that if, for instance, Dewey's vision of ethics were completely opposed to that of HNZ, then it would be very unlikely that reading his work would put one in a favorable position to examine the text. As HNZ 9.17 says, "to advance a project that the arrangement of factors in the situation makes impossible . . . is something that [even] a sage, however spiritlike, could not accomplish."[27] I have found that Dewey's thought on ethics proceeds in very broad terms according to the same propensity shown in HNZ's vision of ethics.

In particular, both Dewey and HNZ propose what I call an "ethic of participation." This means that they both conceive of ideal action as a kind of deep participation of an individual with her environment. Examining Dewey's explicit account of the structure of such participation will give us the positional advantage needed to clarify the implicit details of HNZ's account.

C. Dewey on Experience, Habit, and the Ethics of Participation

Dewey and HNZ both espouse what I broadly characterize as "ethics of participation." That is, they both envision individuals embedded in social and material environments, and find that ideal action consists in the individual bringing as much of her unique abilities and resources to bear on that environment as possible. In this scenario, one lives well by engaging deeply with one's unique context of life and by being an active participant in the positive development of the situations that make up that life.

[27] Major et al., *Huainanzi*, 309 with my emendations, HNZ 9/70/2.

HNZ often describes this process in terms of sages working in accord with the cosmic patterns of the Way, leaving the practical features of individual ethical cultivation largely implicit. Dewey's vision explicitly addresses the practical features of ethical cultivation, so reviewing those features will set up the positional advantage needed to clarify and make explicit many portions of HNZ's account.[28]

Dewey is committed to an empirical method for examining ethics. This means that he will insist on locating ethical life entirely in actual instances of lived experience, rather than in abstract principles of the good or the right. As Gregory Pappas puts it, "a genuine empiricism in philosophy entails that . . . we need to start and end with directly experienced subject matter."[29] Dewey's concept of experience will therefore set up the basic structure for an ethic of participation.

Dewey's formulation of the term experience focuses on the relationship between subject and environment, and collapses the dichotomy between subjective and objective

[28] I should note that reading Dewey along with early Chinese texts is not an entirely novel approach. Several comparative studies of early Chinese philosophical traditions and texts use Deweyan experience as a central category. To the best of my knowledge, however, none have read Dewey's thought on experience as a way to approach Daoist texts. Most of these studies, moreover, rely on Roger Ames and David Hall's reading of Dewey as a certain kind of process philosopher, in a similar vein with A. N. Whitehead. Ames and Hall's translation of the *Daode Jing* is an important example of using this approach to read a Daoist text, but that work relies much more heavily on Whitehead. Nevertheless, it does bear some methodological similarities to my study.

On the use of Dewey in reading early Chinese literature, see especially Joseph Grange, *John Dewey, Confucius, and Global Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004); Wen Haiming, *Confucian Pragmatism as the Art of Contextualizing Personal Experience and World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); See also David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 76-78; and Roger Ames and David Hall, *Daodejing: Making this Life Significant* (New York: Ballantine, 2003).

James Behuniak has also recently applied Dewey's thought on education to a specific issue in early Daoism, but he does not use experience as a central term. See James Behuniak, "John Dewey and the Virtue of Cook Ding's Dao" in *Dao* 9 no.2 (June 2010), 161-174.

[29] Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 20. Pappas' work is the most comprehensive and insightful treatment of Dewey's ethics to date. I have found it extremely helpful in parsing Dewey's thought in this area, and much of my account here follows Pappas.

descriptions of experience.[30] Dewey asserts that "instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, [experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events."[31] Taking a cue from William James, Dewey explains that experience is actually "double-barreled." The two "barrels" of experience are the object being experienced and the person doing the experiencing. In Dewey's conception, both the thing being experienced and the manner in which the person experiences it are integral to the single thing "experience." Experience, for Dewey, does not refer only to an individual's subjective awareness, nor does it mean simply what objectively happens to an individual. Dewey insists that experience always refers to both "barrels" at once.[32]

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[30] NB: This is only a comment on how Dewey's conception of experience affects our understanding of these two ways of talking about experience. The issue of whether the duality of subject and object is actually collapsed in Deweyan experience is a far more complicated issue.

[31] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 16.

[32] With the introduction of the concept of "subjective awareness" as an element of experience, I should also acknowledge the controversial history of the term "experience" in the field of Religious Studies. Beginning with Schleiermacher's *On Religion* in the early nineteenth century, many apologists have used the argument that the "core" or "essence" of religion lies in the unique quality of particularly religious experiences. In these cases, the operative force of experience rests in the irreducibly religious quality of religious experience—a quality directly perceived in a phenomenological episode, and one that is unlike any other kind of quality. The crux of all such arguments is that such episodes of religious experience impart to the subject some direct knowledge of the veracity of religious truths, the existence of the divine or sacred, etc. It is important to note that the bulk of discussions surrounding this issue—both supportive and critical—take as given the model of experience as a phenomenological episode. Most of the controversies surround the nature, origins, and epistemic value of such episodes. Even Ann Taves' recent book, *Religious Experience Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), which should be seen as the cutting edge of research in this field, mostly retains the notion of experience as phenomenological episode.

For the most influential examples of the tradition defining religion by reference to uniquely religious experience, see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* [1836](New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), and Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961). Important critics of the *sui generis* nature of the religious experience include Steven Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, edited by Steven Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), and Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Proudfoot pioneered the "attributionist" approach to religious experience, in which experiences are deemed religious only so far as subjects attribute religious causes or effects to them. This is essentially the stance Taves adopts in *Religious Experience Reconsidered*, but develops using insights from cognitive science and anthropology in the intervening 25 years. Steven Katz argues that mystical experiences (which in practical terms are often equated with or closely linked to religious experiences) are products of subjects' previous expectations and modes of explanation acquired

The important point for my project here is that Dewey's concept of experience notices and takes seriously the emobodied aspects of individual experience, without making purely subjective awareness or felt quality its primary vehicle. In fact, Dewey simultaneously recognizes that the subjective "barrel" of experience is embedded in particular circumstances. This means that when we think of a person "experiencing something" we must think simultaneously of the subjective aspect of that experience, and the inter-active environmental factors that together make up individual instances of experience. Dewey provides another description that is important enough to quote at length:

> Like its congeners, life and history, [experience] includes what men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also how men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see believe, imagine—in short, processes of experiencing. "Experience" denotes the planted field, the sowed seeds, the reaped harvests, the changes of night and day, spring and autumn, wet and dry, heat and cold, that are observed, feared, longed for; it also denotes the one who plants and reaps, who works and rejoices, hopes fears, plans, invokes magic or chemistry to aid him, who is down-cast or triumphant. It is "double-barreled" in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality. "Thing" and "thought," as James says in the same connection, are single-barreled; they refer to products discriminated by reflection out of primary experience.[33]

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from their cultural context. In response to this argument, a "new perennialist" movement sprung up in the 1990s, led by Robert Forman, who argued that at least certain very specific kinds of mystical experience really are *sui generis* and cross-culturally similar because they represent "pure" consciousness or consciousness as such. See especially his *Mysticism, Mind, Consciousness* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), and the essays in his edited volume, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Other important critics of experience as a category in religious studies include Russell McCutcheon and Robert Sharf, who both demonstrate how the term came to be used in the field and gained much of its currency from modern, Western, especially Protestant, understandings of religion, and was largely used to defend projects friendly to modern, Western, Protestant interests. See Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on* sui generis *Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience" in *Numen* 42 no.3 (Oct. 1995), 228-283; and "Experience" in Critical Terms for Religious Studies, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

As I explain below, I use experience in a technical sense derived from Dewey's work to indicate the engagement or inter-action of an individual with her environment, which necessarily entails a certain qualitative aspect. Because I use it in this more narrow, technical sense, I do not engage any issue of whether any kind of experience is mediated or unmediated. Rather, I am only concerned in this work with how the qualitative and contextual aspects of experience function in the ethical program in HNZ.

[33] Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 8.

Dewey's concept of experience takes seriously both the subjectively held signifince of an experience , but it also recognizes that such subjective significance only exists within a given context of physical conditions and life history. Pappas distinguishes Dewey's picture of experience as how "we experience our everyday life from a pre-theoretical and engaged point of view," from the more common philosophical conception of experience as, "the content of consciousness . . . of a knowing subject who is a spectator to an antecedent world."[34] When Dewey uses the term experience he means the process of living, shot through as it is with human meaning and significance.[35]

Pappas makes the important observation that Dewey's commitment to experience was and still is revolutionary because he focused on the lived signifinces and values found in subjective experience in equal measure with their connection to social interaction and the material environment. "To take experience as the starting point," Pappas asserts, "is simply to begin where we are, not with a theory, but with what is pre-theoretically given in . . . the stream of unique and qualitative situations that make up our lives."[36] The most important point here is that for Dewey the concept of experience cannot be given an adequate theoretical treatment because its content is irreducibly contextual. We can, of course, talk about it theoretically (as I do here and as Dewey does

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[34] Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics* (2008), 21.

[35] This is also a controversial area of Dewey's thought, as his "postulate of immediate empiricism" holds that the qualities of experience derived from human significance actually do *exist*. The most famous example, from his essay "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" involves a fearful sound: "I start and am flustered by a noise heard. Empirically, that noise *is* fearsome; it *really* is, not merely phenomenally or subjectively so" (MW3, 160). It appears that Dewey grants the subject power over determining the metaphysical status of phenomenon, which is problematic because it shades into idealism at best, solipsism at worst. However, if we bear in mind that Dewey does not subscribe to any really foundational metaphysics, the postulate of immediate empiricism is not overly objectionable. It does not hold that what the subject feels to be the case is true in Reality, but rather that what the subject believes to be the case plays a formative role in the subject's experience. For Dewey, that experience, and not an antecedent Reality, is the primary stuff of human existence.

[36] Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 11.

throughout his work), but that discussion can only be made meaningful and specific by someone's real, lived experience.[37]

The important use of experience for my project will be as a term to describe the medium of practical ethical cultivation in HNZ. The HNZ authors use explicitly cosmological language to describe the process of ethical self-cultivation, but as I demonstrate in Chapter III, these descriptions are nonetheless backed by practical methods, which are undergone by living individuals. Reading Dewey on the topic of experience allows one to see more clearly the implied practical factors in HNZ's ethical project. By recognizing that the practices described in classical Daoist sources work on the level of individuals interacting with their environment, and that these interactions are necessarily attended by certain identifiable features, we can see better how the techniques of self-cultivation in HNZ work on the level of individual lives. This is not to say that it will be necessary to understand the phenomenological character of sagely experience in HNZ, but simply to appreciate that much of HNZ's ethical program involves adjusting and transforming the kinds of experiences one has. We do not need to know "what it feels like" to be a sage, but only to understand the role inter-active experience plays in the ideal human life, and how such experiences are intimately bound up with one's environment.

Dewey also makes a distinction between experiencing and knowing, which will be important for discerning his conception of experience. As noted above, experience is often equated with consciousness of some object, which can be considered a state of knowledge—e.g. knowledge that something is the case. Dewey maintains, however, that

[37] This is all not to say, however, that Dewey believes in any qualitative element of experience that is not in some way affected by previous experience with the social and physical world; nor is it to say that he thinks qualitative experience is rigidly *determined* by previous experience.

"what is really 'in' experience extends much further than that which at any time is *known*."[38] As implied here, Dewey does not deny a connection between experience and knowledge, but maintains that knowledge, or that which is "cognized," is only one element of what it means to experience.[39] To know something, Dewey asserts, is only one part of what it means to love, endure, strive for, or suffer. Other relevant parts of these human experiences are emotional qualities, relations of will and especially the physical facts of the individual's interaction with his environment. The important point here is that Dewey's concept of experience emphasizes the "trans-action" between individual and environment, eschewing any sharp divide between the two:

> The structure of whatever is had by way of immediate qualitative presences is found in the recurrent modes of interaction taking place between what we term organism, on the one side, and environment, on the other. This interaction is the primary fact, and it constitutes a *trans-action*. Only by analysis and selective abstraction can we differentiate the actual occurrence into two factors.[40]

For example, the experience of walking includes both conscious perception of one's bodily movements, as well as the ground pushing back against one's body to make those movements possible. The experience of walking would be incomplete—indeed, impossible—without both. Our colloquial use of experience usually emphasizes the subject-environment divide and places experience in the perception of the individual.

This point is extremely important for Dewey's understanding of ethics, and for setting up a favorable perspective from which to approach HNZ. Dewey conceives of all human action, including ethical action, as a matter of an organism interacting with its

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[38] Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 20, emphasis in original.
[39] Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 22 and *passim*. Dewey uses the verb "cognize" and its cognates here and throughout EN to mean something like pure analytic thought. He associates the term here with what he calls "intellectualism"—the trend in philosophy that lionizes analytic reason as the sovereign faculty of human life. He contrasts it with things like affective or volitional states, which we should note would probably all be considered cognitive states under current models in cognitive science.
[40] Dewey, "Conduct and Experience" (LW5), 220, emphasis in original.

environment. The inter-action, or "trans-action" is important because it emphasizes how individual and environment mutually implicate one another in experience. Experience is not something that affects only the "inner" world of the individual, and which can in some sense stand apart from the environment, but rather it is something that always connects with the lived circumstances of the environment. Dewey asserts that "in every event there is something obdurate, self-sufficient, [and] wholly immediate," in the perceived quality of the event, but that this does not mean that qualitative aspects of experience stand apart from relations with the environment.[41] Whether we are conscious of it or not, Dewey claims that experience is always impacted by environmental factors, and that it is always oriented to the context in which the individual is embedded. This will be important to keep in mind when reading HNZ because it will allow us to recognize better the implications of what, for instance, sages apprehend in distinct, sagely experience.

It is important to note also the wider factors that Dewey counts as operative in experience. As alluded to in the previous paragraph, some of Dewey's favorite examples of experience are the uniquely human phenomena of striving, loving, succeeding, being defeated, etc. These particular experiences depend heavily on context, which also includes history. Dewey observes in the 1930 essay "Qualitative Thought" that, "the world in which we immediately live, that in which we strive, succeed, and are defeated is preeminently a qualitative world."[42] He goes on to explain that the qualitative aspects of our experience are integral to how we negotiate life because they provide continuity and meaning from one moment to the next. In explaining this, Dewey makes a distinction

[41] Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 74.
[42] Dewey, "Qualitative Thought" (LW5), 243.

between situations and objects. Calling something a situation signifies “the fact that the subject-matter ultimately referred to in existential propositions is a complex existence that is held together in spite of its internal complexity by the fact that it is dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality.”[43] Calling something an object, meanwhile, means “some element in the complex whole that is defined in abstraction from the whole of which it is a distinction.”[44]

For instance, running to make it to a meeting with my thesis advisor on time might be characterized by the quality of urgency that makes it stand out as a discrete situation. Identifying the right word for the quality—urgency, haste, anxiety, etc.—is not especially important.[45] What matters is that there is a pervasive quality that leads me to apprehend the elements of the situation as one cohesive episode, and that when the quality changes—for instance, when I reach my destination with time to spare—I apprehend the start of a new situation.

Dewey also argues that the qualitative aspect of a situation is actually the primary fact, and the objects involved are only secondary. In his explanation of this point, Dewey anticipates much future work on the role of language and social context in the production of meaning and even the function of logic. Dewey argues that the reason logical propositions about particular objects make sense in the first place is not because the objects are primary and contain, ready-made as it were, all of the relevant logical import. He uses the example of the sentence “the stone is shaly.”[46] Both “stone” and “shaly” only have logical import insofar as they belong to a greater context of subject-matter, or

[43] Dewey, “Qualitative Thought” (LW5), 246.
[44] Dewey, “Qualitative Thought” (LW5), 246.
[45] It is also difficult to choose an appropriate description because the determinate factor here is not the *idea* of urgency or whatever in a situation, but rather the actual quality itself, as I perceive it.
[46] Dewey, “Qualitative Thought” (LW5), 246-7.

"universe of discourse."[47] The same is true of individual situations encountered in life. One is able to make sense of individual objects and their relationships because one has a sense of the greater context of the situation to which they belong. The pervasive quality that ties a situation together must also be "taken for granted" because, being the "universe of discourse" in which the elements of the situation make sense, it cannot be contained within itself, just as "a quart bowl cannot be held within itself or in any of its contents."[48] It may, however, be part of some larger context still, and in that respect derive meaning from its being "nested" within a greater context. The point of all this is that the context comes from the amalgamated circumstances of the individual in his or her particular milieu and history with other situations involving similar objects. Thus, the pervasive quality of a situation will be different for different subjects, even if the objects within the situation are the same, and even for the same subject it may be different depending on any number of factors like its relationship to previous situations.

Another related aspect of Deweyan experience is its composition of stable and precarious elements. Dewey observes that the objects and situations one finds oneself in are constantly shifting, and that it is an empirical fact that we live in a world of flux. That does not mean, however, that the world is nothing but a confusing, chaotic welter of phenomena. Instead, we actually do perceive stability in some things, such that they constitute enduring presences in experience. It is important to note here that Dewey does think that all elements of experience are ultimately mutable, and that stability and precariousness are relative terms. For instance, mountains are not, in point of fact,

[47] Dewey, "Qualitative Thought" (LW5), 247.
[48] Dewey, "Qualitative Thought" (LW5), 247.

permanent features of a landscape.[49] Natural processes eventually wear them down to level plains. On the time scale of human lives, however, mountains remain about as constant a presence as is possible. In lesser degrees, and in more abstract terms, relationships between people, or objects' significance in one's life, do endure from one moment to the next and even from one year to the next. For Dewey, "the issue of living depends upon the art with which [the stable and precarious aspects of experience] are adjusted each other."[50] As this quotation suggests, this adjustment is also at the heart of Dewey's moral vision.

Dewey calls the methods by which individuals adjust stable and precarious elements of experience "habits." Habit, for Dewey, "include not only one's routine ways of doing things, but a broad spectrum of tendencies and dispositions, dominant ways of acting, ways or modes of response, abilities, attitudes, sensitivities, accessibilities, predilections, and aversions."[51] As this description indicates, Dewey uses a very broad definition for habit that essentially includes all of the learned ways that individuals come to interact with their environments. One can have habits of thought or action, and indeed anything over which the individual has some control and which makes a real difference in experience can be counted as subject to habit. As elements of conduct, habits are also shaped by one's history of interacting with the environment, and are in that sense acquired. This implies that by changing the way one interacts with the environment one can alter existing habits or create new ones. One can "conduct oneself" toward a different way of conducting oneself.

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[49] See Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 73.
[50] Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (LW1), 76.
[51] Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 122.

To understand the place of habit in Dewey's thought we should also therefore address his concept of conduct. Louis Menand is right in calling Dewey's early article, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," a "key to his thought."[52] In that article, Dewey critiques the idea, standard in psychology in his day, that actions are generated along a discrete arc from external stimulus to idea of response to the action of motor response.[53] Dewey rejects the idea that such stimulus-response phenomena happen as discrete events, and instead asserts that they always occur as part of a never-ending cycle, the response of one event being the stimulus of the next. The point for Dewey's philosophy is that he consistently maintains the priority of the rich, irreducible interplay of factors that leads from one moment of experience to the next. This bears out in his view of ethics as his concept of conduct. "Where there is conduct," Dewey says, "there is not simply a succession of disconnected acts but each thing done carries forward an underlying tendency and intent, conducting, leading up, to further acts."[54] We should also note here that Dewey thinks any action—any response to any stimulus—is potentially relevant to this conducting forward of successive actions. Human ethical action, therefore, is fully embedded in the context and history of one's situation. That history and context also provides continuity to experience, and the continuity between one's previous actions and the disposition to similar actions is what Dewey generally calls character. Individual continuities between previous actions and dispositions to certain kinds of actions are what Dewey generally terms habits. Habits are thus

[52] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 328. Menand actually calls the ideas in "Reflex Arc" *the* key to Dewey's thought, but I hesitate to put all of Dewey's eggs in that particular basket.
[53] Dewey, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (EW5), 96-109.
[54] Dewey, *Ethics* (LW7), 168.

tendencies to conduct oneself one way rather than another, and in that capacity they shape how one moves forward in experience.

The intelligent regulation and maintenance of habits is the main prerogative of Dewey's vision of a life well lived, and Dewey's concept of intelligence is one of the most easily misunderstood elements of his thought. Dewey used the term intelligence in many areas of his work to direct attention away from reason as a sovereign faculty. Unfortunately, in the intervening years it seems that we have come to associate intelligence more with intellectualism and rationality than Dewey originally intended. Part of this misunderstanding rests on widely held beliefs about his use of science as a governing metaphor, and further misunderstandings about his idea of science. Recent work by Stephen Fesmire has helped correct this view by emphasizing the importance of art and aesthetic experience in Dewey's ethics.[55] Pappas points out, however, that in both the scientific and aesthetic elements of his work, Dewey's concept of intelligence is more importantly a function of life itself than any particular type of intellectual endeavor.[56] That is, the fundamental sense of intelligence as Dewey uses it is the sense we use when we say "intelligent life evolved on Earth." It denotes a capacity for reflective, adaptive engagement with the environment, in whatever form that may take. This is one of the reasons Dewey often contrasts intelligent action with mechanical action, or action by rote. Mechanical action relies purely on following rules unreflectively, and "it is only the breath of intelligence blowing through such rules that keeps them from the petrification which awaits all barren idealities."[57] The problem with mechanical action

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[55] See Steven Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).
[56] See Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 20-21.
[57] Dewey, "Moral Theory and Practice" (EW3), 103. Quoted in Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 51.

lies not in the rules but in the *way* one follows them—that is, without the "active and alert commerce with the world" that characterizes Deweyan experience.[58]

The best illustration of what Dewey means by intelligence in this context is his analogy of the "live creature." In the opening chapter of *Art as Experience*, Dewey once again characterizes experience in general as a matter of an organism interacting with its environment.[59] He points out how the life of any living creature is punctuated by alternating periods in which the creature finds satisfaction for its basic needs in its environment, and periods in which its environment frustrates those needs. Eventually, if it is to continue living, the live creature changes the way it interacts with its environment to restore the equilibrium. This restoration, however, can happen in better and worse degrees:

> If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.[60]

Dewey goes on to argue that this "growth" is what constitutes the basis of "a higher powered and more significant life."[61] In *Art as Experience*, Dewey finds this experience of "consummation," or the deep satisfaction that attends reestablishment of equilibrium with one's environment, as the basic esthetic impulse. Pappas argues that in the greater context of Dewey's work, it also forms the basis of a flourishing human life in general, and is therefore central to Dewey's ethics.[62]

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[58] Dewey, *Art As Experience* (LW10), 25.
[59] This account appears in Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 11-19.
[60] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 19-20.
[61] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 20.
[62] See especially Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 166ff.

Dewey argues that the live creature is able to reestablish equilibrium with its environment because it can employ intelligence. That is, the live creature can sense discontinuity in experience and react by either taking steps to alter its environment or by adjusting the way it engages it, further refining these reactions based on the feedback provided by subsequent moments of experience. The most profound moments of experience come "through a fulfillment that reaches to the depths of our being—one that is an adjustment of our whole being with the conditions of the environment."[63] Moreover, Dewey finds that the being most "fully alive" lives entirely in the present moment of its experience, using its past as "a storehouse of resources by which to move confidently forward," and regarding the future as "a promise."[64] "Only when the past ceases to trouble," Dewey asserts, "and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive."[65] The important point of these descriptions is to illustrate how, for Dewey, ideal human action is a matter of participating most fully in one's environment. That is, the height of "living" is being actively engaged and responsive to the present moment and circumstances, using as much of one's resources as possible.

Dewey thinks that this intensely "enlivened" sort of experience is possible because of the basic nature of experience itself as inter-action between individual and environment. However, he also recognizes that for most people the most intense moments of experience are the exception and not the rule. They still constitute the ideal, however, and stand out as a "rhythm" that gives continuity to life and can contribute to its

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[63] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 23.
[64] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 23-24.
[65] Dewey, *Art as Experience* (LW10), 24.

order and structure.[66] Nevertheless, by engaging more fully with one's environment, any particular moment of experience can be enlivened by this "breath of intelligence."

Pappas argues that the sense of balance between an individual and her environment is Dewey's main criterion for describing ideal action.[67] As noted above, Dewey's conception of experience incorporates elements of stability and precariousness, and Pappas argues that he adopts a principle of balance that addresses the ways one interacts with the environment so as to strike a satisfying or productive tension between the two. This is one area of Dewey's thought where analogies from the fine and technical arts are particularly important. One finds the balance between stable and precarious elements of experience not by any pre-ordained ideal or quota, but by "feel"—that is, by skillful, engaged perception of current lived circumstances. Moreover, one also determines whether the proper balance has been struck by skillfully evaluating the quality of experience.[68] So for Dewey, all of the information and tools necessary for optimal conduct are present in individual experience, and they are utilized to that end by the faculty of intelligence.

The important end of the Deweyan picture is discerning what will be the most beneficial habits for one to acquire to optimally engage one's constantly transforming environment. Habits provide continuity and stability to experience, but one can also take actions to change existing habits by altering one's conduct; one can acquire the habit of making better habits. These meta-habits are the means by which an individual realizes the potential for flourishing afforded by her particular life situation. By cultivating these

[66] Dewey specifically uses the term rhythm throughout *Art as Experience* (LW10), and Pappas treats it as almost synonymous with "balance."
[67] See esp. Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 172-184.
[68] NB: Skillfulness is not necessarily the metaphor Dewey would use here, but I think that it is apt.

habits one can simply "lie back on experience" as Dewey says, and allow the content of one's particular situation to provide the needed guidance for further adjustment.[69] Pappas identifies openness and courage as the habits Dewey finds most important for his situation, but they are certainly not the only important ones.

In the end, Dewey's account of ethics envisions humans as living creatures embedded in social and material environments, and finds that living well consists in actively participating in those environments by engaging and responding to them in ways that yield a sense of balance or satisfaction in experience. The practical methods by which people improve experience in this view are habits. Since habits are simply acquired ways of interacting with one's environment, they can effect better or worse alignment with it. Practical ethics, according to Dewey's vision, would then be a process of evaluating the effects of current habits and changing one's conduct so as to acquire new habits that allow one to more completely participate in one's environment. It is also important to note that on the practical level of individual self-cultivation, this process would consist primarily in clearly identifying and working to strengthen and consolidate the aspects of experience that constitute a flourishing life. That is, on the personal level, Dewey's vision of ethics finds people systematically working to improve the depth and consistency of certain qualities—namely, satisfaction with or consummation of environmental factors.

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[69] Quoted in Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 13. The quote is from an article on Dewey in *Atlantic Monthly* 1941, 673. This is an important point, as in this interview Dewey seems to describe a mystical experience he had which shaped his thinking on several issues.

D. Conclusion

Now that we have a working model of the explicit details of how an ethic of participation would work on a practical, individual level, it will be easier to draw out the implications of HNZ's ethical program. By adding Dewey to the arrangement of factors that influence my inquiry here, I will be able to approach HNZ from an overall perspective that facilitates making the kind of connections that the HNZ authors often leave unstated.

From Dewey's account, it should also be clear that the process of acquiring the habits necessary to consistently maintain equilibrium with one's environment will be extremely intensive. Indeed, if Dewey is correct in saying that one is most fully alive when one's "whole being" inter-penetrates one's environment, then achieving this as a consistent feature of experience would seem to require a wholesale transformation of habits. As I indicated briefly above, Dewey does not think that such a permanent and deep engagement with the present moment of one's circumstances is possible. He thinks that the best one can hope for is to engage in a continuous process of shared improvement that includes others in one's society. This is why Pappas identifies open-mindedness and courage as key habits in Dewey's own normative vision that focuses on democracy as an ethical practice.[70]

However, Dewey was not aware of the extensive "technologies" of self-cultivation developed by the classical Daoist tradition purportedly meant to effect just such a transformation. The classical Daoist tradition in general, and HNZ in particular, also presents an "ethic of participation," but is usually much more optimistic about the

[70] See Pappas' discussion of the "ideal moral self" in *John Dewey's Ethics*, 185-216.

possibility of deeply and consistently participating with one's environment, and thereby remaining most "fully alive."

Before proceeding to HNZ's account of ethics, it will be important to understand the background of the text, and in particular to examine the tradition of inner cultivation "technology" that animates it. In what follows, I do not explicitly return to Dewey until the Conclusion, but I often make use of the terminology outlined above to fill in the implicit details of classical Daoist ethics.

CHAPTER III:
Huainanzi in the Context of Classical Daoist Self-cultivation Practices

HNZ was produced at a pivotal time in Chinese history, in a resurgent intellectual climate, and drawing on the full flowering of Chinese thought from the previous few centuries. This chapter places HNZ within that context to better understand the support and implications of its unique view of ethics. I begin by describing the historical context and the circumstances surrounding the text's composition at the court of Liu An, including the political ramifications of the text and its apparent purpose. Next I briefly describe what is known about the intellectual world of the Huainan court and the background against which the text was composed. This leads naturally to a discussion of how best to classify the text, and I review the arguments for rejecting traditional "school" categorizations in early China in general, as well as the arguments for and against categorizing HNZ in particular. I then describe the structure of the text as part of my argument for why HNZ should be considered a key text in the classical tradition of Daoist ethics.

The remainder of the chapter traces the development of textual accounts of breath cultivation within this tradition, demonstrating how HNZ can and should be read as an extension and elaboration of the ideas on this topic found in the syncretist stratum of ZZ and the "Xinshu" chapters of GZ, in particular. I approach the topic of early Daoist breath cultivation with the "positional advantage" (*shi* 勢) of reading Dewey's ethics in

the previous chapter, and begin making the connections that will help fill in the implied practical ethics of classical Daoist sources.

A. Historical Context

HNZ was presented to Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty in 139 BCE by the emperor's uncle, Liu An, second king of Huainan.[1] Liu An was the grandson of Liu Bang, founder of the Han dynasty. Liu An's line of the Liu clan had, by the time Liu An presented HNZ to court, become somewhat associated with rebellion against the crown and general untrustworthiness.[2] Nevertheless, there seems to have been a real affection between the men, and upon receiving the text of HNZ from his uncle, Emperor Wu is said to have loved the work and to have included it in his private collection.[3] Despite the initially enthusiastic response, there is little evidence that the text did much to persuade the young monarch to Liu An's way of thinking. After that visit, Liu An's career would suffer a series of setbacks, eventually culminating in his indictment on charges of treason, and ending with his suicide to escape punishment in 122 BCE. The kingdom of Huainan was subsequently placed under imperial rule, and all of Liu An's effects confiscated, including his extensive library.

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[1] I follow Major et al., in calling Emperor Wu Liu An's nephew. Technically, Emperor Wu was Liu An's first cousin once removed (his father's brother's son's son). The Chinese custom of referring to a male relative of one's father's generation as "uncle," however, gives a much better sense of the character of their relationship. See Major et al., 10n.13.

[2] Liu An's father, Liu Zhang, died on his way to exile after participating in a failed rebellion against his half-brother, Liu Heng (Emperor Wen). Liu Zhang's mother was also a member of the Chao clan, who worked against the Lius in the early days of the Han dynasty. Liu An himself also became involved with another unsuccessful coup attempt in his youth, but was saved from any permanent retribution. For more on all of these matters, see Benjamin Wallacker, "Liu An, Second King of Huai-nan (180? – 122 B. C.)," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92 no.1 (Winter 1972): 36-51; as well as Major et al., 2-6. Griet Vankeerberghen treats the political events surrounding Liu An's life in greater detail, but with a focus on his eventual demise. See Griet Vankeerberghen, *The* Huainanzi *and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

[3] See Harold Roth, *The Textual History of the Huai-nan Tzu* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1992), 16. Roth here cites *Han Shu* chapter 44.

Another reason why it may have been easy to be wary of Liu An, despite Emperor Wu's youthful affection, is that Liu An had assembled at his own capital in Shouchun a large group of scholars and technical experts, creating an intellectual center to rival that of the imperial capital at Chang'an. This rich intellectual atmosphere was the medium out of which HNZ was composed. According to Ban Gu's history of the Western Han (*Han Shu*, first century CE), Liu An assembled "several thousand guests and visitors" who were presumably literary experts and other intellectuals, but also "masters of esoteric techniques" (*fangshi* 方士).[4] Collectively, the court produced a work in three parts, and the first or "inner" volume is what we have today as HNZ.[5] The third-century CE commentator Gao You lists eight specific men, in addition to Liu An, who co-authored the work.[6] The text is attributed to Liu An in imperial bibliographies, but all modern scholarship considers it a collaborative work, with Liu An serving perhaps as an "editor in chief" for the project.[7] Major et al. note that, regardless of what hand(s) actually completed the text, it is clear that it draws on a wide variety of early Chinese scholarship and literary technique, as one would expect from as purportedly vibrant an intellectual community as the court of Huainan.[8]

The audience for such a text, moreover, is unclear. It was presented directly to Emperor Wu, so was he alone the intended audience? Major et al. argue that this is unlikely given the fact that the young monarch had only been in power for two years

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[4] *Han shu* 44/2145, cited in Major et al., 8.
[5] The "middle" volume exists only in fragments collated by Qing scholars, and deals with esoteric arts and alchemical recipes. The "outer" volume is not extant. For more on these matters see Roth, *Textual History*. There is some controversy over whether what Ban Gu names as the "middle" volume of twenty-one chapters is the same twenty-one chapter work we have today, but they are not materially important here. For an overview, see Major et al, 11.
[6] See Major et al., *Huainanzi* (2010), 8.
[7] This is essentially the position shared by Major et al. (Major et al., 9).
[8] Major et al., 9.

before that visit from his uncle, and the size and complexity of the text suggest that it had been in production for much longer. Moreover, there was no way Liu An or his retainers could have known ahead of time that the prince Liu Che would eventually become Emperor Wu.[9] Major et al. suggest instead that the text was composed during the reign of the previous emperor, Jing, and that the twenty-first chapter, *Yaolue* 要略 "A Summary of the Essentials" was composed for the occasion of presenting the work to Emperor Wu and giving him an idea of why the gift was so special.[10] In that case, the intended audience of the main text would be members of the ruling Liu clan in general, or else educated government officials and others with the means and motivation to put the ideas explored in the text into practice.

Discerning HNZ's intended audience in this case is only important in characterizing what, essentially, the text is "doing." It is important for understanding its context in early Chinese history, but not necessarily for understanding how the broadly applicable ideas espoused within can be understood by modern interpreters. Griet Vankeerberghen has studied extensively the political implications surrounding the composition of HNZ. She concludes that the text makes basically two claims: "(1) that any person who has cultivated his heart in a proper, sagelike manner possesses the moral authority that entitles him to participate in politics and (2) that the *Huainanzi* contains

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[9] See Major et al., 9-10.

[10] See Major et al., 11. Another reason Major et al. give for concluding that HNZ was primarily composed during the reign of Emperor Jing is the text's canonical use of LZ. During Emperor Jing's tenure, and the period of stewardship by his mother Empress Dowager Dou, LZ was apparently very much in vogue at court. In that intellectual atmosphere, it would have made good political sense for Liu An to emphasize the canonicity of LZ and its ideas in directing research on HNZ. However, the authors' use of LZ is not merely politically expedient. As I demonstrate below, the core values espoused in LZ form a crucial part of the guiding ethos of HNZ. Given the intellectual options open to Liu An and his retainers, there is good evidence that they made a concerted effort to make use of and expand on texts that we now associate with the early Daoist tradition.

within it all one needs to know to become a sagelike ruler."[11] Her study on these issues then places the text in the milieu of early Han debates about proper political authority and finds that it is best to view the text as Liu An's direct response to these debates. On this understanding, HNZ is directed at the policymakers in Chang'an in general, with the goal of convincing them that the best administrative policy for the expanding empire was to retain the feudal system of local kingdoms, each semi-autonomously ruled by a member of the royal clan. Such a policy would be in direct conflict with the growing sentiment that tighter central control was necessary. As the throne reined in the power of local fiefdoms in favor of imperially-governed commandaries, Liu An would have felt real pressure to ensure that the older feudal system survived. In this respect, HNZ was, at least in part, an effort to convince the emperor and those in his inner circle of Liu An's powers as a monarch in his own right, and to bolster the political power of enfoeffed royal clansmen.

However, as Vankeerberghen's characterization above suggests, the text makes broader claims, and as only one part of Liu An's larger effort to portray himself as a leading man of letters, we can read it as addressing literate people in the ancient Chinese world more generally. Vankeerberghen's reading tries to understand HNZ as both a text and a political event—a maneuver on the part of Liu An to influence imperial policy. HNZ does present an argument that the best kind of ruler is one "who has cultivated his heart in a proper, sagelike manner," but this is based on a premise that theoretically any person *could* cultivate themselves in this way, and that the result is certain sagely

[11] Vankeerberghen, *Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, 5.

faculties that are the proper conduits of government power.[12] In this respect, the text is also one among many entrants into the early Chinese discussion of self-cultivation. This is the sense that I emphasize in reading HNZ. I seek to read HNZ to understand its claims about the nature of the well-lived human life, regardless of what political consequences those claims may have had for its authors.

We should still note, however, that even in this broader reading, the text's practical audience would still be quite small. In second-century BCE China, literacy would still have been restricted to the privileged few, and among these one would have to have substantial leisure to undertake the long training regimens required by the text's program of self-cultivation. Given the patriarchal nature of traditional Chinese society, the authors also surely intend that only men would be capable of undertaking such programs of cultivation. Nevertheless, HNZ purports to treat its human subject universally, and in examining its ethical content I seek to understand it on those terms.

With this approach in mind, it is not necessary to give a more elaborate rehearsal of all the historical facts of HNZ's creation.[13] Where it will be helpful to understand the intellectual history and context of specific terms or ideas in the following chapters, I provide these as needed. The next important factor for the present chapter is the issue of how—if at all—to categorize HNZ in terms of prevailing Han intellectual traditions.

[12] Roth, in a personal communication, notes how this universalizing stance, which opens the halls of power to theoretically any individual with the tenacity for assiduous self-cultivation, may be one reason HNZ failed to attract more support from the existing political order.

[13] The authoritative account of these facts can be found in Roth, *Textual History of the* Huai-nan Tzu, and much of Roth's research is restated in Major et al.

B. Determining the "School" Affiliation of HNZ

Recent scholarship suggests that the idea of "schools" as traditionally conceived did not exist in early China. The source of the enduring idea that intellectual activity was organized into coherent and distinguishable traditions or "schools" is the first-century BCE *Shiji* by Sima Qian and his father, Sima Tan.

Sima Tan's essay in *Shiji*, "Essentials of the Six Schools" (*liujia zhi yaozhi* 六家之要指), is often taken as the first classification of the major intellectual traditions active in pre-Han China, and Ban Gu's parallel usage in *Han Shu* is taken as confirmation of this account. However, as Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan have shown, the usages of the term *jia* 家 in *Shiji* and *Han Shu* differ in important ways, and neither matches particularly well with the post-Han notion of *jia* as intellectual traditions based on authoritative transmission of specific, canonical texts.[14] Sarah Queen has also argued that Sima Tan's categories were polemical and should not be read as a description of prominent traditions.[15] Reflecting on this research, Nathan Sivin has gone so far as to conclude that, "the notion of 'schools' can be discarded once and for all."[16]

In fact, all of the arguments against the existence of "schools" in early China before the latter Han are based on the premise that "school" necessarily refers to a post-Han model for intellectual lineages. That model, moreover, is importantly text-based. That is, in the post-Han usage of *jia* 家 the defining characteristic of an intellectual

[14] Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China" in *T'oung Pao* 89 no.1 (January 2003): 59-99.
[15] Sarah Queen, "Inventories of the Past: Rethinking the School Affiliation of the *Huainanzi*" in Asia Major 14 no.1 (2001): 51-72.
[16] Nathan Sivin, "Drawing Insights from Chinese Medicine" in Journal of Chinese Philosophy 34 no.1 (2007), 43.

lineage or "school" is its focus on and expertise with a specific text or set of texts.[17] Individual traditions would transmit authoritative recentions of texts from master to disciples, and indeed a significant part of a lineage's authority would stem from its possession of such authoritative versions of texts. While it is true that this kind of social organization did not exist in pre-Han China (with the possible exception of the Mohist and Confucian lineages), that does not mean that early Chinese intellectual life lacked discernable traditions.

With respect to the affiliation of HNZ, several scholars reject characterizing it according to any of the traditional affiliations based on arguments made in the text itself. Judson Murray has argued that, based on the authors' self-description of their project in the post-face Chapter 21 (*Yaolue* 要略 "A Summary of the Essentials"), HNZ defies traditional categorization.[18] The authors argue that the exhaustive knowledge contained in HNZ goes above and beyond all previous formulations, and should therefore not be put on a par with earlier thinkers. Moreover, "A Summary of the Essentials" engages only individual figures and does not distinguish HNZ against schools or other collective lineages. Paul Goldin argues similarly, but much more cynically, that HNZ uses an "insidious syncretism" to undermine and disenfranchise other ways of thinking for the political gain of its authors.[19] This argument also places HNZ self-consciously outside the pale of categorization with other intellectual traditions, and focuses on the authors'

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[17] For more on this and many related issues, see Mark Edward Lewis' authoritative study of the place of writing in Early China, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), especially Chapter 2.

[18] Judson Murray, "A Study of 'Yaolue' 要略, 'A Summary of the Essentials': Understanding the *Huainanzi* through the Point of View of the Author of the Postface" in *Early China* 29 (2004): 45-110. See also Judson Murray, "The Consummate Dao: The Way (*dao* 道) and Human Affairs (*shi* 事) in the Huainanzi" (PhD dissertation, Brown University, 2007).

[19] Paul Rakita Goldin, "Insidious Syncretism in the Political Philosophy of Huai-nan-tzu" in *Asian Philosophy* 9 no.3 (November 1999): 165-191.

attempt to articulate a new and separate position for themselves. Both Murray's and Goldin's arguments are examples of the "internalist" position that HNZ is best understood by relying only on evidence internal to the text, without positing affiliation with any other figure or tradition. The majority of the scholars who worked on the recent English translation of HNZ hold to this "internalist" view—including John Major, who previously viewed the work as a paradigmatically "Huang-Lao" text.[20] Harold Roth, however, consistently maintains that the HNZ belongs in the same tradition of texts as LZ, ZZ, and the "Xinshu" texts of GZ.

Roth's defense of HNZ's Daoist pedigree does not contradict the "internalist" view of the text. Indeed, Roth concurs that the HNZ authors self-consciously attempt to set the text apart from all other philosophical works, and eschew affiliation with any previous tradition. However, Roth argues that the concepts upon which the text's argument for exceptionalism relies are themselves fundamentally Daoist. He argues that recent advances in understanding the literary and rhetorical structure of the text, especially its systematic use of the root-branch structure, support the view that, of all the ideas synthesized in HNZ, the most foundational ones are similar to ideas found in other Daoist texts.[21] In the text at large chapters 1-8 are the "roots" and chapters 9-20 are the "branches." Within the root chapters, Roth argues, chapters 1 and 2 are themselves "roots" which, "provide the cosmological, cosmogonic, and self cultivation foundations for the entire 'Root Section,' and by extension, for the entire book." Chapters 1 and 2 are the chapters most heavily influenced by LZ and ZZ, respectively. The influence of

[20] John Major, *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought: Chapters Three, Four, and Five of the* Huainanzi (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 8-14.
[21] Harold Roth, "*Huainanzi* and Han Daoism" in *Dao Companion to Daoist Philosophy*, edited by Liu Xiaogan (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

Daoist inner cultivation ideas are therefore structurally embedded in HNZ from the beginning of the text. Moreover, Roth also finds that each chapter has an internal root-branch structure wherein the opening passage(s) of each chapter lay the conceptual foundations for what comes after. He finds that all of these chapter-roots either directly support or at least remain consistent with the foundational ideas contained in chapters 1 and 2.

I agree with Roth's arguments for a Daoist foundation in HNZ, but I also maintain that our approach to filiation should be shaped by the kinds of questions we bring to the text. In a study of the text's internal structure and the authors' self-understanding as it relates to their political and philosophical goals, the "internalist" approach to the text may be most helpful. In a study of the text's ethical thought paying close attention to the practices of self-cultivation it advocates, setting it within a clearly related group of texts identified as Daoist will be most helpful. This is the approach I have taken here, and so examine the ideas and practices associated with the classical Daoist tradition of inner cultivation to see how best to fit HNZ's unique contribution into that picture.

This is not to say that other traditions and lineages in early China did not influence the ideas in HNZ. Indeed, within individual chapters, one can discern influence from various other strains of thought.[22] I simply contend that, when placing the HNZ in its early Han intellectual context, we must note that the "Daoist" ideas in the text play a more formative role in its overall structure and argument. Moreover, paying close attention to this influence is important for understanding the areas of thought where it is

[22] For instance, Donald Harper has identified parallels with the Confucian lineage associated with the *Zisizi* and *Mengzi* in HNZ Chapter 10, and Andrew Meyer has treated extensively the influence of Militarist thought on HNZ Chapter 15. See Donald Harper, "Huai Nan Tzu Chapter 10: Translation and Prolegomena" (Master's Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1978) and Andrew Meyer, *The Dao of the Military: Liu An's Art of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

most formative, such as ethics and various areas of self-cultivation. If we wish to attend to ethics in HNZ, then we must attend to the tradition of practices indicated by other "Daoist" texts. This is not to say that asking questions about ethical cultivation will force us to conclude HNZ is a Daoist text, but rather that reading other texts influenced by the classical Daoist tradition of self-cultivation will be helpful in understanding HNZ's vision of ethics. We can thereby appreciate how HNZ fits into the shared landscape of classical Daoism, and this does not foreclose seeing how it fits into an even more expansive view.

C. Inner Cultivation in Classical Daoism

This section follows closely the work of Harold Roth in mapping the contours of inner cultivation practices in classical Daoism. Roth has argued extensively that textual evidence shows similarly-constituted practices of "apophatic breathing meditation" across all of the texts linked with the early Daoist tradition.[23] In fact, Roth's analyses draw together certain texts, like chapters 3, 5, 17, and 25 of *Lushi Chunqiu* and the "Xinshu" chapters of GZ, traditionally not associated with Daoism in the classical period. I think that Roth's meticulous textual work has shown beyond doubt that these texts are related, and that their relation lies precisely in the practices that informed their compositions. Consequently, in this section I do not want to rehearse all of the arguments in favor of a common thread linking these texts, but instead examine the thread itself for what it can tell us about how the HNZ authors situated their ethical

[23] See especially Harold Roth, "Redaction Criticism and the Early History of Taoism" in *Early China* 19 (1994): 1-46, "Evidence for Stages of Meditation in Early Taoism" in *Bulletin of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 60 no.2 (1997): 295-314, and "The *Laozi* in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis" in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the* Laozi, edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

thought within the tradition.

More specifically, I am interested here in examining how each of the texts relates inner cultivation practice to ethical transformation, especially with respect to how experience can purportedly be transformed through the acquisition of certain habits. I individually examine the texts most relevant for HNZ, and order my presentation roughly by date, but more importantly by the rubric of Individualist, Primitivist, and Syncretist "phases" of classical Daoism developed by Roth in response to the work of A. C. Graham and Liu Xiaogan.[24] Roth divides the extant textual evidence based on the categories of cosmology, inner cultivation, and political thought. The Individualist phase, which includes NY and the inner chapters of ZZ, shows similar characteristics of thought on cosmology and inner cultivation, and has very little to say about politics and government. The Primitivist phase, which includes the LZ and a stratum of the ZZ from the outer and mixed chapters, maintains Individualist values on cosmology and inner cultivation, but applies them to a vision of government featuring a powerful monarch who exerts minimal control over small, agrarian communities. The Syncretist phase, which includes "Techniques of the Mind" I and II from GZ, the *Huanglao Boshu*, a stratum from the Outer and Mixed chapters of ZZ, and the HNZ, elaborates on the cosmology of the Individualist and Primitivist phases, and applies inner cultivation thought to a more robust picture of a hierarchical political order.

I also make indirect use of Michael LaFargue's LZ scholarship to articulate what I

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[24] See especially Harold Roth, "Psychology and Self-Cultivation in Early Taoistic Thought" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51 no.2 (December 1991): 599-650, "Who Compiled the Zhuangzi?" in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts*, edited by Henry Rosemont, Jr. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991), and *Original Tao*. For Graham and Liu's work on the textual strata of ZZ, see A. C. Graham, "How Much of *Chuang-Tzu* Did Chuang-Tzu Write?" in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990): 283-321, and Liu Xiaogan, *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1994).

call “pragmatic meanings” of classical Daoist inner cultivation terms. LaFargue has argued that the term *dao* 道 in the LZ, at least in its cosmological sense, is a hypostatization of certain qualities of mind advocated by the tradition. LaFargue approaches the LZ using methods of social analysis derived from the study of early Christian literature and argues that the LZ is basically a text serving the practical purposes of a narrow set of scholar-retainers (*shi* 士) in early China.[25] The *shi* 士 responsible for the composition of LZ were, like others in their social class and set, purveyors and practitioners of specialized practices—in this case, various meditational and possibly macrobiotic techniques—whose texts were meant to assist them in promoting these practices to educated elites. With this picture in mind, he argues that we should not read the LZ passages on *dao* 道 as straight-forward arguments about cosmology, but instead as literary expressions of the importance and grandeur of the mental states achieved through classical Daoist inner cultivation techniques.[26]

Under this reading, *dao* 道 is not a “real” entity responsible for the creation of the cosmos, but instead a designation for that which is most foundational in the lives of cultivated Daoist practitioners. It is a hypostatization of certain tendencies in the world as viewed from the perspective of one who has gone through a rigorous regimen of self-cultivation. I explore this theme more fully below, and how it relates to the process of acquiring sagely habits in HNZ, but for now it will suffice to emphasize the understanding of *dao* 道 in terms of a profound continuity and organic order in

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[25] See Michael LaFargue, *Tao and Method: A Reasoned Approach to the* Tao Te Ching (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

[26] See especially Michael LaFargue, *The Tao of the* Tao Te Ching (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 207-213. LaFargue also refrains from using the term Daoist and opts instead for “Laoist,” signifying only the community that produced what eventually became known as the LZ.

experience, which is only retrospectively identified as an element of cosmic reality and termed "*dao* 道."

My approach here also resonates with Edward Slingerland's work on what he terms "effortless action" as a common theme in much of classical Chinese philosophical literature. Slingerland argues that "mainstream" pre-Qin philosophy works on a problematique characterized by "practical, engaged knowledge," and the notion that there is a kind of such knowledge that leads to "perfected action."[27] Perfected action, moreover, is "action that is spontaneous and yet nonetheless accords in every particular with the normative order of the cosmos."[28] There is also an element of paradox in this problematique in that the knowledge of *how* to act effortlessly is something one must achieve through great effort, yet expending effort to seek it as an end is entirely antithetical to effortless action itself. Despite this paradox, effortless action is purportedly something extremely simple to do once one manages to do it. That is, descriptions from diverse textual sources report that once achieved, effortless action is self-reinforcing and seems to arise "naturally" or "spontaneously" as a matter of course.

Much of Slingerland's work involves metaphor theory and examines how metaphor functions as a tool for indirectly pursuing the goal of non-goal-oriented action. While this work on metaphor could certainly shed light on some aspects of how inner cultivation functions in HNZ and the texts influential in its composition, my work here intersects with Slingerland's instead through the notion of embodied and contextualized knowledge. In arguing for the importance of pragmatic meanings in classical Daoist inner cultivation terms, I accept the premise that much of early Chinese philosophy was

[27] Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action:* Wu-wei *as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4-5.
[28] Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 5.

conducted in terms of embodied knowledge. That is, because the texts under consideration here were composed against the backdrop of certain practices of breath cultivation, I hold that many of their claims and arguments must be understood in the context of promoting and developing embodied skills. There are factual claims and logical arguments made in these texts, but they almost always apply to lived, embodied contexts rather than conceptual speculation. Thus, when we read these texts we must always bear in mind that this literature originally would have been read and composed against the backdrop of pscyho-physical cultivation techniques like breath meditation and macrobiotic hygiene. This context means that, whatever else the texts may be doing, they are also describing techniques for transforming individual experience in specific ways.

D. Inner Cultivation in NY

Roth has identified NY as not only the earliest text on breath cultivation in the classical Daoist tradition, but in East Asia overall.[29] Buried in the much larger GZ collection, NY was overlooked by "mainstream" scholars for centuries. Like the HNZ, GZ was categorized in historical bibliographies as an "eclectic" (*za* 雜) text, which is perhaps an apt description for GZ overall, given its wide range of essays. NY, however, shows clear affiliation with an early tradition of breath cultivation. The text consists of twenty six sections of mostly rhymed verse that Roth, drawing on the work of Michael LaFargue, calls "early Daoist wisdom poetry."[30]

The text begins with a verse defining certain key terms, chiefly *jing* 精:

The vital essence of all things:

[29] Roth, *Original Tao*, 2.
[30] Roth, *Original Tao,* 17.

It is this that brings them to life.
It generates the five grains below
And becomes the constellated stars above.
When flowing amid the heavens and the earth
We call it ghostly and numinous.
When stored within the chests of human beings,
We call them sages.[31]

Here the authors identify vital essence (*jing* 精) as that which gives life to all things. This term will become central in the "technical vocabulary" of breath cultivation in classical Daoism. It originally or literally means semen, but comes to be associated with extreme concentration and refinement of substances. As we will see, the authors of NY use it in this sense.

We should also note here a rhetorical strategy that is common in ancient Chinese sources and which will be important in my exposition throughout what follows. The structure of classical Chinese is such that it is very common to express concepts in the passive through nominalization—that is, defining a concept by equating it with a noun-phrase made from a some relevant verb or verb-object combination. For instance, "X is that which Ys," where Y is a verb and "that which Ys" is the nominalized verb phrase. In the passage above, *jing* 精 is passively defined as that which causes things to be alive. Things are already alive—this the authors rightly assume the reader knows—but "*that* they are alive is because of *jing* 精*"* becomes the conceptually forceful sense of the phrasing. Moreover, *jing* 精 is thusly defined in terms of its effects—namely, causing things to be alive—and not in its substance or essence. This is not to say that the authors do not think *jing* 精 is a material reality—we see below that they very much do—but only to say that this nominalized valence is conceptually different from other more straight-

[31] Roth, 46, GZ 16.1/115/16-17.

forward valences the term might have. Hereafter I call this a term's pragmatic valence.[32]

Jing 精 is furthermore that which, below on earth, causes the five staple grains to grow, and in the heavens above causes the stars to be arranged in constellations. Here, the operative verbs are active, so there is no reason to reject the idea that *jing* 精 literally "generates" (*sheng* 生) the five grains or "becomes" (*wei* 為) the constellated stars, but I maintain that there is also a pragmatic valence operative here, and this is the one I want to emphasize. The pragmatic sense is clearer in the final two formulations, in that they describe states or relationships with the result that, given that state, we *call* or define it thusly. In motion throughout the world *jing* 精 is difficult to perceive, so in that instantiation we call it ghostly and numinous—or simply "ghosts and spirits." When settled in a person we call that person a sage. So, given all of what *jing* 精 is, all that it functions as, it also has an ethical relevance in that other people we call sages are ones that are literally full of *jing* 精. There is a concrete connection between *jing* 精 and the

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[32] This is meant to be a nod to Dewey and other pragmatists, without necessarily entailing all of what pragmatist philosophy would make of this relationship. That being said, C. S. Peirce provides a useful analogy for what I call the pragmatic valence of a term. See Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," 128-129. He uses the concept of force in Physics to illustrate how function is integral to meaning. We all know from Physics 101 that F = ma, wherein force (F) is described by the function of mass (m) times acceleration (a). We also usually talk about masses accelerating because of force. For instance, the apple falls to earth with increasing velocity (accelerates) because of the force of gravity. However, the concept of "force" is equivalent to mass times acceleration. That is, it is not a "real" thing in the same sense that the apple and the earth are real. It is only a word to describe how the relationship between the apple and the earth changes. Peirce emphasizes how thinking of force as an actual "thing" added by gravity is a fallacy, and that the meaning of the word is entirely exhausted by describing the acceleration of a mass. Force does not *cause* a mass to accelerate; force *is* a mass accelerating. Given that masses are observed to accelerate, force is that phenomenon of the universe which makes them accelerate.

So here, the definition for *jing* 精 described in similar terms might look like: "Given that things are observed to be alive, *jing* 精 is that phenomenon of the universe which makes them alive." The language of "making" is somewhat misleading in both examples, because it implies that there is a "something" which has actively compelled the mass to accelerate or the thing to live, but this is simply an infelicity of the English language. Peirce would concede that the statement "force is what makes the apple accelerate" is true, but that this does not warrant the assertion that force is anything *more* than just that function of acceleration. The nominalized construction in classical Chinese conveys a clear emphasis on function over substance.

ideal human actor. There is also, therefore, a concrete connection between the ideal human actor and properties of generating life and organizing nature seen in the pragmatic valences of *jing* 精.

Jing is also the basis of human cognition. Verse III states:

> All forms of the mind
> Are naturally infused and filled with it [the vital essence],
> Are naturally generated and developed [because of] it.
> It is lost
> Inherently because of sorrow, happiness, joy, anger, desire, and profit-seeking.
> If you are able to cast off sorrow, happiness, joy, anger, desire, and profit-seeking,
> Your mind will just revert to equanimity.[33]

In generating and developing, and then remaining infused within the various mental phenomena, *jing* 精 also underpins human mental life. Moreover, there is a sense here that excessive emotionality and desire "uses up" or causes one to lose *jing* 精 and suffer the consequences. One can also reverse that process by avoiding those things and thereby "reverting to equanimity" (*fan qi* 反齊). This passage also demonstrates, however, how this is simply how *jing* 精 works—not how it is controlled by humans. In fact, Verse II states:

> Therefore this vital energy
> Cannot be halted by force,
> Yet can be secured by inner power.
> Cannot be summoned by speech,
> Yet can be welcomed by the awareness.[34]

So humans can do things that encourage *jing* 精—given the kind of thing that it is—to behave in a certain way, but cannot directly control it.

Besides *jing* 精, one of the most important terms in NY is *dao* 道. In fact, the

[33] Roth, 50, GZ 16.1/115/22-23.
[34] Roth, 48, GZ 16.1/115/19-20.

authors of NY reserve very similar language for describing *dao* as they do for describing *jing* 精. It is clear from the text that the *dao* 道 is the "primary" concept, but *jing* 精 is related closely enough that it seems to be the psycho-physical correlate of *dao* 道. As Roth says, "the vital essence appears to be the crystallization of the more abstract power or force that is the Way within the energetic systems constituting the human being and the entire cosmos."[35] Like *jing* 精, "the Way is what infuses the body," yet also like *jing* 精, "people are unable to fix it in place."[36] Moreover, as for the Way,

> It goes forth but does not return,
> It comes back but does not stay.
> Silent! None can hear its sound.
> Suddenly stopping! It abides within the mind.
> Obscure! We do not see its form.
> Surging forth! It arises within us.
> We do not see its form,
> We do not hear its sound,
> Yet we can perceive an order to its accomplishments.
> We call it "the Way."[37]

Here we get an indication that the pragmatic valence of the Way is similar to that of *jing* 精. The Way is specifically not any kind of sensible object, but it nonetheless exists as a practical reality because we can perceive "an order to its accomplishments" (*xu qi cheng* 序其成). The pragmatic sense of *dao* in this passage is "that by which things are brought to fruition or completion (*cheng* 成)." Again, it is worth reiterating that in this sense *dao* 道 is not literally an entity or power that actively guides things to completion, but rather it is *the fact that* there is a perceptible order to things in the first place. This idea is echoed again in Verse VI:

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[35] Roth, *Original Tao*, 105.
[36] Roth, 52, GZ 16.1/115/26.
[37] Roth, 52, GZ 16.1/115/26-28.

As for the Way:
It is what the mouth cannot speak of,
The eyes cannot see,
And the ears cannot hear.
It is that with which we cultivate the mind and align the body.
When people lose it they die;
When people gain it they flourish.
When endeavors lose it they fail;
When they gain it they succeed.
The Way never has a root or trunk,
It never has leaves or flowers.
The myriad things are generated by it;
The myriad things are completed by it.
We designate it, "the Way."[38]

It is significant here that the phrasing of lines 8-9 is literally "that which an affair has lost it uses to fail; that which it has gained it uses to succeed."[39] This phrasing creates a link between acquiring/losing and success/failure, meaning that that which is gained/lost—namely, *dao* 道—is defined primarily through the function of success and failure. Things and affairs succeed or fail first, and the fact that they do so *is* the Way. That being said, success and flourishing are things people would like to pursue, so how does one achieve them?

Also like *jing* 精, the Way can be attracted or enticed to abide with a person through the practices of inner cultivation. Verse V says,

The Way has no fixed position;
It abides within the excellent mind.
When the mind is tranquil and the vital breath is regular,
The Way can thereby be halted.
That Way is not distant from us;
When people attain it they are sustained
That Way is not separate from us;
When people accord with it they are harmonious.
Therefore: Concentrated! As though you could be roped together with it.
Indiscernable! As though beyond all locations.

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[38] Roth, 56, GZ 16.1/115/30-32.
[39] *Shi zhi suo shi yi bai, suo de yi cheng ye* 事之所失以敗, 所得以成也.

The true state of that Way:
How could it be conceived of and pronounced upon?
Cultivate your mind, make your thoughts tranquil,
And the Way can thereby be attained.[40]

As we have seen in previous examples, the mind must be tranquil to maintain a store of *jing* 精. The vital breath (*qi* 氣) being regular or patterned (*li* 理) is here associated with the same state of mind. *Qi* 氣 will in later sources be associated with the constituent fluid matter of all phenomena, but in NY it is most closely associated with its literal meaning of breath. If this practice allows one to apprehend the Way, it makes sense that the Way would thereby be perceived as intimately close, even if it cannot be literally conceived or sensibly apprehended otherwise. Verse VIII elaborates:

If you can be aligned and be tranquil,
Only then can you be stable.
With a stable mind at your core,
With the eyes and ears acute and clear,
And with the four limbs firm and fixed,
You can thereby make a lodging place for the vital essence.
The vital essence: it is the essence of the vital energy.
When the vital energy is guided, it [the vital essence] is generated,
But when it is generated, there is thought,
When there is thought, there is knowledge,
But when there is knowledge, then you must stop.
Whenever the forms of the mind have excessive knowledge,
You lose your vitality.[41]

Here we get the further elaboration that alignment, tranquility, and stability are all important for cultivating *jing* 精, but that *jing* 精 itself is created in the process of guiding the breath. Roth concludes from this and similar passages that the text refers to some form of seated meditation, since the four limbs must be firm and fixed, and "aligning" or

[40] Roth, 54, GZ 16.1/115/28-30.
[41] Roth, 60, GZ 16.1/116/2-4.

"squaring up" (*zheng* 正) could refer to arranging oneself on a cushion or mat.[42]

The result of this practice is generation of *jing* 精, but since *jing* 精 is also the basis of mental phenomena ("when it is generated there is thought," *sheng nai si* 生乃思), it is also possible for thought to get out of hand. Thought leads to knowledge and if you get to knowledge you have gone far enough. The NY authors clarify, however, that the problem is not knowledge as such, but rather "*excessive* knowledge" (*guo zhi* 過知). They say that when there is knowledge one must *stop*—not go back. Knowledge by itself is fine, but excessive knowledge causes one to lose vitality.

Maintaining the proper balance of creating *jing* 精 but remaining tranquil enough to not succumb to the disturbances that make one lose it, one builds up a store of *jing* 精 that leads to super-normal abilities and attributes. Verse XVI describes some of them as "ample and smooth skin," "acute and clear eyes and ears," and the ability to "mirror things with great purity."[43] Aside from the physical benefits of a well-tuned psycho-energetic system, the cultivated person also enjoys greater powers of perception, and the ability to apprehend supposedly limitless amounts of information about the world.[44] These more mysterious abilities will be the ones most relevant to ethical self-cultivation, and I examine them in greater depth as they appear in HNZ. Verse IX adds, "Hold fast to the One; do not lose it, and you will be able to master the myriad things."[45] The emphasis here is on exerting an influence on the world around oneself, without being adversely affected by it, and it adds an explicitly ethical valence by maintaining that,

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[42] See Roth, *Original Tao*, 110ff.
[43] Roth, 76 with my emendations, GZ 16.1/116/28-29.
[44] "Reverently be aware [of the Way] and do not waver, / And you will daily renew your inner power, / Thoroughly understand all under the heavens, / And exhaust everything within the Four Directions." Roth 76, GZ 16.1/116/29.
[45] Roth, 62, GZ 16.1/116/7.

"exemplary persons act upon things, and are not acted upon by them, because they grasp the guiding principle of the One."[46] The phrase "grasping the guiding principle of the One" (here, *zhi yi* 執一, elsewhere, "holding fast to the One" *shou yi* 守一 or "embracing the One" *bao yi* 抱一) is important for the range of classical Daoist ethics. Here it refers to maintaining the state of profound mental tranquility described above, and thereby allowing the Way (the One) to remain "fixed" within.

Verse X continues the theme of exerting a positive influence on the world:

> With a well-ordered mind within you,
> Well-ordered words issue forth from your mouth,
> And well-ordered tasks are imposed upon others.
> Then all under the heavens will be well ordered.[47]

This passage links the conduct of cultivated people with a power to exert positive influence in the form of "good order" (*zhi* 治) throughout the world. One's words in these circumstances exhibit this quality of good order, as do the affairs one participates in with others.[48] This capacity to speak and interact with others in an orderly fashion is the direct result of the orderliness of the mind achieved through breath cultivation. The mind's capacity to be orderly, moreover, is because of a specific part of the mind: the numinous mind (*shen* 神) or the "mind within the mind." The authors of NY see *shen* 神 as the most basic part of one's mental phenomena, and the one most easily damaged or impaired by the perturbations of *qi* 氣 encountered above. Verse XIII explains:

> There is a numinous [mind] naturally residing within;
> One moment it goes, the next it comes,

[46] Roth, 62, GZ 16.1/116/7.
[47] Roth, 64, GZ 16.1/116/7-8.
[48] Roth's translation has "imposing tasks on others" (*shi jia yu ren* 事加於人), which is technically preferable since *jia* 加 means "to add to, to inflict upon." I find this, however, a bit too blunt for the sense of the passage. Since one would be implicated in the speech issuing from one's mouth, it seems reasonable to implicate one in the tasks one lays upon others, as well.

And no one is able to conceive of it.
If you lose it you are inevitably disordered;
If you attain it you are inevitably well ordered.
Diligently clean out its lodging place
And its vital essence will naturally arrive.
Still your attempts to imagine and conceive of it.
Relax your efforts to reflect on and control it.
Be reverent and diligent
And its vital essence will naturally stabilize.
Grasp it and don't let go
Then the eyes and ears won't overflow
And the mind will have nothing else to seek.
When a properly aligned mind resides within you,
The myriad things will be seen in their proper perspective.[49]

Here we see the trope of "natural arising" or "self-arriving" (*zi lai* 自來) common in NY. As with *jing* 精 and with *dao* 道, the *shen* 神 only becomes operative after the practitioner has "diligently cleaned out its lodging place" (*jing chu qi she* 敬除其舍)—that is, when one has removed the obstacles that prevent it from "arriving of its own accord," as it were. Once this has been done, however, and one's *jing* 精 is stabilized, causing as before the senses to become acute and clear, one achieves a balanced mind within (*zheng xin zai zhong* 正心在中), and is able to apprehend orderliness in the external world. Verse XIV elaborates:

When your mind is well ordered, your senses are well ordered.
When your mind is calm, your senses are calmed.
What makes them well ordered is the mind;
What makes them calm is the mind.
By means of the mind you store the mind:
Within the mind there is yet another mind.
That mind within the mind: it is an awareness that precedes words.[50]

Here the authors reiterate that it is indeed the mind that determines whether the senses are well ordered and tranquil, but there is an inner quality of mind that actually makes this

[49] Roth, 70, GZ 16.1/116/14-17.
[50] Roth, 72, GZ 16.1/116/18-21.

possible. "By means of the mind you store the mind" (*xin yi zang xin* 心以藏心) indicates the fact that conscious direction of one's energies is what makes the refinement of mental abilities possible—one uses the mind to refine the mind. The implication is that the seat of human mental and emotional faculties itself has a directing faculty ("within the mind there is yet another mind" *xin zhi zhong you you xin yan* 心之中又有心焉). This directing faculty, however, is merely "an awareness that precedes words" (*yi yi xian yan* 意以先言), or a basic pre-conceptual, pre-reflective level of mental activity.

Roth describes this level of mind as "a direct, nondual awareness of the Way," and associates it roughly with other cognitive states commonly reported by mystical authors as pure consciousness or awareness of the ground of existence, etc.—in any case, a phenomenological occurrence that defies categorization using conventional linguistic standards.[51] I agree with Roth that the authors of NY would conceivably characterize "an awareness that precedes words" as a direct awareness of the Way, but for my purposes here, the phenomenological quality of the *shen* 神 or "mind within the mind" is not important. What matters is that the authors of NY equate the operation of this faculty with specific characteristics of mental and emotional behavior—namely, tranquility and orderliness—and that these special kinds of mental behavior facilitate well-ordered interaction with external phenomena (i.e. "the myriad things" *wan wu* 萬物). In other words, although the authors of NY give a definite account of the Way as a cosmological principle that can be subtly understood by a cultivated, tranquil mind, and that affords such a mind certain psychological and ethical benefits, there is also a definite sense in which the Way is simply the name for a tendency towards order that cultivated

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[51] See Roth, *Original Tao*, 108ff.

practitioners gain the ability to perceive and with which they become disposed to act in harmony. In fact, in the text these two senses are not easily separated, but in giving an English account the difference is more obvious.

Verse XVIII contains a good example:

> When there is a mind that is unimpaired within you,
> it cannot be hidden.
> It will be known in your countenance,
> and seen in your skin color.
> If with this good flow of vital energy you encounter others,
> they will be kinder to you than your own brethren.
> But if with a bad flow of vital energy you encounter others,
> they will harm you with their weapons.
> [This is because] the wordless pronouncement
> is more rapid than the drumming of thunder.
> The perceptible form of the mind's vital energy
> is brighter than the sun and moon,
> and more apparent than the concern of parents.
> Rewards are not sufficient to encourage the good;
> Punishments are not sufficient to discourage the bad.
> Yet once this flow of vital energy is achieved,
> all under the heavens will submit.
> And once the mind is made stable,
> all under the heavens will listen.[52]

Here, the authors give the balanced flow of *qi* 氣 and tranquility of mind that are the result of inner cultivation practice a social gloss. On the one hand, this passage makes claims about the psycho-physiological results of inner cultivation practice using some of the text's characteristic language about *qi* 氣 as "vital energy." When the vital breath circulates properly and one's mind functions well, this necessarily leads to physiological health benefits, and moreover allows one to exert a subtle but powerful positive effect on others (presumably through a quasi-physical process of using one's own *qi* 氣 to affect others' *qi* 氣). On the other hand, the passage makes a straight-forward claim about how

[52] Roth, 80, GZ 16.1/117/2-4.

best to interact with other people. If, after following a regimen of inner cultivation practice, one is in good health, with a pleasant appearance and a mental and emotional life[53] characterized by tranquility and equanimity, then one will generally get along better with other people and exert more of a positive influence on them. Subtle physical cues and the nuances of behavior affected by good physical and emotional health (”the wordless pronouncement” *bu yan zhi sheng* 不言之聲, and “the perceptible form of the mind’s vital energy” *xin qi zhi xing* 心氣之形) are even more direct and efficacious (”more rapid than the drumming of thunder” *ji yu lei gu* 疾於雷鼓, and “brighter than the sun and moon” *ming yu ri yue* 明於日月) than overt verbal communication. In the grander sphere of social interaction—namely, governmental policy, or administering “all under the heavens”—these subtleties born of a well-balanced character are even more noticeable. This is the practical effect of what the NY authors convey in this passage. Their language uses the understanding of psycho-physical cosmology available at the time, but the pragmatic aspect remains. Again, this is not to say that the authors do not literally understand the process of ethical self-cultivation as a matter of manipulating the flow of material-energies, but simply to say that within such an account a discernible pragmatic meaning operates.

This understanding of the pragmatic meaning of inner cultivation in NY allows us to discern key points on the relationship between inner cultivation and ethical action. For instance, Verse XX has:

[53] I include both mental and emotional health because the word translated here as “mind” is *xin* 心, which refers literally to the organ of the heart, thought in early China to be the seat of both intellect and emotion. It is also often translated as “heart-mind” or simply “heart,” depending on what is most appropriate for the context. No matter how it is translated, however, we should remember that early Chinese psychology makes no clear distinction between reason and emotion; in all cases, mental and emotional faculties, though conceptually separate, are seen as seamless components of one’s *xin* 心.

Deep thinking generates knowledge.
Idleness and carelessness generate worry.
Cruelty and arrogance generate resentment.
Worry and grief generate illness.
When illness reaches a distressing degree, you die.
When you think about something and don't let go of it,
Internally you will be distressed, externally you will be weak.
Do not plan things out in advance
Or else your vitality will cede its dwelling.
In eating, it is best not to fill up;
In thinking, it is best not to overdo.
Limit these to the appropriate degree
And you will naturally reach it [vitality].[54]

This passage describes the kinds of mental and emotional activity that all people encounter, but which prevent one from acting optimally. Excessive thinking, idleness, arrogance, aggression, anxiety, and depression all lead to ill effects, as does over-eating.[55] The solution is to "limit" them (*jie* 節), or perhaps more accurately, to place them within appropriate limits. By doing this, one can necessarily achieve vitality, which we know from earlier passages is associated closely with regulation of breath, abundance of *jing* 精, and tranquility of mind.[56] Verse XXV elaborates:

The vitality of all people
Inevitably comes from their peace of mind.
When anxious, you lose this guiding thread;
When angry, you lose this basic point.
When you are anxious or sad, pleased or angry,
The Way has no place within you to settle.
Love and desire: still them!
Folly and disturbance: correct them![57]

Here we get the further clarification that negative emotions and mental agitation are not

[54] Roth, 84, GZ 16.1/117/10-12.
[55] I retain Roth's translation above, but my interpretation here should express some of the possibilities implied by the original Chinese—e.g. cruelty as encompassing aggression.
[56] Roth argues that lines 10-11 ("in eating, it is best… not to overdo") are a later interpolation, and I am inclined to agree. They do not necessarily disrupt the argument of the passage, but discounting them would mean that the final two lines refer to all of the cases above, and not merely to eating and thinking.
[57] Roth, 94, GZ 16.1/117/27-28.

negative *per se*, but rather are negative because they prevent one from allowing the Way to “settle” (*chu* 處) within. So here again we have an instance of attainment of the Way being signaled by or concomitant to a state of lacking negative emotions or mental agitation. Moreover, the Way is referred to obliquely as a “guiding thread” (*ji* 紀) and “basic point” (*duan* 端). In both cases, the phenomenon identified as *dao* 道 is the basis upon which other phenomena proceed—that which determines their basic character. This becomes important for ethics because the Way is the guiding thread and basic point of the actions of the cultivated person. Verse XXIV proceeds in a similar vein:

> When you enlarge your mind and let go of it,
> When you relax your vital breath and expand it,
> When your body is calm and unmoving:
> And you can maintain the One and discard the myriad disturbances.
> You will see profit and not be enticed by it,
> You will see harm and not be frightened by it.
> Relaxed and unwound, yet acutely sensitive,
> In solitude you delight in your own person.
> This is called “revolving the vital breath”:
> Your thoughts and deeds seem heavenly.[58]

This verse, referring directly to breath cultivation practices, exhorts the practitioner to “maintain the One and discard the myriad disturbances” (*shou yi er qi wanke* 守一而棄萬苛), abiding in a state of calm repose in which one is nonetheless active and alert.[59] When one is “relaxed and unwound” (*kuan shu* 寬舒), yet remains “acutely sensitive” (*ren* 仁)[60], the "thoughts and deeds” (*yi xing* 意行) of such a person "seem heavenly” (*si*

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[58] Roth, 92, GZ 16.1/117/23-25.
[59] Roth notes that “maintaining the One” *shou yi* 守一 appears in several other texts associated with the early Daoist tradition, and indeed it is an important term throughout the texts I cover here. See Roth, *Original Tao*, 227n109.
[60] Roth’s translation of *ren* 仁 as "acutely sensitive” is unorthodox, but not unheard of. He cites a definition in *Hanyu Da Cidian* (Vol. 1, 1096) for this meaning, which appears in *Huangdi Neijing Suwen* (See Roth, *Original Tao*, 222n112). Normally, as in Confucian texts where the term is common, *ren* 仁 is translated as “benevolence,” “humaneness,” or less commonly as “authoritative.” There is thus a definite

tian 似天). That is, such a person's inner and outer conduct is characterized by an almost superhuman level of ease and naturalness, as characterizes the regular motion of heavenly bodies. This characterization appears again in later texts, and is very important in classical Daoist ethics.

The key feature here is that optimal human action is characterized in NY by profound inner calm and outer composure, as well as sensitivity and clarity in responding to circumstances. In fact, Verse XXV continues in this vein:

> Do not push it! Do not pull it!
> Good fortune will naturally return to you,
> And that Way will naturally come to you
> So you can rely on and take counsel from it.
> If you are tranquil then you will attain it;
> If you are agitated then you will lose it.[61]

Here the authors reiterate familiar themes about the necessity of maintaining inner calm and resisting agitation, with the result that the Way will necessarily become present of its own accord. What is significant here, though, is how the authors say that once the Way arrives one can "rely on and take counsel from it" (*ji yu mou* 籍與謀). It is not entirely clear just how one would rely on and take counsel from the Way, since it is such an ephemeral reality, but it is clear that the Way informs one's decision making. This meshes well with the characterization earlier in Verse XXV of the Way as "guiding thread" or "basic point." The Way is something that fundamentally informs the actions of the ideally cultivated person, and therefore provides a basis for ethical norms. As the examples above from NY show, however, the Way is also fundamentally indexed to a

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moral cast to the term, but in this particular instance it seems unlikely that the authors of NY are using *ren* 仁 in the Confucian sense. In the context, as contrasted by the particle *er* 而 with "relaxed and unwound" *kuan shu* 寬舒, Roth's translation seems the most appropriate.

[61] Roth, 94, GZ 16.1/117/28.

reality encountered in sagely experience, and apprehended through habits of mental and emotional tranquility and sensitivity.

E. Inner cultivation in the Inner Chapters of ZZ

Work on the textual stratigraphy of ZZ by A. C. Graham and Liu Xiaogan has shown that the Inner Chapters are most likely the product of a single author, represent the earliest material in the text, and comprise the stratum most likely to have been written by the historical Zhuang Zhou.[62] Roth has also identified the Inner Chapters as part of the Individualist phase of classical Daoism, and the text therefore shares in common with NY important thematic elements of inner cultivation. Like LZ, some of the references to inner cultivation in the Inner Chapters are less explicit than those in NY, but in general they tend to be more explicit than those in LZ, and moreover bear clearly and directly on Zhuangzi's ethics in the Inner Chapters. Below I focus on the most direct instances of inner cultivation in the Inner Chapters, and a few related passages to further illustrate some important implications for ZZ's ethical vision.

One of the most important instances of inner cultivation techniques in all of ZZ is the "fasting of the mind" (*xin zhai* 心齋) passage in Chapter 4. Taking Confucius and his favorite disciple Yan Hui as the interlocutors in the dialogue, Zhuangzi uses the former sage's established authority in ethical thought to endorse his own vision of fully contextualized decision-making. In the set-up for the exchange, Yan Hui tells Confucius how he is planning to visit the ruler of a neighboring state to convince him to change his tyrannical methods and adopt a more upright approach to governing the people. The

[62] Zhuang Zhou is the Warring States philosopher known to history as Zhuangzi, after whom the text is named. I use the textual convention ZZ to refer to the text, and Zhuangzi to refer to the author of the Inner Chapters.

ensuing dialogue has Yan Hui presenting different plans for approaching the king, and Confucius warning Yan Hui that each one will surely lead to the disciple's death at the hands of the murderous tyrant. Finally, Yan Hui asks Confucius what he should do and the master gives his reply in the following dialogue:

> "Fast, and I will tell you," said Confucius. "Doing something thought out in the mind, isn't that too easy? Whoever does things too easily is unfit for the lucid light of heaven."
> "I am of a poor family, I have not drunk wine or eaten a seasoned dish for months. Would that count as fasting?" [Yan Hui replied.]
> "That kind of fasting one does before a sacrifice, it is not the fasting of the mind."
> "I venture to inquire about the fasting of the mind."
> "Unify your attention. Rather than listen with the ear, listen with the mind. Rather than listen with the mind, listen with the vital breath. Listening stops at the ear, the mind at what tallies with the thought. As for 'vital breath' it is the emptiness which waits to be roused by other things. Only the Way accumulates emptiness. Emptying is the fasting of the mind."[63]

Confucius' final identification of fasting with emptiness, and with the ability to "listen with the vital breath" (*ting zhi yi qi* 聽之以氣) marks this as an example of breath cultivation. Just as fasting of the body entails abstaining from certain activities and inputs—namely, drinking/eating and wine/flavorful foods—fasting of the mind entails abstaining from certain kinds of mental activities and sensory inputs. In this passage, Confucius speaks of fasting of the mind as both a preparation for right action and the state from which one acts rightly. The preparatory nature of the practice is clearer in examples below, but for now it is significant that Zhuangzi's Confucius emphasizes emptiness as the basis of right action and of the Way.

Just as in NY, ZZ's emphasis on emptiness applies mostly to self-centeredness. Right action is characteristically devoid of selfish or self-centered motives. In the "fasting of the mind" exchange, Yan Hui's problem is that all of his plans rely on some

[63] Graham, 68 with my emendations, ZZ 4/9/26-4/10/3.

preconceived judgment about what is the "right" course of action. Confucius criticizes him because all of these plans assume that Yan Hui's personal point of view is somehow privileged—that he is in a special position from which he can determine the right course of action. In exhorting him to emptiness, Zhuangzi's Confucius really points him toward the one position from which he can actually perceive the correct course of action—namely, the position of the Way which, paradoxically, privileges no single position. Confucius continues,

> You [Yan Hui] are capable of entering and roaming free inside [the tyrant ruler's] cage, but do not be excited that you are making a name for yourself. When the words penetrate, sing your native note; when they fail to penetrate, desist. When there are no doors for you, no outlets, and treating all abodes as one you find your lodgings in whichever is the inevitable, you will be nearly there. To leave off making footprints is easy; to walk without touching the ground is hard.[64]

Zhuangzi's Confucius is here encouraging Yan Hui to be empty of self-centered motives precisely so that he can better or more fully engage with his environment when he meets with the king. It is significant that Confucius does not criticize the basic premise of Yan Hui's mission, but only his plans for executing it.

This passage is not a cynical exhortation to give up trying to act well at all, but a comment on *how* to act well. The final line of the quotation, "to leave off making footprints is easy; to walk without touching the ground is hard," expresses this spirit. "Leaving off making footprints" (*jie ji* 絕迹) signifies halting action altogether, whereas "walking without touching the ground" (*wu xing di* 無行地) signifies acting in a way that asserts no lasting connection with the situation. The idea is that, just as in walking one imposes the impression of one's feet on the ground, so in many other ways of acting one tries to "make one's mark" on the situation, and bring external circumstances more in line

[64] Graham, 69, ZZ 4/10/4-5.

with how one thinks they ought to be. Zhuangzi's Confucius explains how this kind of acting inevitably backfires or at least leads to outcomes well beyond one's ability to control, and offers instead a model for acting that removes the crucial error but remains nonetheless energetically active. He advises Yan Hui to act, and to "sing his native note," but also to "treat all abodes as one" and find not acting just as appropriate, doing only what the situation demands ("find lodgings in the inevitable" *yu yu bu de yi* 寓於不得已).[65]

Confucius' advice in the "fasting of the mind" passage is essentially aimed at transforming Yan Hui's experience through changing the habits by which he interacts with his environment. Yan Hui's interaction with the tyrant is the site of experience in question, and the way he conducts that experience is determined by what habits he brings to the situation. At the beginning of the passage, Yan Hui exhibits the habits of reasoning cultivated by traditional training in the art of rhetoric and persuasion. The particulars of those habits are not necessarily important, but their character is. That is, at the beginning of the passage Yan Hui exhibits habits of thought or judgment that lead him to assess the situation only in terms of one "right" approach or position, such that the situation will only be satisfying if his environment exactly meets his expectations. Zhuangzi's Confucius realizes that Yan Hui cannot control his environment by will alone, and so advises him that this is a pernicious habit, and that in order to succeed in his mission he must cultivate new habits of thought. The transformed habit of thought Zhuangzi's Confucius advocates is characterized by flexibility and non-assertiveness, such that any

[65] The phrase Graham translates as "the inevitable," *bu de yi* 不得已, is one of several phrases in classical Daoist literature used to indicate the way that situations naturally or spontaneously unfold, without active intervention. I discuss it at greater length below in my Chapter V.

arrangement of the situation could provoke an appropriate response, and therefore be satisfying. He also insists that such habits are acquired through "fasting of the mind," which indicates some sort of apophatic breath cultivation. As we have seen, even though the preparatory practice is apophatic, the resultant habits are entirely positive. Through the process of "mental fasting" one forms the habit of relying on different parts of one's faculties—namely, the vital breath—to conduct oneself forward in experience. It is less clear in this passage what it means to "listen with the vital breath," but other passages in the Inner Chapters will help to clarify.

Another exchange between Confucius and Yan Hui in ZZ Chapter 6 clarifies just how one prepares for such a change in habit:

> "I am improving," said Yan Hui.
> "What do you mean?" asked Confucius.
> "I have forgotten about rites and music."
> "Not bad, but you still haven't gotten it."
> On another day Yan Hui saw Confucius again and said, "I am improving."
> "What do you mean?" asked Confucius.
> "I have forgotten about humaneness and rightness."
> "Not bad, but you still haven't gotten it."
> On another day Yan Hui again saw Confucius and said, "I am improving."
> "What do you mean?" asked Confucius.
> "I just sit and forget."
> "What do you mean 'sit and forget,'" Confucius asked, taken aback.
> "I let organs and limbs drop away," said Yan Hui, "dismiss eyesight and hearing, depart from my bodily form and expel knowledge, and merge with the Great Pervader. This is what I mean by 'sit and forget.'"
> "If you merge [with it] then you have no preferences; if you transform [with it] then you have no constants," said Confucius. "It turns out that you are really the worthy one! Please allow me to follow you [as your disciple]."[66]

The "punch line" of this passage turns the tables on Confucius, confirming that his

[66] Graham, 92 with my emendations and input from Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, 63-64, ZZ 6/19/17-22.

disciple knows more about the Way than the great teacher.[67] In the previous exchanges in the passage Yan Hui approaches Confucius asserting that he has “improved” by “forgetting” (*wang* 忘) core Confucian principles and concepts. As we might expect from the Confucius of the “fasting of the mind” passage, overcoming attachment to a narrow vision of right action, even when attached to Confucian terms like humaneness and rightness, is indeed progress. However, only when Yan Hui reports his technique for “sitting and forgetting” (*zuo wang* 坐忘) does Confucius realize Yan has achieved something special. Yan Hui’s method for sitting and forgetting illustrates a central theme of ZZ’s account of inner cultivation.

When Yan Hui sits and forgets, he apparently undergoes a series of exercises that work to dissociate his awareness from certain fundamental parts of his being. First, he loses awareness of physical body parts, then sensory inputs, then the awareness of even having a body in the first place, as well as his faculty for knowing. The result is that he “merges with the Great Pervader” (*tong yu datong* 同於大通). "The Great Pervader” is a euphemism for the Way, which we elsewhere learn “pervades” (*tong* 通) all things and provides the basis by which disparate things may be “deemed one” (*wei yi* 為一).[68] As

[67] Zhuangzi’s use of Confucius as a character is a complicated literary trope. For more on the use of Confucius as a character in the Inner Chapters see S. F. Lin, “Confucius in the Inner Chapters of the Chuang-tzu” in Tamkang Review 17 (1988): 311-317.

[68] “Things however peculiar or incongruous, the Way pervades them and deems them one” *hui gui jue guai, dao tong wei yi* 恢恑憰怪, 道通為一. ZZ 2/4/26-2/5/1. James Legge first uses “The Great Pervader” as a translation for *da tong* 大通, and Roth adopts it, as well. See James Legge, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism, Vol. 1* (New York: Dover, 1962), 257; and Roth, “Bimodal Mystical Experience in the ‘Qiwulun’ Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*” in *Hiding the World in the World: Uneven Discourses on the* Zhuangzi, edited by Scott Cook (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003): 15-32. However, as Henry Rosemont, Jr. has pointed out to me in a private communication, “pervade” is not an entirely accurate translation for *tong* 通. *Tong* 通 more precisely means “to penetrate” or “to pass through.” Unfortunately, “penetrate” in English has a somewhat more abrupt and even violent connotation that is not appropriate to *tong* 通. *Tong* 通 specifically has the sense of passing through something easily and without impediment, as a ball might fly through an open hoop. Pervade captures this sense of free and unobstructed penetration, verging on

with other examples in the classical Daoist tradition, this passage seems to suggest that the ideal mode of action is to refrain from ever using one's "normal" senses and mental faculties. Indeed, this passage phrases the cultivation process negatively as a matter of "forgetting" body and mind. However, the negative phrasing belies a positive gain—in this case, "merging with the Great Pervader." Even though the requisite *preparation* for this gain is a process of diminishing other faculties, Zhuangzi makes it clear that the *result* is a thoroughly positive acquisition of a new faculty—or perhaps better, the development of an existing but latent one. Moreover, as we saw above, this faculty does not provide a way to avoid interacting with the world, but rather can be understood as a habit of thought or action that imparts a different quality to experience and conduct. The most important quality operative in this transformed experience is the lack of self-motivation or of self-centered understanding, and the reliance instead on contextual or inter-active norms.

Contextual and inter-active norms, moreover, are often described in the Inner Chapters with a special relation to the Way and to heaven. There are sets of passages related to each of these terms that help describe the faculties of perception and judgment Zhuangzian habits activate. One example is Zhuangzi's story of the monkey-keeper:

> A monkey-keeper handing out nuts said, "three every morning and three every evening." The monkeys were all in a rage. "All right then," he said, "four every morning and three every evening." The monkeys were all delighted. Without anything being missed out either in name or in substance, their pleasure and anger were put to use; his too was the "That's it" which goes by circumstance. This is why the sage smooths things out with his "That's it, that's not," and stays at the point of rest on the potter's wheel of heaven. It is this that is called "letting both alternatives proceed."[69]

In this example, "the potter's wheel of heaven" (*tian jun* 天鈞) represents the panoply of

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permeation, however infelicitous the phrase may be. Where the context is more appropriate, e.g. in my Chapter V below, I use the more accurate translation "penetrate."

[69] Graham, 54, ZZ 2/5/4-6.

factors that make up a situation or the phenomenal world in general—continuously moving, and at once productive and disorienting. The still point at the center of the wheel represents the one position from which one gives all possibilities equal weight. The monkey keeper acts from this point in that he gives equal weight to the different ways of distributing nuts to his charges. Graham's unique translation of "the 'that's it' which goes by circumstance" captures this sense, and helps explain how Zhuangzi emphasizes contextuality in ethical decision-making. "That's it, that's not" (*shi fei* 是非) is a technical usage identified by Graham as Zhuangzi's shorthand for the process of making analytical distinctions in general.[70] The "that's it which goes by circumstances" is a way of logical affirmation that prioritizes contingent, expedient, provisional meanings, and which does not carry the weight of the "that's it which deems" (*wei shi* 為是), which is a way of logical affirmation that prioritizes fixed, universally determined meanings. Both are essentially habits of thought. Adopting one and rejecting the other changes one's experience, and largely determines the possibilities for ethical conduct. Closely related to the "that's it" which goes by circumstance is Zhuangzi's metaphor of lucidity, which accompanies many accounts of ideal conduct.

One of the most important themes in the Inner Chapters, and especially in the "Qiwulun" 齊物論, is Zhuangzi's relativistic treatment of language. Zhuangzi generally treats language as an arbitrary human invention, with proper linguistic distinctions depending entirely on one's context and point of view. The quintessential distinction for Zhuangzi is between "that's it" and "that's not" (*shi fei* 是非), but as Graham

[70] For Graham's account of this, see especially A. C. Graham, "Chuang-tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal" in *History of Religions* 9 no.2 (1969): 137-159, as well as his notes in Graham, *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*.

demonstrates, Zhuangzi *does* endorse a position from which one can make accurate distinctions, but warns that that position constantly changes. Nevertheless, Zhuangzi described it in the passage above as the “still point on the potter’s wheel of heaven,” and elsewhere as “the axis of the Way”:

> There they say “that’s it, that’s not” from one point of view, here we say “That’s it, that’s not” from another point of view. Are there really It and Other? Or really no It and Other? Where neither It nor Other finds its opposite is called the axis of the Way. When once the axis is found at the center of the circle there is no limit to responding with either, on the one hand no limit to what is it, on the other no limit to what is not. Therefore I say: “The best means is Illumination.”[71]

Here, the “axis of the Way” (*dao shu* 道樞) is defined as the place “where neither It nor Other finds its opposite” (*bi shi mo de qi ou* 彼是莫得其偶) and thus the conceptual point from which one can operate using only the “that’s it" which goes by circumstance. This state is also conceptually linked to the opening scene in the “Qiwulun” where Nanguo Ziqi enters a state of deep meditation in which he appears to “lose the counterpart of himself” (*sang qi ou* 喪其耦).[72] The description above therefore hints at the state achieved through the techniques of inner cultivation encountered elsewhere in the Inner Chapters. It also ends with the conclusion that “the best means is Illumination" (*mo ruo yi ming* 莫若以明). “Illumination” (*ming* 明) is a common description in the Inner Chapters, and especially in the “Qiwulun,” of the penetrating insight of the sage, which allows him to see things from the perspective of the “axis of the Way.”[73] Illumination therefore seems to be a special faculty connected with ethical discernment.

[71] Graham, 53, ZZ 2/4/18-20.
[72] Graham, 48, ZZ 2/3/14.
[73] Two cases follow this formula precisely: ZZ 2/4/14 and ZZ 2/5/15. In both of these examples, as in the one above, the sage “uses Illumination” (*yi ming* 以明) to transcend the distinctions that normally mark things off as polar opposites. There are several other passages using verbs related to luminosity that express similar ideas about the sage’s illuminating insight.

In general, the picture of moral cultivation we get in the Inner Chapters of ZZ is of a process by which the practitioner disables or destabilizes certain common habits of thought and thereby acquires habits which emphasize the use of faculties that engage the subtle details of one's environment in a non-self-assertive way and thereby make optimal use of the possibilities in that situation. In HNZ this faculty will be expressed in the term spirit-illumination (*shenming* 神明), and many of the antecedents of this idea are present in the Inner Chapters.[74]

Zhuangzi evocatively describes the positive benefits that accrue to one who undergoes apophatic cultivation through the character of Cook Ding. One of the most enduring and influential vignettes in the Inner Chapters, the passage on Cook Ding from Chapter 3 is worth quoting at length:

> Cook Ding was carving an ox for Lord Wen-hui. The slapping of his hands, the leaning of his shoulders, the stepping of his feet, the bending of his knees—whoosh! zing!—[all came together, and] the blade as he sliced never missed the rhythm, now in time with the "Mulberry Grove" dance, now as if with an orchestra playing "The Managing Chief."
> "Ah, excellent!" said Lord Wen-hui. "That the height of skill should attain this point!"
> Cook Ding put away his knife and replied, "What your servant loves is the Way; I have left skill behind me. When I first began carving oxen, everywhere I looked I saw nothing but oxen. After three years I never saw an ox as a whole. Now I meet the oxen with my spirit instead of looking at them with my eyes. I cease knowing with my senses and move according to the drives of my spirit. I depend on the natural patterns, cleave along the great seams, let myself be guided by the main cavities, and go by whatever is actually there. I never encounter the slightest obstacle even where veins and arteries come together or where the ligaments and tendons join, not to mention the large bones! A good cook changes his blade once a year, because he chops. A common cook changes it once a month, because he hacks. Now I have had this knife for nineteen years, and taken apart several thousand oxen, and the edge of the blade is still as if it just came off of the grindstone. Between the joints there are spaces, but the edge of the knife has no thickness. When something with no thickness goes into a space like that, of course it will have plenty of room to move around—this is why after nineteen years the edge of my knife is still as if it just came off the grindstone.

[74] *Shenming* 神明 appears once in the Inner Chapters at ZZ 2/5/3, and seems to be used as a faculty of mind, but it is not as clear a case of being a faculty reserved only to the sage.

> Nonetheless, whenever I come to something complicated, I see where it will be difficult to handle and cautiously prepare myself. My gaze settles, my movements slow down, and with a minute flick of the blade the mass suddenly unravels, like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand back holding the knife, attentively look all around, and purposefully hesitate a moment with my awareness at full capacity, then clean the blade and put it away."
> "Wonderful!" said Lord Wen-hui. "I have heard the words of Cook Ding and thereby learned how to nurture life."[75]

The astonishing case of Cook Ding becomes a prime example of the Daoist ideal of non-assertive action that nonetheless yields almost super-humanly effective results. Cook Ding maintains from the beginning that his abilities transcend the realm of skill, and that he can do what he does because his focus is always on the Way. When he describes how he arrived at these abilities, Cook Ding recounts a process similar in important ways to what Yan Hui describes as "sitting and forgetting." Although there is no mention of the vital breath to mark this as an example of breath cultivation, the Cook's process also emphasizes the training of awareness, diminution of mental and sense faculties, and the attainment of spirit-like responsiveness to situations.

When he begins his career, Cook Ding trains his awareness to return always to his chosen object so that "everywhere [he] looked [he saw] nothing but oxen" (*suo jian wu fei niu zhe* 所見無非牛者). After three years of this, he knows so much about the specific intricacies of bovine anatomy that he "never saw an ox as a whole" (*wei chang jian quan niu zhe* 未嘗見全牛者). These two stages destabilized Cook Ding's habits about distinguishing ox from non-ox and individual ox-parts from the whole ox, and

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[75] Graham, 63-64 with many of my own emendations and input from Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, 26-27, ZZ 3/7/30-3/8/11. The translation of the last sentence of Cook Ding's speech is entirely my own, and may be somewhat controversial. Both Graham and Mair translate those lines with the sense that after he has finished carving the ox, Cook Ding pauses a moment to savor the triumph, and presumably to take in the astonishment and adulation of those watching him. This sentiment seems out of place to me, so my translation tries to take better account of Cook Ding's mental/spiritual state while carving the ox in describing what he does afterward.

together moved him toward his current condition, in which he "meets the oxen with [his] spirit instead of looking at them with [his] eyes" (*yi shen yu er bu yi mu jian* 以神遇而不以目見).

The distinction between looking with the eye and meeting with the spirit mirrors the distinction between the person who relies on learned skill (*ji* 技) to act effectively and the one who relies on the Way (*dao* 道). However, the overt actions of both may seem similar—in this case, Cook Ding and the "good cook" both cut up oxen—so the more important distinction lies in their methods. "Meeting with the spirit" represents a fundamentally different way of interacting with the environment than, for instance, "looking with the eyes." The difference is essentially that Cook Ding and others who act in a way Zhuangzi wants to promote conduct themselves using a different set of habits from people who promote conducting themselves using habits cultivated through learned repetition in specialized domains. Cook Ding describes some of the differences when he says that he "ceases knowing with [his] senses" (*guan zhi zhi* 官知止) and instead "moves according to the drives of [his] spirit" (*shen yu xing* 神欲行), which allows him to "depend on the natural patterns" (*yi hu tian li* 依乎天理) and cut cleanly and effectively through even the most complex parts of the ox. This is significant because the difference between the two modes of acting is entirely in the method of conduct, and not in the environment. Indeed, acting according to the drives of his spirit allows Cook Ding to "go by whatever is actually there" or "respond to what is inherently so" (*yin qi guran* 因其固然). In other words, the habits cultivated in his training allow Cook Ding to interact with his environment in a way that better utilizes the potentialities that exist in

the situation—but the potentialities exist whether he explores them or not.

This contextual or situational focus points to the pragmatic meaning associated with the Way in the Inner Chapters of ZZ. As is the case with other classical Daoist authors, Zhuangzi is reticent to describe the Way in concrete terms, but often describes it in terms of its practical import through nominalization and hypostatization. In Chapter 6 we learn that the Way "is something with identity, something to trust in, but does nothing, has no shape" (*you qing you xin, wu wei wu xing* 有情有信, 無為無形).[76] Moreover, many people and natural phenomenal "obtained it" (*de zhi* 得之) and thereby found the means to operate effectively. For instance, "the Dipper which guides the stars found it, and through all the ages points unerringly; the sun and moon found it, and through all the ages never rest."[77] The Way is thus defined not by any quality perceptible to the senses, but rather by its implicit quality of providing a reliable guide for action. In the Inner Chapters, the Way is basically defined retroactively. That is, things act effectively and as a matter of course, and the reason they are able to do so is attributed to the Way. As Zhuangzi puts it in Chapter 2, "It seems that there is something genuinely in command, and that the only trouble is we cannot find a sign of it. That as 'Way' it can be walked is true enough, but we do not see its shape; it has identity but no shape."[78]

In a given situation there will be any number of possible paths of action, but only a limited number that conduce to good order and overall systemic harmony given the parameters of the situation. For instance, Cook Ding has many options for how to cut up an ox, but given the actual patterning of joints and cavities in the ox in front of him, there

[76] Graham, 86, ZZ 6/17/1.
[77] Graham, 86, ZZ 6/17/4.
[78] Graham, 51, ZZ 2/4/1-2. Graham reads an implication of "Way" into this line, though *dao* 道 does not appear in the original. I find this entirely consonant with the sense of the rest of the passage, especially when read in the context of the rest of the Inner Chapters and the "Qiwulun" in particular.

is a limited sub-set of options that will allow him to cut up the ox with his characteristic ease and grace. The fact that, when he has been properly prepared, these paths for effective action become clear to him is, according to Zhuangzi, attributable to the existence of the Way. The existence of the Way as normative order, however, is only made manifest after he acts in a way that seems determined by a normative order.

Thus, the Way is importantly a guide for action, but it is not a pre-determined guide or immutable law. Instead, what the Way "is," or the guidance it provides, is determined by the individual characteristics of given situations, as manifested in the experience of the people involved. It simply does not exist in any sense until all the factors of a situation coalesce to bring it about in each moment. As Zhuangzi puts it in Chapter 2, "The Way comes about as we walk it; as for a thing, call it something and that's so. Why so? By being so. Why not so? By not being so."[79] This presumes that the Way is the normative pattern to the cosmos, but how an individual experiences it varies from situation to situation and from individual to individual. The most important ethical characteristic of a Zhuangzian sage, therefore, is not discrete knowledge of *what* the way is, but rather practical knowledge—in the form of habits—of *how* to discern, maintain, and replicate the kinds of experiences associated with the Way.

F. Inner cultivation in the "School of Zhuangzi" material in ZZ

Graham identifies much of the material in the Outer and Mixed Chapters of ZZ as a production of writers influenced by the ideas and style of the Inner Chapters. He therefore classifies this material as a stratum from "the school of Zhuangzi," or Zhuangzi's intellectual heirs. Many of the inner cultivation themes identified above in

[79] Graham, 53, ZZ 2/4/24.

the Inner Chapters find expression in the School of Zhuangzi material. Some of the most striking examples come from the various “knack passages” or “skill passages” that appear to be modeled after the story of Cook Ding from the Inner Chapters. These vignettes reinforce many of the themes that will be important for the HNZ’s ethics, so it will suffice to examine only one detailed example.

The story of Woodworker Qing draws together several inner cultivation themes from the Inner Chapters:

> Woodworker Qing was carving wood for a bellstand. When the bellstand was completed, all who saw it were amazed, as though they were seeing the work of a spiritual being. The Marquis of Lu went to see it and inquired of the woodworker, “With what art have you made this?”
> “Your subject is merely a workman,” was the reply. “What art could I possess? However, there is one thing. When I am getting ready to make a bellstand, I dare not waste any of my vital breath, so it is necessary to fast in order to calm my mind. After fasting for three days I no longer presume to harbor any thoughts of congratulations and rewards, of rank and salary. After fasting for five days, I no longer presume to harbor any thoughts of censure or praise, of skill or clumsiness. After fasting for seven days, I abruptly forget that I have four limbs and a body. At that time, I have no thought of public affairs or the court. My skill is concentrated and all external distractions disappear. Only then do I enter the mountain forest and observe the heavenly nature of the trees till I find one of ultimate form. Only after the completed bellstand manifests itself to me do I set my hand to the work. Otherwise, I give up. Thus is heaven joined with heaven. This is what makes one suspect that my instruments were made by a spiritual being.”[80]

Here Woodworker Qing prepares for his work with a regimen deliberately similar to Yan Hui’s fasting of the mind, and the outcome is similar to the results enjoyed by Cook Ding. Qing seeks to conserve and focus his vital breath, and to do that he must “fast in order to calm the mind” (*qi yi jing xin* 齊以靜心). He does not mention abstaining from meat and wine, and we can conclude that Qing’s “fasting” is similar to Yan Hui’s because it proceeds along similar lines. Qing’s fasting takes him through several stages

[80] Mair,182-183 with my emendations, ZZ 19/52/4-8.

in which he eliminates thoughts of external reward and becomes increasingly focused, culminating in his "forgetting I have four limbs and a body" (*wang wu you si qi xing tu* 忘吾有四枝形體), just as Yan Hui did. The resulting focus allows Qing to perceive the "heavenly nature" (*tian xing* 天性) of trees in the forest so that he can choose one with perfect form. After that, it is as if the bellstand already exists as a potentiality in the wood, and Qing simply brings it out—in much the same way that Cook Ding's focus allowed him to perceive and execute the potentiality for an ox carved perfectly along its natural seams. This is why Qing describes his process as "heaven joining to heaven" (*tian he tian* 天合天)—because in both working with and manifesting what is already inherently, naturally in the wood, he is not adding anything human to the process. Ordinary skill—e.g. that which works toward some goal like fortune or reputation—would be more like joining human concerns to natural, heavenly materials. Qing's work, however, is purely natural or heavenly, and therefore seems more like the work of a spiritual being than of a man.

Many of the vignettes depicting extraordinarily skilled individuals in Chapter 19 and elsewhere in the Outer Chapters stress the importance of absorption in an activity. Success in these cases is usually determined by the characters' ability to ignore thoughts external to the activity, and focus instead on elements internal to the inter-active experience of their environments. This distinction between internal and external conditions of experience will be very important for HNZ's vision of ethics, and the skill passages of ZZ lay much of its foundation. In fact, we can already see it being developed in the stratum of ZZ Graham identifies as "Syncretist" and Liu Xiaogan identifies as "Huang-lao." Although there are many other examples of inner cultivation in ZZ, these

Syncretist examples will be most important for understanding HNZ's starting point.

G. Inner cultivation in LZ

Throughout much of East Asian history, LZ was taken as the foundational text of Daoism. Traditional accounts hold that a sixth-century BCE Zhou archivist named Laozi authored it, the same archivist who instructed Confucius on the proper performance of ritual. Modern scholarship has shown that there is little evidence for the LZ in anything like its current form before about the early fourth century BCE, and that later apologists likely contrived the figure of Laozi to meet certain rhetorical challenges.[81] Regardless, the texts excavated from Mawangdui include two manuscript copies of a text very similar to what we know as the LZ, the earlier of which can be dated to no later than 195 BCE. LZ was firmly established as a canonical text by the time the HNZ authors composed their own work.

The LZ is a difficult text to interpret, but recent scholarship by Roth and others has shown that it exhibits a strong influence by the meditative tradition that first appears in NY.[82] Donald Harper has also shown how the reference to a box bellows in LZ 5 can be linked to early Chinese longevity practices similar to breathing meditation.[83] LZ expands on the self-cultivation themes of NY, however, to include comments on proper government and the conduct of the sage-ruler. It envisions an ideal society of small-scale

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[81] See A. C. Graham, "The Origins of the Legend of Lao Tan" in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990): 111-124, and William H. Baxter, "Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*: The Probable Date of the *Tao-te-ching*" in *Lao-tzu and the* Tao-te-ching, edited by Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998): 231-254.

[82] See Harold Roth, "The *Laozi* in the Context of early Daoist Mystical Praxis" in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the* Laozi, edited by Mark Csikzentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: SUNY, 1999): 59-96.

[83] See Donald Harper, "The Bellows Analogy in *Laozi* V and Warring States Macrobiotic Hygiene" in *Early China* 20 (1995): 381-392.

agrarian communities, and in this respect it influences the authors of HNZ in their conception of the ideal communities of antiquity. The greatest influence on HNZ, however, is LZ's development of inner cultivation theory and the cosmology of the Way.

Many of the LZ passages dealing with inner cultivation echo important themes first observed in NY. For instance, LZ 12 has:

> The five colors make a man's eyes blind;
> Horseracing and hunting make a man's mind go mad;
> Goods that are hard to obtain make a man's progress falter;
> The five flavors make a man's palate dull;
> The five tones make a man's ears deaf.
> For these reasons,
> In ruling, the sage attends to the stomach, not to the eye.
> Therefore, he rejects the one and adopts the other.[84]

Here the LZ authors make a familiar admonition that provocative sensory stimulation endangers one's ethical development. The point stated negatively here is stated positively in NY. Excessive and disorderly mental activity, including paying undue attention to external stimuli, causes one's vitality to diminish, but in keeping one's vitality intact and renewing one's store of *jing* 精, one's senses function clearly and one's mind remains tranquil. LZ 12 does not specifically mention *jing* 精, but it does conclude that because excessive attention to stimulating activities diminishes one's capacities, the sage "attends to the stomach, not to the eye." Roth argues that the sage's attention to the stomach (*wei du* 為腹) is a reference to focusing on the breathing muscles located in the abdomen.[85] The sage here also specifically rejects sensory delights ("does not attend to

[84] Mair, 72, LZ 12A/4/11-12. NB: Mair arranges his translation according to the order of chapters found in the Mawangdui manuscripts, but for the sake of clarity, all of my references are to chapter numbers in the received version.
[85] Roth, "Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis," 73. This makes sense given NY's parallel advice on patterned breathing, and *fu* 腹 indeed refers to the part of the abdomen later associated with the "lower cinnabar field" (*dan tian* 丹田) in Daoist internal alchemical practices.

the eye" *bu wei mu* 不為目, and "rejects the one and adopts the other" *qu bi er qu ci* 去彼而取此), which points to a set of other practical instructions given by the LZ authors.

In general, the sage in LZ rejects external satisfactions or goals, and cleaves instead to inner qualities of tranquility and consistency. In all the LZ authors think one ought to reject, do away with, banish, or otherwise avoid fifteen things: visual stimulation (by metonymy, "eyes" *mu* 目, LZ 12), shallowness (*bao* 薄, LZ 38), flowery ornamentation (*hua* 華, LZ 38), extremes (*shen* 甚, LZ 29), excesses (*she* 奢, LZ 29), extravagances (*tai* 泰, LZ 29), wisdom (*zhi* 智, LZ19), rightness (*yi* 義, LZ 19), profit (*li* 利, LZ 19), sageliness (*sheng* 聖, LZ 19), humaneness (*ren* 仁, LZ 19), cleverness (*qiao* 巧, LZ 19), learning (*xue* 學, LZ 19), selfishness (*si* 私, LZ 19), and desires (*yu* 欲, LZ 19).[86] Many of these examples come from LZ 19, so it will be useful to examine the passage more closely:

> "Abolish sagehood and abandon cunning,
> the people will benefit a hundredfold;
> Abolish humaneness and abandon rightness,
> the people will once again be filial and kind;
> Abolish cleverness and abandon profit,
> bandits and thieves will be no more."
> These three statements are inadequate as a civilizing doctrine;
> Therefore, let something be added to them:
> Evince the plainness of undyed silk,
> Embrace the simplicity of the unhewn log;
> Lessen selfishness,
> Diminish desires;
> Abolish learning
> and have no anxieties.[87]

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[86] The operative verbs in this set of things to be dispensed with are: *qu* 去 "to discard, to forego," *qi* 棄 "to cast aside, to reject," *jue* 絕 "to cut off, to put an end to," *shao* 少 "to lessen," and *gua* 寡 "to make few, to diminish." LZ also uses similar verbs *chu* 除 "to remove, to get rid of" and *she* 舍 "to cast off, to throw away," but these are both used rhetorically and do not appear to indicate a word of advice from the authors that some object should be given up or avoided.

[87] Mair, 81 with my emendation, LZ 19A/6/19-20A/7/1.

This passage is significant on a number of levels. First, the fact that the first three formulations are presented as "three statements" (*san yan* 三言) indicates that they were known to the LZ authors as set phrases. This could mean that they were formulaic phrases used by the oral tradition of master-disciple lineages associated with the practical teaching of inner cultivation techniques.[88] The importance of the three phrases themselves is that sagehood and cunning, humaneness and rightness, and cleverness and profit are all seen as things that impede the good functioning of society. They are all also otherwise laudable qualities that the LZ authors regard as deceptively injurious. The LZ authors often make paradoxical claims that positive qualities result in negative effects and that negative qualities result in positive effects. The rest of the chapter gives an indication why this should be the case.

The three sayings express what one should not do, and the LZ authors add in response a list of things one *should* do—namely, "evince the plainness of undyed silk, embrace the simplicity of the unhewn log, lessen selfishness, diminish desires, avoid learning, [and] have no anxiety."[89] All these positive admonitions point to tranquility

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[88] Roth and LaFarge have each analyzed the significance of these kinds of phrases, as well as other rhymed sections of texts in LZ that are not specifically identified by the authors as pre-existing set phrases. LaFargue argues that LZ can be read as a philosophical "sayings collage" in which aphorisms of the oral tradition are written down and linked together by rhetorical elements like *shi gu* 是故 "therefore" to form a coherent philosophical argument. Roth argues that NY shares with LZ the elements of oral aphorism, but seems less philosophically contrived, in part because of a relative lack of rhetorical connectors, and that NY is therefore an earlier composition than LZ. See Roth, *Original Tao*, 17, 201-202; and LaFargue, *Tao and Method*, 301-336.

[89] Mair and others, following Henricks and earlier commentators, place the first line of chapter 20, "abolish learning and you will be without worries," at the end of Chapter 19. I find it strange, however, that the parallel use of *jue* 絕 in the first three lines of Chapter 19 should be echoed in what becomes the final line, when it is absent from the previous two. There is not, however, a similar parallelism internal to the last three lines of Chapter 19 when taken as a set, and the rhyme scheme still works out. Moreover, LZ 19 and 20 both have parallels in the Guodian bamboo strips, and the parallel with LZ 19 does not include the phrase from LZ 19. The two parallels are also not consecutive in the Guodian material, suggesting that the content of LZ 19 and 20 was already set earlier than the Mawangdui or received versions, and thus that it is unlikely the last line of LZ 19 was erroneously included in LZ 20.

and simplicity, and we can therefore read the chapter's opening statements as objections to the tendency for otherwise positive attributes to cause undue complexity and complication. The LZ authors thus make a strong statement in favor of the mental habit of simplicity, and against the mental habit of complexity or contrivance.

Simplicity, especially as the metaphor of the "unhewn log" or "uncarved block" portrays is a hallmark of the LZ. We can therefore read simplicity or plainness as a kind of "cardinal virtue" for the LZ authors, but in evincing plainness, what embellishment does the sage avoid? LZ consistently treats what we would call selfishness or egotism as the root of undue embellishment, so plainness or simplicity usually indicates an ethical quality of selflessness or detachment from ego-centric concerns. In Chapter 19 above, we see the explicit admonition to "lesson selfishness" (*shao si* 少私), but it is less clear why things like humaneness and rightness should be the kind of selfish concerns the sage avoids. The reason is that conventions like humaneness and rightness, as well as cunning intelligence and the clever pursuit of profit, appear to the LZ authors under most circumstances to be tools for pursuing selfish ends. The LZ authors see "learning" (*xue* 學) as mostly an enterprise for impressing other people and thereby winning favor and perhaps an official title and salary, and fame.

Just because sages abandon these selfish interests, however, does not mean that they do not have any kind of goals; they simply lack any special attachment to those goals and avoids allowing them to determine how they live. For instance, in LZ 77 we learn that the sage "acts but does not possess, completes his work but does not dwell on

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In the end, I find that the sense of the passage works well with Henrick's parsing of the text, and I emend Mair's translation here to reflect these concerns. For more on this issue, see Robert G. Henricks, *Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-Wang-Tui Texts* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 224.

it" (*wei er fu you cheng, gong er fu ju ye* 為而弗有成, 功而弗居也), and "has no desire to display his worth" (*bu yu shi xian ye* 不欲見賢也).[90] Likewise, Chapter 72 says that the sage "is self-aware but does not flaunt himself, is self-devoted, but does not glorify himself" (*zi zhi er bu zi jian ye, zi ai er bu zi gui ye* 自知而不自見也, 自愛而不自貴也).[91] These two passages illustrate how sages do indeed engage in many goal-directed activities but do so while avoiding the taint of complexity and contrivance that normally vexes human endeavors. Chapter 24 insists that:

> One who boasts is not well established;
> One who shows himself off does not become prominent;
> One who puts himself on display does not brightly shine;
> One who brags about himself gets no credit;
> One who praises himself does not long endure
> In the Way, such things are called:
> "Excess provisions and extra baggage."
> Creation abhors such extravagances.
> Therefore, one who aspires to the Way does not abide in them.[92]

Here, self-aggrandizement and selfish attachment to excess are counter to the Way and therefore inherently counterproductive. The point of boasting is to build oneself up in the esteem of others, yet the LZ authors claim that it has the opposite effect of making one less well established—likewise with bragging, self-adulation, and showing off. The message is that in all cases the self-centered path will lead to failure and that only the path of self-effacement will lead to success. Chapter 22 provides the antithesis to this claim:

> The sage holds to the One and in this way becomes the shepherd of the world.
> He does not show himself off; therefore he becomes prominent.
> He does not put himself on display; therefore he brightly shines.
> He does not brag about himself; therefore he receives credit.

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[90] Mair, 53, LZ 77A/26/7.
[91] Mair, 47, LZ 72A/24/21.
[92] Mair, 86 with emendations based on Henricks, *Te-Tao Ching*, 230, LZ 24A/8/16-17.

He does not praise his own deeds; therefore he can long endure.
It is only because he does not compete that, therefore, no one can compete with him.[93]

It is significant that Chapters 24 and 22 appear in sequence in the Mawangdui manuscripts. The language in Chapter 22 parallels exactly the language in Chapter 24, and shows how the LZ authors regard self-effacing action as the more effective—and clearly superior—form of action. The point cannot be overstated that the LZ authors regard this type of action as also *inherently* productive. Just as self-aggrandizing behavior runs counter to the Way, self-effacing behavior cleaves to the Way. The formulation of sagely characteristics in Chapter 22 depends on the ability to "hold to the One." As mentioned above in connection with NY, "holding to the One" (*zhi yi* 執一) signals the sages' ability to retain an awareness of the Way throughout their experience.

This self-effacing sort of action is described elsewhere in LZ as *wu-wei* 無為, "nonaction." In the most famous formulation of *wu-wei* 無為 from LZ 48, the authors insist:

The pursuit of learning results in daily increase,
Hearing the Way leads to daily decrease,
Decrease and again decrease,
until you reach nonaction.
Through nonaction,
no action is left undone.[94]

Taken in the context of the previously examined passages, we can see that the point here is that the "daily increase" has to do with self-centered goals. The LZ authors know "learning" (*xue* 學) as an affair bound up with social expectations of wealth and prestige, and therefore juxtapose it with "hearing the Way" (*wen dao* 聞道)—i.e. their idea of self-

[93] Henricks, *Te-Tao Ching*, 232, LZ 22A/8/3-5.
[94] Mair, 16, LZ 48A/16/13-14.

cultivation. By decreasing the motivations led by egoistic concern, one comes closer to the kind of action described as *wu-wei* 無為, which is inherently productive and "leaves nothing undone." The description of a specific kind of *action* as *non*-action is part of LZ's project of presenting difficult concepts through paradox, but it makes intuitive sense when we consider the basis of prescribed action as self-*effacing*—and therefore tending to diminution of ego-bound elements of uncultivated experience, like greed, anxiety, arrogance, etc.

The LZ authors take the business of the effacement or attenuation of certain common habits of thought and action very seriously. Emptiness therefore plays a central role in LZ's ethical vision, as it does for other classical Daoist texts. For instance, LZ 11 highlights the importance of emptiness:

> Thirty spokes converge on a single hub,
> but it is in the space where there is nothing that usefulness of the cart lies.
> Clay is molded to make a pot,
> but it is in the space where there is nothing that the usefulness of the clay pot lies.
> Cut out doors and windows to make a room,
> but it is in the spaces where there is nothing that the usefulness of the room lies.
> Therefore,
> Benefit may be derived from something,
> but it is in nothing that we find usefulness.[95]

In all of the examples here, the LZ authors point to emptiness as the reason why an object is "useful" (*yong* 用). The dichotomy between usefulness and benefit in the final lines is also important. Benefit applies only to tangible goods, which can be beneficial by being consumed, but once consumed disappear and therefore are no longer beneficial. Usefulness, however, is a property that can be drawn upon indefinitely. This is also probably why in LZ 4 the Way, a useful thing *par excellence*, is described as something

[95] Mair, 70, LZ 11A/4/6-7.

that is “empty, but which when used never needs to be refilled” (*dao chong, er yong zhi you fu ying ye* 道沖, 而用之有弗盈也).[96] Similarly, ideal action is characterized by emptiness. LZ 16 enjoins the practitioner to “attain utmost emptiness, [and] maintain utter stillness” (*zhi xu ji ye, shou jing du ye* 致虛極也, 守靜督也).[97] The specific methods for how to do this are less than clear in LZ, but they bear a strong resemblance to the methods described in NY. The best example is Chapter 10:

> While you
> Cultivate the soul and embrace the One,
> can you keep them from separating?
> Focus your vital breath until it is supremely soft,
> can you be like a baby?
> Cleanse the mirror of mysteries,
> can you make it free of blemish?
> Love the people and enliven the state,
> can you do so without cunning?
> Open and close the gate of heaven,
> can you play the part of the female?
> Reach out with clarity in all directions,
> can you refrain from action?
> It gives birth to them and nurtures them,
> It gives birth to them but does not possess them,
> It rears them but does not control them.
> This is called “mysterious Potency.”[98]

With its references to “embracing the One” (*bao yi* 抱一) and “focusing the vital breath (*fu qi* 槫氣), Roth argues that this passage is the most explicit reference to inner cultivation in the LZ.[99] “Cleansing the mirror of mysteries” (*xiu chu xuan jian* 修除玄監) is also similar to NY’s “cleaning out” (*chu* 除) the lodging place of the vital essence. In both texts, these metaphors evoke the cultivated qualities of stillness and clarity that form the basis of an awareness of the Way. In ideal action, moreover, one must maintain this

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[96] LZ 4A/2/9. This is my own translation.
[97] Mair, 78, LZ 16A/6/3.
[98] Mair, 69, LZ 10A/3/18-10A/4/2.
[99] See Roth, "Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis,” 82.

awareness throughout one's experience. Roth translates the first line of LZ 10 as "Amidst the daily activity of the psyche, can you embrace the One and not depart from it?"[100] He takes this as a holistic assessment of human mental life, with both physical and psychological attributes. Thus, "embracing the One and not departing from it" refers to a constant psycho-physiological practice.

In LZ 52, we find other instructions for inner cultivation that include "stop up the openings, shut the doors" (*sai qi dui, bi qi men* 塞其兌, 閉其門) and refer to the systematic training of attention away from sense perceptions.[101] The result is a habit of conducting experience that the LZ authors call "following the constant" (*xi chang* 習常).[102] That is, once one undergoes the training entailed in inner cultivation practices, one's modified habits yield an experience that has similar characteristics, which one can then focus on as a guide for further conduct.

The LZ authors take constancy (*chang* 常) as an important feature of the Way, and an important practical benefit that accrues to practitioners of inner cultivation in so far as they maintain an awareness of the Way. This fact will lead to the final important point on inner cultivation in the LZ as it influences HNZ—that the pragmatic meaning of the Way in LZ is as an enduring characteristic of cultivated experience. In LZ 16 the authors enjoin the reader to "attain utmost emptiness" (*zhi xu ji* 致虛極) and "maintain utter stillness" (*shou jing du* 守靜篤), and continue:

> The myriad creatures arise side by side, thus I observe their renewal.
> Heaven's creatures abound, but each returns to its roots, which is called "stillness."
> This is termed "renewal of fate."
> Renewal of fate is perpetual—

[100] Roth, "Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis," 82.
[101] Mair, 21, LZ 52A/18/4.
[102] Mair, 21, LZ 52A/18/5.

to know the perpetual is to be enlightened;
Not to know the perpetual is to be reckless—
recklessness breeds evil.
To know the perpetual is to be tolerant—
tolerance leads to ducal impartiality,
ducal impartiality to kingliness,
kingliness to heaven,
heaven to the Way,
the Way to permanence.
To the end of his days, he will not be imperiled.[103]

Here, amidst the teeming transformations of the myriad things, the cultivated person is able to perceive an underlying quality of tranquility. This underlying quality is perpetual or enduring (*chang* 常), and the passage later links it to the Way through various character traits that are important for good government. Incidentally, when one possesses these traits and maintains an awareness of the Way, one is able to safely endure through his whole life. The important point here is that the experience of stillness or tranquility is identified with an underlying, enduring order to the cosmos, and that this order can be followed to avoid calamity and ensure a long life.

However, as we have seen throughout the LZ, the cosmological concept of *dao* 道 as an underlying constant is fundamentally indexed to the experience of cultivated individuals. The Way can only be perceived and followed in emptiness and tranquility, but it also seems to exist—insofar as it exists at all—*as* emptiness and tranquility. So the Way does indeed carry a cosmological meaning in LZ, but it also carries an equally important pragmatic meaning as the unifying continuity of experience that attends moral transformation through the acquisition of habits by inner cultivation techniques. This emphasis on emptiness and stillness, and the attendant ability to maintain awareness of a constant normative property in experience will be taken up into the system of ethics in

[103] Mair, 60, LZ 16A/6/3-5.

HNZ.

H. Inner cultivation in the Syncretist material of ZZ and the "Techniques of the Mind" texts in GZ

Roth has shown that the stratum of ZZ that Graham identifies as "Syncretist" and that Liu identifies as "Huang-Lao" shares certain literary forms and technical terminology with the three "Techniques of the Mind" (*Xin shu* 心術) texts in GZ, as well as with HNZ. He also posits based on some of this evidence that ZZ was in fact compiled at the court of Liu An, where HNZ was also composed.[104] Regardless of how the text came together, the fact remains that ZZ, especially in its Syncretist stratum, exerts a powerful influence on the ideas in HNZ. It will therefore be important to identify some of the animating principles of the Syncretist take on inner cultivation and ethics that will bear on our understanding of HNZ's project. For the sake of simplicity, I treat the Syncretist material from both ZZ and GZ together in this section.

In important ways, the Syncretists' worldview and ethics are the natural outcome of the developments of earlier Daoistic thought. In particular, the Syncretist stratum of ZZ makes use of concepts from the Inner Chapters to describe the attributes of ideal human actors. Where the Inner Chapters envisioned this individual as personally enlightened and cosmically centered, the Syncretist authors add the element of political centrality and imagine the ideal person as the central political authority.[105] The

[104] See Roth, "Who Compiled the *Zhuangzi*?" Roth therein reviews the evidence that at least some of the material which later became the 52-chapter version of ZZ existed at the court of Lü Buwei in Qin, about a century before it would have made its way to Liu An's court.

[105] This is also the position of the sage in HNZ, and one reason to count HNZ as a part of the ultimate syncretic culmination of classical Daoist thought. There are many other broad historical and intellectual factors that contribute to the Syncretist move to equate cosmic and political centrality. For more on those issues, see Michael Puett's authoritative study on the relationship between cosmological thought and political authority in early China: Michael Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-*

justification for the sage's role in political life is rooted in self-cultivation ideas from the Inner Chapters. For instance, stillness, quiescence, and emptiness characterize the Syncretists' sage just as they characterized Zhuangzi's perfected person:

> Emptiness and stillness, calm and mildness, quiescence and indifference, Doing Nothing, are the even level of heaven and earth, the utmost reach of the Way and the Power; therefore emperor, king or sage finds rest in them. At rest he empties, emptying he is filled, and being thusly full he makes proper distinctions. Emptying he is still, in stillness he is moved, and when he moves he succeeds. . . . Emptiness and stillness, calm and mildness, quiescence and indifference, Doing Nothing, are the root of the myriad things. To be clear about these when you sit facing south is to be the kind of lord that Yao was; to be clear about these when you stand facing north is to be the kind of minister that Shun was.[106]

The ideals of emptiness and stillness in the Inner Chapters were mainly reserved for conducting personal affairs or for reflecting on the vagaries of life, death, and constantly shifting distinctions. Here, however, the Syncretist authors place these sagely qualities in a more complicated political context. "Emptiness and stillness" (*xu jing* 虛靜), "calm and mildness" (*tian dan* 恬淡), "quiescence and indifference" (*ji mo* 寂漠), and "Doing Nothing" (*wu wei* 無為) are the central standard ("even level") of Heaven and Earth, and the utmost expression of the Way (*tiandi zhi ping, er daode zhi zhi* 天地之平, 而道德之至). Significantly, this is the reason why political functionaries like kings, emperors, and sages "find rest in them." We saw earlier in the Inner Chapters of ZZ as well as in LZ how *dao* 道 both resides in stillness and emptiness as personal attributes of cultivated persons, and how in important ways *dao* 道 *is* stillness and emptiness. This passage draws a link between the two and asserts that stillness and emptiness, etc. are the central

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Divination in Early China (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2002).

[106] Graham, 259 with my emendations, ZZ 13/34/16-20. "Doing Nothing" is Graham's translation for *wu-wei* 無為, which makes more sense given the sentence structure than my previous translation as "non-action."

tools by which effective leaders operate. The authors further illustrate this relationship by attributing these qualities to Yao as ideal ruler and Shun as ideal minister.

This passage also introduces the central Syncretist concept that the sages or perfected people, though genuinely empty and still, are nonetheless moved to action when the situation demands it. Moreover, because their actions are always based in stillness and emptiness, and therefore close to the Way, they are necessarily effective. We encountered this theme in earlier writings, as well, but the Syncretists give it a specific political gloss and often equate the sage's actions with *kingly* action. Continuing from the previous passage on the various sagely qualities:

> Use these [emptiness, stillness, etc.] to withdraw in retirement and wander at leisure, and the recluses of river, sea, mountain, and forest will submit to you. Use these to come forward and act in order to bring comfort to the age, and your achievement will be great and name illustrious, and the empire will be united. In stillness a sage, in motion a king, you do nothing yet are exalted, you are simple and unpolished yet no one in the empire is able to rival your glory.[107]

Here we see that the efficacious power of the sage inheres in his personal abilities, and that these will lead him to positively impact whatever situation he encounters. If he acts like Zhuangzi of the Inner Chapters and retreats from public life, he will influence the other hermits he encounters and be renowned as a sage. If instead he engages in affairs of state, he will unify the empire and be exalted as a king. When the situation demands stillness, he appears as a sage; when it demands action he appears as a king. Similarly, "in stillness [the cultivated person] shares the Power of the Yin / in motion shares the surge of the Yang."[108] This phrase begins to draw the important parallel between the actions of the sage and the natural rhythms of the cosmos. Since Yin and Yang are the complimentary opposites that describe the phases of transformation for all phenomena in

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[107] Graham, 259-260 with my emeandations, ZZ 13/34/21-22.
[108] Graham, 260 with my emendations, ZZ 13/34/28.

the cosmos, the sage's connection with them identifies her conduct with the basic pulse of change in the universe.

Drawing outward from this basic connection between the Way and the sage, the Syncretist authors use several tropes of natural, organic order, all of which are important in HNZ. Arguably most important for HNZ is the root-branch metaphor, which the ZZ Syncretist authors employ to describe the central place of the sage-king in political and social life:

> The root is in the man above, the outermost branches are in the men below . . . The operations of the Three Armies and the Five Weapons are branches of his Power. The proclamations of reward and punishment, benefit and harm, the Five Penalties, are branches from his teaching. The details of rites and laws, measures and numbers, title and performance, are branches of his government. The sound of bells and drums, the display of plumes and yak-tails, are branches from his joy. The clothes differentiated for degrees of wailing and mourning are branches of his sorrow. These five sorts of branches are outcomes which await the circuitings of his Quintessential Spirit, and his actions based in the Techniques of the Mind.[109]

This passage references some of the mechanisms by which the sage-king actually implements the insights he gains by following the Way. He remains rooted in stillness and emptiness, and when he "moves" in certain ways (e.g. makes laws or expresses joy and sorrow) the results are normative for the rest of the world. There is an overlapping sense of authority here, in that the sage-king's actions are normative because he is the sage-king, and he is the sage-king because his actions are normative. However, the Syncretist authors' presentation makes it clear that the normative authority of the sage-king comes from the Way and its place as an underlying natural order. The Way and the natural order are already present in all situations, and the sage-king acts effectively only insofar as he is able to accord with them. Thus, in ZZ Chapter 15 the Syncretist authors say of the sage, "only when stirred will he respond, / only when pressed will he move, /

[109] Graham, 261 with my emendations, ZZ 13/35/9-11.

only when it is inevitable will he rise up. / Rejecting knowledge and precedent / He takes his course from Heaven's pattern."[110] This passage of verse makes clear that the normative patterns of nature come first, and the sage's power or efficacy stems entirely from his ability to respond appropriately given these natural guidelines. "Heaven's pattern" (*tian li* 天理) is, moreover, something subtle that only the cultivated sage can recognize and use as a guide for action, but which is thought to be active in nature whether a sage recognizes it or not. Roth also identifies the phrase "reject knowledge and precedent" (*qu zhi yu gu* 去知與故) as a Syncretist technical term in several other writings, including HNZ, and the term "Heaven's pattern" (*tian li* 天理) is similarly important, especially for HNZ.[111]

These metaphors of organic order help to support Syncretist ethical claims. In particular, the descriptions of the active sage immersed in complicated situations address the normative source of ethical claims, because they imagine the Way as the quiet root of the cosmos, regardless of how complicated the branches become. The Individualist authors of the Inner Chapters of ZZ and of NY saw the efficacy of inner cultivation practices only on a personal level, and often go so far as to eschew social involvement. The Syncretist authors of ZZ Chapter 15 critique this approach and may even have Zhuangzi himself in mind when they mock the "untroubled idlers" (*jian xia zhe* 間暇者), who "shun the age" (*bi shi* 避世) and care only for fishing and Doing Nothing (*wu wei* 無為).[112] The Primitivist authors of LZ and parts of ZZ, however, held that principles of inner cultivation practice could work in a social setting, and indeed did work in the

[110] Graham, 265, ZZ 15/41/27-28.
[111] See Roth, "Who Compiled the Zhuangzi?"
[112] Graham, 264-265, ZZ 15/41/19.

societies of antiquity, so they argued for a return to simple, agrarian ways of life. The Syncretist authors take a similar position, but are more optimistic about the chances of recovering a connection with the normative order in the present age of complicated political arrangements. ZZ Chapter 13 contains an ordered sequence of things implemented by "the men of old who made clear the Great Way" (*gu zhi ming da dao zhe* 古之明大道者) that starts with Heaven, the Way, and Power, and continues through humaneness and rightness to several different administrative, moral, and legal distinctions.[113] This is significant because it marks a new turn toward accepting the kinds of conceptual distinctions that Zhuangzi of the Inner Chapters argued were inherently problematic. The Syncretist authors reiterate, however, that the only way that the rulers of antiquity were able to make such distinctions was because they recognized the Way as the root at every level. Times were simpler in antiquity, but the significant point is the centrality and enduring simplicity of the Way, which continues despite the level of differentiation and confusion in contemporary life. "However vast heaven and earth may be, their transformations are always regular," the Syncretist authors explain, "however many the myriad things may be, their ordering is always unified."[114] No matter how complicated things get, the Way remains as the still point in the center, and as long as one "uses the Way to examine everything, the responses of the myriad things will be at one's disposal."[115]

This focus on the enduring efficacy of the Way is an integral part of HNZ's rhetorical stance, as well, and we see the basic outline of HNZ's overall argument on that point in the Syncretist Chapters of ZZ. In the final chapter of the extant ZZ, the

[113] Graham, 262, ZZ 13/35/21-23.
[114] This is my own translation, ZZ 12/29/12.
[115] Graham, 269 with my emendations, ZZ 12/29/14.

Syncretist authors argue that the works of major thinkers popular in their day all merely contain a “small corner” of the Great Way, and that the authors’ approach alone gets at the full “Techniques of the Way” (*dao shu* 道術) handed down by the rulers of antiquity.[116] However, each individual thinker’s work does contain some applicability and is accurate within a narrow set of circumstances.[117] The undoing of these various approaches, according to the Syncretist authors, lies in their focus on a particular approach or point of view, instead of always taking the Way itself as central. The point again is that the root is the Way, and as long as that root is maintained, one can navigate the complicated world of branches with confidence—and indeed do better than those who focus on even one of the major branches.

The Syncretist approach therefore aims to be truly syncretic in that it appeals to the purported common root of all other competing approaches, and thereby supersedes and contains them within itself. For instance, the sage, in holding fast to the Way alone, “hits the course which is Humaneness but does not depend on it, approximates to Rightness but is not clogged by precedents, answers to Ritual Propriety but does not acquire aversions because of it.”[118] This passage is a prime example of how the Syncretist authors integrate technical terminology from other traditions—in this case, Confucians—and use it in a way that grants some legitimacy to the ideas, but constrains them within a cosmology of the Way as ultimate root. Confucian terms like humaneness (*ren* 仁), rightness (*yi* 義), and ritual propriety (*li* 禮) describe well certain good actions

[116] ZZ 33/97/13. I translate *dao shu* 道術 as “Techniques of the Way” to highlight the parallelism with “Techniques of the Mind” *xin shu* 心術. Roth has translated *dao shu* as “lore of the Way,” which highlights especially well the aspect of transmission involved. See Roth, *Original Tao*, 181-185 and *passim*.
[117] The sentiment here is well expressed by our modern English expression, “a broken clock tells the right time twice a day.”
[118] Graham, 268 with my emendations, ZZ 11/29/4-5.

of the sage, but they cannot be taken as universally reliable descriptions for all action in all situations. For the Syncretist authors in ZZ, the course for sagely action can only be determined in specific, unique situations, and then only in accord with underlying natural patterns. In certain situations, these sagely responses will be approximate to what Confucians might call Humaneness, for instance, but Humaneness in this view cannot universally describe sagely responses.

The authors of the Syncretist "Techniques of the Mind" I and II and "Purified Mind" chapters of GZ (*Xinshu shang* 心術上, *Xinshu xia* 心術下, and *Baixin* 白心) espouse a similar approach as the Syncretist authors in ZZ, but very clearly rely on material from NY to make their case for government by an enlightened sage.[119] Using language reminiscent of NY, the authors of "Techniques of the Mind I" state:

> What the sage controls is the concentration of his vital breath.
> Eliminate desires and you will be expansive,
> Being expansive, you will become tranquil,
> Being tranquil, your vital breath will be concentrated.
> When it is concentrated, then [your mind] will be established in solitude,
> Attaining solitude, it will be illumined,
> When it is illumined, it will be spirit-like.[120]

This passage mirrors fairly closely the inner cultivation language from NY, situating the sage's cultivation in his concentration of vital breath (*qi* 氣) to produce vital essence (*jing* 精), which in turn allows him to attain an illumined (*ming* 明), spirit-like (*shen* 神) mind.

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[119] There is evidence in *Xinshu shang* that the authors were also aware of the Inner Chapters of ZZ. For more on the connections between the two texts, see Roth, "Who Compiled the Zhuangzi?" and *The Resonant Way: Taoist Texts from the Kuan Tzu* (unpublished ms, n.d.). Also, I often refer to "the Syncretist authors" of all three of these texts, but we should note that they are not necessarily the same group of authors. *Xinshu Shang* and *Xia* were almost certainly composed by the same authors, while *Baixin* seems to be the product of a different group.

[120] Roth, 66 with my emendations, GZ 13.1/96/24-25. *Xinshu Shang* is composed in two parts: a preliminary section that appears to be a record of existing sayings, and a "commentary" section which explains them. This quotation is from the commentary to the second section of original text, under Roth's parsing of the text. What is translated "vital breath" is actually *jing* 精, but Roth's reading makes sense given what we know from NY about the way the sage produces *jing*—namely, by concentrating vital breath. Integrating this conceptual link makes for a much smoother translation.

As we saw in the Syncretist chapters of ZZ, the authors take this basic formulation from an Individualist text and apply it to a more complicated picture of social and political life. The basic text of section V gives a gloss of moral and political terms like rightness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and law (*fa* 法) in terms of the Way and Power, in much the same way as the Syncretist ZZ above.[121] The commentary to this section explains:

> "Rightness" means that each person keeps to what is suitable. "Rituals" are what adapt to genuine responses of people, trace the patterns of what is appropriate for them, and then create limits and embellishments. Therefore, "ritual propriety" means "to have inherent patterns." Inherent patterns are what clarify [interpersonal] distinctions to illustrate the significance of rightness. Therefore, rites are derived from rightness; rightness is derived from inherent patterns; and inherent patterns are derived from the Way.[122]

This passage takes us through a process of reasoning that will be extremely important for understanding many of the claims in HNZ. It starts with the Confucian technical terms of rightness (*yi* 義) and ritual/ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and defines them in terms of following along with, responding to, or according with more abstract elements of human experience, which in turn derive ultimately from the Way. The two most important abstract realities to which right and ritually propitious action conform are inherent patterns (*li* 理) and genuine responses (*qing* 情). We encountered inherent patterns above, and the term functions here much as it does in the Syncretist material in ZZ. Genuine responses, however, are more complicated, but receive a much fuller treatment in HNZ. Here, it will suffice to say that *qing* 情 are the psychic-energetic responses people have to a given situation. They are "genuine" in that they represent the deepest,

[121] GZ 13.1/96/1-2.

[122] Roth, 70-71 with my emendations, GZ 13.1/97/1-3. Roth follows Guo Moruo in emending *yi* 宜 "suitable" in the final line to *dao* 道. Retaining *yi* 宜 makes more sense given the immediate context of the passage and its internal structure, but *dao* 道 makes more sense in the text as a whole. It also makes my point in the analysis clearer and more concise, although retaining *yi* 宜 would still be consistent.

most unreflective level of response a person can have, and are therefore unaffected by artifice and preconceptions. As such, like inherent patterns *li* 理, they are very close to the cosmic root of the Way. The point here is that we see in *Xinshu Shang* more of the conceptual foundations of the Way as root of ethical decision-making and action that we find in HNZ.

The theme of matching or according with natural patters that we saw in the previous passage also becomes absolutely central to the moral philosophy of HNZ. The commentary to section VII of *Xinshu Shang* says:

> To be responsive is to take others just as they are. Take control of their names; pay attention to how they develop. This is the Way of being responsive. The Way of non-acting is to adapt to [other things]. Adapting means that nothing is added to them and nothing is subtracted from them. To make the name by adapting to the form, this is the technique of adaptation. Names are what the sage uses to sort out the myriad things.[123]

This passage is significant because it describes the processes of responding and adapting, but does not mention natural patterns. Instead, we see an emphasis on taking things and people "just as they are," and responding to situations as they present themselves. The emphasis on naming is a common philosophical theme in early China, and here we see the Syncretic Daoist position that names are simply a tool the sage uses to "sort out" (*ji* 紀) and comprehend the myriad things, and that names depend entirely on what inheres in the thing itself and not in the knowledge of the sage. The ability to rely on the properties of situations just as one finds them—rather than how one interprets them—is what sets the sage apart from the uncultivated person:

> Noble persons are not enticed by likes
> Nor oppressed by dislikes.
> Calm and tranquil, they act without effort,
> And they discard wisdom and precedent.

[123] Roth, 73, GZ 13.1/97/14-17.

Their responses are not contrived.
Their movements are not deliberated selected.
The mistake is in intervening directly oneself.
The fault lies in altering and transforming things.
Therefore, the ruler who has the Way:
At rest seems to be without knowledge,
In response to things seems to fit together with them.
This is the Way of stillness and adaptation.[124]

Sages evince an ease and tranquility that comes from avoiding the characteristic mistakes people make in acting in an un-sagelike way. The common mistake, moreover, is in not "taking things as they are" but instead imposing one's own judgment and altering things against the natural tendencies of the situation. This description, however, should not be taken as meaning sages have no personal preferences, but rather that they do not allow their personal preferences to *impose* on whatever they finds before them. They have likes and dislikes, but are not "enticed" or "oppressed" by them. Presumably, sages also takes themselves "just as they are," so their responding to things so that they "seems to fit together with them" should not necessarily be taken as a case of sages "altering and transforming" their own qualities just to match with the situation. Indeed, *Xinshu Xia* says that exemplary persons "have the same guiding patterns as the Heavens and the Earth," which indicates that the potential for harmony runs equally through both sages and the situations they encounter, so that their effecting harmony is a matter of coordination as well as adaptation.[125] HNZ explores this tension between sages' internal conditions and their external context in much greater detail.

Like the Syncretist stratum of ZZ, the "Techniques of the Mind" texts harness this vision of sagely action to an ethos for government. *Baixin* section II says that, "the best

[124] Roth, 75 with my emendations, GZ 13.1/96/4-5. The translation "act without effort" is *wu wei* 無為.
[125] Roth, 82, GZ 13.2/98/14.

rulers follow Heaven."[126] Heaven is understood here as a collection of natural phenomena and celestial objects that unerringly follow a course and thereby bring chronological order to the cosmos: "The Heavens do not, for the sake of even one person, disrupt impartial laws . . . they carry out their movements and the myriad things receive the benefit from them."[127] The *Baixin* authors then explain that the sage likewise carries out his movements according to natural guidelines and the people are similarly benefited. The point is that the argument for political authority here is linked to an ethical argument about what constitutes right action. Action that accords with subtle but perceptible natural guidelines is ethically superior, but also cosmically superior, and that cosmic superiority underwrites the sage's ability to benefit the people and to stand at the center of the political order. HNZ makes an almost identical case.

Throughout these examples, we can also see the continued foundational importance of inner cultivation practices. All of the Syncretist authors considered here make an argument for political authority based on cosmological centrality or harmony, but the sage achieves cosmological centrality and harmony only as a result of inner cultivation. The habits of judgment and action that enable the sage to act in a way that harmonizes the human realm with the normative natural order are all acquired through inner cultivation techniques. Moreover, as we have seen through numerous examples, these habits result in a specific kind of experience that classical Daoist authors call *dao* 道.

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[126] Roth, 90, GZ 13.3/99/16.
[127] Roth, 91, GZ 13.3/9920-22.

I. Conclusion

The Syncretist authors use self-cultivation ideas from all the previous phases of Daoistic thought to give an account of cosmology and moral cultivation that enfolds even rival philosophical positions. As I have demonstrated above, the syncretic move to supersede and co-opt the approaches of all previous figures rests on the purported ability of cultivated persons to access that which lies at the root of how the cosmos operates. Inner cultivation practice is therefore central to the syncretic project. Moreover, there is evidence throughout many early Chinese texts that suggests a transmission of identifiably similar inner cultivation techniques and theories common to the texts traditionally associated with classical Daoism.

All of this lends further support to Roth's textual claims that the Syncretist writings, including HNZ, are essentially Daoist. By tracing the development of self-cultivation literature in the classical Daoist tradition, I have demonstrated the further point that the very eclecticism that many argue makes HNZ exceptional and unclassifiable is itself Daoistic, thus justifying our reading of HNZ as a major culminating contribution to classical Daoist thought. We should also be clear that Roth does not argue, and I am not arguing here, that Syncretism represents the final stage of a cohesive tradition that underwent some changes over the centuries but retained its basic core beliefs. Instead, I argue that the Syncretist movement in Daoistic thought takes as foundational many concepts already developed in earlier Daoistic writings. I argue only that they are conceptually related, not necessarily that they share a social or material history. I think it is very likely that they are part of a more-or-less continuous tradition of breath cultivation practitioners, since those practices are something that must be

physically taught and learned, not simply transmitted through texts. However, my assertion that HNZ represents a culminating expression of classical Daoist ethical thought hangs only on the premise that its foundational ideas are shared with other Daoistic texts, not that an unbroken tradition or school of "Daoists" composed it. It may even be the case that the HNZ authors would reject the idea that they belonged in the same category as the authors of the Syncretist stratum of ZZ or GZ.[128] Similarly, the authors of earlier texts like LZ or the Inner Chapters of ZZ might have denied any relationship with each other or with the later authors of HNZ, had they knowledge of them. Nonetheless, the textual evidence suggests a clear relationship between all of these texts, and the binding thread is a central focus on techniques of breath cultivation.

The various treatments of classical Daoist breath cultivation reviewed above are also similar in a number of ways. They all refer to a purportedly apophatic training process of deconstructing or destabilizing core faculties of thought and perception. This negation of sense and thought, however, consistently results in a positive gain in abilities that allows the practitioner to act well. Acting well, moreover, is consistently described in terms of acting without egoistic concerns or without letting one's will impose on the "natural" occurrence of phenomenon. The various texts of the classical Daoist tradition use evocative language to describe these sagely attributes. Cultivated persons are "empty," "quiescent," "equanimous," or "tranquil." They also gain access to a spirit-like level of mind (*shen* 神), that allows him to "merge with the Great Pervader" and "mirror things with great clarity." All of these texts argue that acting in this way leads to ideal, almost superhumanly effective outcomes, with the result that both individual and

[128] Unless, of course, some of them *were* the authors of, for instance, ZZ Chapter 33, as Roth has suggested.

environment—including other people—are all better off than they were before.

In this sense, the tradition of classical Daoism reviewed here espouses an ethic of participation. Under this view, a human life is good or better to the extent that it finds the individual participating deeply in her environment, both by being sensitive and responsive to her environment, and by being aware of and open to the possibilities for her own unique contributions to inter-action with it. Moreover, she can deepen her level of participation by undergoing the regimen of apophatic breath cultivation recommended in the texts above. This regimen will instill in her new habits of thought and action that bring a transformed cast to her experience, and purportedly allow her to respond to more of her environment using more of her uniquely contextualized resources.

The classical Daoist texts move that the path marked out by this effortless, fully inter-active kind of conduct corresponds to a normative natural order in the cosmos. They attribute the existence and operation of this order to *dao* 道. They maintain that *dao* 道 is at once the generative cosmic force that guides sagely action and the actual instances of sagely action itself, as apprehended in individual experience. Thus *dao* 道 has a simultaneously cosmological and practical valence. This is the basic approach to ethics taken by HNZ, but HNZ fleshes out all parts of this picture to give us an astonishingly rich resource for understanding classical Daoist ethics.

Finally, the most important insight to be taken from tracing the lineage of classical Daoist inner cultivation from NY to HNZ is that many of the explicit claims in HNZ are based on implicit understandings inherited from the inner cultivation tradition. Moreover, reading Dewey's explicit account out of the features of practical moral life while reading HNZ will help us to more easily or naturally connect HNZ's explicit

ethical claims with its implicit practical understanding of ethics. In the end, making these connections will allow us to understand not only how HNZ’s ethical vision hangs together, but also how the classical Daoist tradition in general arrives at its understanding of the fundamental features of the well-lived human life.

CHAPTER IV:
Roots: The Underpinning of *Huainanzi*'s Ethics[1]

In this chapter I explore the fundamental concepts upon which HNZ's ethical thought rests. The bulk of the chapter is organized according to individual concepts, presented in roughly the same root-branch structure that characterizes the text itself. That is, I begin with the most fundamentally important concept in the text, *dao* 道, and proceed to increasingly specific elements of cosmology and moral psychology that influence the practical implications of the text's ethics. Throughout this survey, I will demonstrate how, for the HNZ authors, sagehood and ideal moral action are defined by harmonious participation in a "normative natural order."[2] This order is the result of *dao* 道, which is itself a concept with both cosmological and practical import. Because the HNZ authors most explicitly make cosmological claims about sagehood and ideal action, the practical claims that lie behind them are often implicit.

By reading Dewey's ethical thought alongside HN's, we can more easily make the explicit these implicit practical claims. I will argue that HNZ's overarching practical claim is that, in any given situation, the confluence of a person's total personal endowment and her total environmental context will produce subtle but perceptible impulses, which, if followed, will necessarily lead to more harmonious participation

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[1] This chapter contains some material from a paper I wrote for Professor Harold Roth in 2008 entitled, "The Role of *Qing* 情 in the *Huainanzi*."

[2] Harold Roth, "Nature and Self-Cultivation in *Huainanzi's* 'Original Way'" in *Polishing the Chinese Mirror: Essays in Honor of Henry Rosemont, Jr.*, edited by Marthe Chandler and Ronnie Littlejohn (New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2008), 273.

between person and environment. A person's total personal endowment will include innate physical and mental abilities and limitations, and basic human tendencies—essentially, anything that is internal to the person, but the possession or lack of which is beyond the person's control. A person's total context will include her life history, position relative to other people and things, and the arrangement of external factors in a situation—essentially, anything that is external to the person, which she naturally will also not be able to control. Ideal moral action, therefore, will be a matter of participating fully in one's social and natural environments using the full complement of one's naturally endowed characteristics and abilities. The subtle impulses that arise from one's contextualized personal endowment can also be described as dispositions. The "direction" one is disposed to act in each situation effectively defines the Way as it is expressed in the world.

In this chapter, I explore the fundaments of the HNZ authors' worldview that leads them to this moral vision. I return to many of the same themes in the next chapter—especially various aspects of the text's anthropology—but examine them more closely, focusing on how they relate to the specific methods for cultivating sagely habits and the implications for HNZ's ethics in general.

A. The Root-Branch Metaphor in HNZ and the Relationship between Cosmology and Meta-ethics

In the previous chapter, I mentioned the root-branch metaphor as the central rhetorical device the HNZ authors use to support their claim to supersede and supplant all previous philosophical views. This metaphor gives structure to the entire text and is

central to understanding how the HNZ authors build their case for a *dao*-centered ethics.[3] Because the root-branch metaphor is often expressed in HNZ as an explicitly cosmological concept and not an ethical one, it will also be important to understand first the relationship between cosmology and meta-ethics before proceeding to the most important elements of meta-ethics in HNZ.

As Roth has demonstrated, the root-branch metaphor exercises a structural influence over every level of text in HNZ.[4] The first eight chapters form the root section of the text, and within these chapters, Chapters 1 and 2 are themselves roots. Further, each individual chapter opens with a root passage that sets the tone for what follows. In each case, the root provides the "normative foundation" that orients all of the material that comes after in the branch sections.[5] There is also a cosmological significance to this structure, and it will be helpful to examine briefly how the hierarchy of root and branch plays out in HNZ's innovate cosmology.

One common trope the HNZ authors use in several chapters is to portray the contemporary social and political situation as devolved from a more perfect time in deep antiquity. This golden age is often called "the age of Utmost Potency" (*zhi de zhi shi* 至德之世), and degenerate later times are called "the age of decline" (*shuai shi* 衰世). The order and coherence characteristic of the age of Utmost Potency is in direct correlation to the age's proximity to the undifferentiated unity at the origin of the cosmos. Likewise, the chaos and confusion characteristic of the age of decline is due to its distance from the

[3] The phrase "*dao*-centered ethics" recalls the work of Jung Lee, who makes a more detailed argument for the centrality of *dao* 道 in Daoist ethics. See Jung H. Lee, "Ethics from a Daocentric Perspective: Normativity, Virtue, and Self-Cultivation in Early Daoist Thought" (PhD dissertation, Brown University, 2003).
[4] See Roth, "*Huainanzi* and Han Daoism."
[5] Roth, "*Huainanzi* and Han Daoism," 2.

cosmic origin. For instance, HNZ 8.1 describes “the reign of Grand Purity” (*tai qing zhi zhi* 太清之治) as, “harmonious and compliant and thus silent and indifferent / Substantial and true and thus plain and simple” (*he shun yi ji mo, zhi zhen er su pu* 和順以寂漠, 質真而素樸).[6] It goes on to explain how this means that at that time the cosmos functioned properly, there was no conflict or want among people, and all sorts of auspicious signs manifested on earth.[7] In the age of decline, however, the cosmos did not function properly and natural disasters and anomalies happened, people began fighting with each other over resources, and corruption, oppression, and untimely death were rampant.[8] Throughout this account, the heart of the problem, according to the HNZ authors, is that in the reign of Grand Purity people, “inwardly accorded with the Way / [and] outwardly conformed to Rightness” (*zai nei er he yu dao, chu wai er zhou yu yi* 在內而合乎道, 出外而調于義), whereas in the age of decline people ignored the standard of the Way and so descended into chaos.[9]

HNZ 2.10 gives more detail about just what was lost in the descent into chaos, as well as the prospects for a solution. The authors’ description of the age of Utmost Potency here says that people,

> took primal chaos as their gnomon and floated freely in a limitless domain . . . At this time nothing was directed or arranged; separately and autonomously [things] completed themselves. Mixed and merged, simple and undispersed, they blended into a unity, and the myriad things were greatly abundant.[10]

The text then reviews several stages of decline, starting with the reign of the semi-divine figure Fuxi, who “broadcast [Potency and harmony] subtly and comprehensively,” yet

[6] Major et al., 267, HNZ 8/61/6.
[7] See Major et al., 267-268, HNZ 8/61/6-12.
[8] See Major et al., 268-270, HNZ 8/61/12-27.
[9] Major et al., 267, HNZ 8/61/6-7.
[10] Major et al., 99, HNZ 2/15/6-9.

nevertheless allowed the Way to become obscured so that "all [the people] wanted to part from their childlike and ignorant mind and awareness appeared in the world."[11] The sense here is not that people were insensate before and only after this became conscious, but rather that they began to awaken to the possibilities for discrimination that they encountered, whereas before they had simply and straight-forwardly perceived their world however they found it, without dwelling on permanent distinctions.[12]

This trend continued under the next semi-divine rulers, The Divine Farmer and Yellow Emperor, who set about classifying and dividing the things of the world into categories. When this happened, "the myriad people all were alert and awake, and there were none who did not straighten up to listen and look. Thus they were orderly but could not be harmonized."[13] During the first "historical" dynasty of the Xia, "desires attached to things; / hearing and sight were lured outward, / [so that] nature and destiny lost their [proper] attainment."[14] I will cover nature and destiny in greater detail below, but the point here is that in this stage of decline the problem was that people's emphasis shifted to external things. Skipping over the Shang, the HNZ authors relate how the Zhou dynasty saw even greater differentiation and dispersal of categories, and a greater increase in externally-directed desires, along with the contrivances and artifice meant to satisfy them. "The current age being bereft of nature and destiny," according to the HNZ authors, is therefore "the product of gradual decline."[15] Throughout this account, the central element of decline is ever greater levels of differentiation away from a unified and

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[11] Major et al., 99, HNZ 2/15/10-11.
[12] The translation "awareness" corresponds to *jue shi* 覺視, a binome containing "to become aware of" and "to see clearly, to scrutinize." Awareness as consciousness or conscious attention is usually expressed in HNZ with *yi* 意.
[13] Major et al., 99, HNZ 2/15/13.
[14] Major et al., 99, HNZ 2/15/14.
[15] Major et al., 100, HNZ 2/15/19-20.

harmonious origin. The evolution of the cosmos described by the HNZ authors takes a parallel track.

The beginning of HNZ Chapter 2, "Activating the Genuine" (*Chu Zhen* 俶真) contains a unique reading of a ZZ passage as a list of cosmogonic stages. The ZZ passage, from the "Qiwulun" 齊物論 essay of the Inner Chapters, mocks the attempt to discern any kind of cosmogony by giving a set of stages that regress *ad absurdum*:

> There was a beginning.
> There was not yet beginning to have "there was a beginning."
> There was not yet beginning to have "There was not yet beginning to have 'There was a beginning.'"
> There was Something.
> There was Nothing.
> There was not yet beginning to have "There was Nothing."
> There was not yet beginning to have "There was not yet beginning to have 'There was Nothing.'"[16]

The HNZ authors seem to take these lines of verse to be an actual description of stages in a cosmogony, and go on to explain what occurred at each stage. The first stage, "There was a beginning," describes a state of undifferentiated potentiality, which nonetheless has some specific characteristics. "It is on the verge of desiring to be born and flourish," the authors write, "but not yet forming things and categories."[17] The basic materials of the universe exist at this stage, but have not yet formed distinct entities. The stage before this, "There was not yet beginning to have 'There was a beginning'" finds the *qi* 氣 of Heaven and Earth moving in their characteristic ways, but not yet connecting with each other to form the basic materials of the universe.[18] The next previous stage has the fundamentals of Heaven and Earth in existence, but not yet active. "Nothing and Something were a

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[16] Major et al., 84, HNZ 2/10/14-15. The original passage is ZZ 2/5/18-20.
[17] Major et al., 84, HNZ 2/10/16.
[18] See Major et al., HNZ 2/10/16-17.

matched pair," the authors say.[19] That is, the important categories of existence were present, but had no meaningful or operative division.

At this point, the ZZ verses relate to Something and Nothing, and the HNZ authors switch their focus from cosmology to phenomenology. This passage has historically bedeviled commentators because the HNZ authors so clearly seem to be doing something against the original sense of the text they are quoting. Michael Puett takes stock of the various approaches to this problem, and proposes an explanation that makes much better sense of the passage.[20] He notes how many interpreters have tried to read the HNZ author's commentary on these several lines as giving a coherent, if poorly ordered, account of cosmogony. To do this, one must find a way to reorder the HNZ comments to form a linear cosmogonic account.[21] Puett suggests instead that the HNZ authors are actually doing two related things in their commentary: first, giving two abbreviated cosmogonic accounts in their commentary on the first three lines and last four, and second, giving an overall phenomenological account of the process of tracing the world back to its cosmic origin, which the sage undertakes in inner cultivation practice. By applying this message to both a cosmogony starting with the mixing of *qi* 氣, and a cosmogony starting with Something and Nothing, Puett claims:

> The implication would appear to be that one could in fact start anywhere—with any point, in any situation—and undertake the same reconstruction [of how phenomena are linked together through the cosmic origin]. And the goal of the exercise would be to allow the practitioner to see how all things are ultimately and fully inter-related.[22]

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[19] Major et al., HNZ 2/10/18.
[20] See Michael Puett, "Violent Misreadings: The Hermeneutics of Cosmology in the *Huainanzi*" in *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 72 (2000): 29-42.
[21] Two such attempts are Hu Shi, *Huainan Wang Shu* 淮南王淑 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1962); and Charles Le Blanc, "From Ontology to Cosmogony: Notes on Chuang Tzu and Huai-nan Tzu" in *Chinese Ideas about Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde*, edited by Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987).
[22] Puett, "Violent Misreadings," 40.

This argument is supported by the fact that the entire enterprise ends with another ZZ quote, explicitly drawing an analogy between the final stage of the supposed cosmogony and a description of inner cultivation practice.

The final stage, "There was not yet beginning to have 'There was not yet beginning to have "There was Nothing,"'" brings the discussion back to the human realm with another ZZ reference. The description begins with an image of undivided cosmic unity, but then likens the situation to the topic of conversation between characters from ZZ:

> It was like Resplendent Light asking Not Something, who was withdrawn and had lost himself: "I can [conceive of] having Nothing, but I cannot [conceive of] not having Nothing. If I could reach [the state of] Not Nothing, how could even the most marvelous surpass this?"[23]

Resplendent Light and Not Something are speaking about inner cultivation. One purpose of the reference in HNZ is to underscore the relationship between the cosmological position of the Way, and its position in inner cultivation. The difficulty of conceiving and describing an advanced stage of apophatic cultivation is similar to the difficulty of describing the cosmos before any familiar characteristics took shape—indeed, before even the basis of familiar characteristics took shape. Nonetheless, as Puett notes, the HNZ authors portray the two processes as intimately related. This brings us to the central topic of the current chapter. In HNZ, the Way is often given a cosmological gloss, but when unpacking the ethics of the text, it is important to remember that the cosmological descriptions always rely on a practical understanding of the Way originating in inner

[23] Major et al., 86, HNZ 2/1026-27. The ZZ passage appears at ZZ 22/63/1-3, and is somewhat more elaborate than the HNZ version.

cultivation practices. This fact ties together many of the authors' arguments and is central to their rhetorical strategy.

HNZ Chapter 3, "Celestial Patterns" (*Tian Wen* 天文), has a more straight-forward account of cosmogony. Briefly examining it will make clear which parts of the above cosmogony are explicitly cosmological, and which have a wider valence. Without reproducing the entire passage, the basic sequence of cosmogony in HNZ 3.1 goes:

> "Grand Inception" (*Tai Shi* 太始), a state in which nothing was yet formed, produced Nebulous Void (*Xu Kuo* 虛霩), which produced space-time (*yuzhou* 宇宙)[24], which produced the original *qi* (*yuan qi* 元氣). The original *qi* 氣 began to divide according to density, with the lighter forming Heaven (*tian* 天) and the denser forming Earth (*di* 地). The essence (*jing* 精) of Heaven and Earth produced *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, the successive alterations of the yin and yang essences produced the four seasons, and the more complicated alterations of the essences of the seasons produced the myriad things (*wan wu* 萬物, i.e. plants, animals, people, etc.). The very hottest yang *qi* 氣 accumulated to form the sun, and the very coldest yin *qi* 氣 accumulated to form the moon, with the overflow of both forming the stars and planets.[25]

The account goes on to relate the mythology behind why the stars revolve as they do and why rivers in China all flow east. The account given here matches very well with the chronological stages in HNZ 2.1, but makes the last few stages of HNZ 2.1 seem out of place since they do not seem to describe directly the stages of cosmogony. The connection between cosmology and ethics makes the final few stages of the account in HNZ 2.1 appropriate.

The important point in HNZ's narratives of devolution from a golden age and of cosmogony is that cosmological diversification closely parallels moral and political diversification. In the cosmological examples, moreover, the Way stands not only at the

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[24] "Space-time" *yuzhou* 宇宙 refers literally to "roof beams" and "eaves," but by the early Han it is well established as meaning the basic spatial and temporal parameters of the universe. For a more detailed explanation see Major et al., 114 n.1, and 910.

[25] This is my restatement of the cosmogony found in Major et al., 114-115, HNZ 3/18/18-26.

initial origin of the cosmos, but also as the constant origin throughout its existence. No matter how complicated and chaotic the branches may become, the Way remains the same root throughout the cosmos and throughout time. The same is true of moral and political diversification. The world has become impossibly complex, and this has made it easy for people to be distracted from the underlying unity and harmony of their lives, but the means for reconciliation has always and will always remain close at hand because the Way remains the simple and undifferentiated constant in the universe.

For example, HNZ 8.3 contains another account of the devolution of mankind from simple harmony to chaotic disunity, and asserts that a metaphoric return to cosmic origins is the only solution to the problem. This passage opens with a vision of the people of antiquity as living in sublime harmony, free from want and oppression. They "made their *qi* the same as that of Heaven and Earth . . . [and] it was as if they were still immersed in turbid obscurity."[26] These phrases reference the cosmogonic stages of undifferentiated or barely differentiated *qi* 氣 and the "turbid obscurity" (*hun ming* 混冥) of homogeneous matter-energy.[27] In the age of decline people, started dividing into groups just as the primordial unitary *qi* 氣 divided into the myriad things. At this point, the cultural institutions supporting moral characteristics of Humaneness (*ren* 仁), Rightness (*yi* 義), Ritual (*li* 禮), and Music (*yue* 樂) became important because there were no natural checks on conflict and chaos. The authors portray these institutions as

[26] Major et al., 8/62/7-8.

[27] *Hun ming* 混冥 does not appear in the cosmogony in HNZ 3.1, but there is similar language used to describe the murky origins of the cosmos. HNZ 2.1 does use *hun ming* 混冥, but it appears in one of the stages I indentified above as dealing with the Way in particular. Interestingly, in all six cases of *hun ming* 混冥 in HNZ, it is something that humans either "penetrate to" (*tong* 通) or "exist in/are located in" (*zai yu . . . zhi zhong* 在於 . . . 之中). In all cases except at HNZ 21/227/3 it is something positive; in 21/227/3 it is used as a more conventional term for confusion and obscurity.

effective for what they do, but still stop-gap solutions to a more fundamental problem. However, "when the Way and its Potency are established in the world, then the people become pure and simple," and will not do each other harm no matter how great the temptation.[28] This passage is part of the argument for the methods of inner cultivation espoused by the HNZ authors as superior to and inclusive of the lesser practices of, for instance, the Confucian literati. It also illustrates, however, how the reason these techniques are effective is because they allow one to metaphorically return to a harmoniously functioning state analogous to that found at the inception of the cosmos, even when the actual state of the world in which one finds oneself is extremely complex and challenging.

In the previous chapter, I argued that HNZ is a Daoistic text in the same vein as the Syncretist authors of the ZZ and the *Xinshu* chapters of GZ. We can find further evidence of this relationship in the HNZ authors' *dao*-centric cosmology and its place in their treatment of sagehood and ideal action. Rather than advocating a return to the idyllic golden age, the HNZ authors recognize that the complexity of a large, hierarchical society is a necessary outcome of a process analogous to cosmic differentiation. Even though such a complex world tends to distract and disorient people from their tendencies to act harmoniously, there is nothing evil *per se* about complexity. The Way underlies the cosmos no matter how complicated it becomes, and the best method for dealing with challenging complexity is always to act in accordance with the Way.

The HNZ's cosmology therefore underwrites the meta-ethics for sagely action. The rest of this chapter will focus on concepts important to this scheme so that we can

[28] Major et al., 272, HNZ 8/62/15.

better understand how the HNZ authors conceive of the possibilities for an ideal human life.

B. *Dao* 道 and *De* 德: The Way and Potency

The Way, *dao* 道, is an important philosophical term throughout early Chinese literature, but HNZ participates in the classical Daoist tradition of ascribing to the Way central import in both cosmology and ethics. In terms of the language used to describe *dao* and the central position it takes, HNZ is not especially innovative among classical Daoistic texts. The innovation of the HNZ authors comes from how they build out the implications for the centrality of *dao* 道.

As we have seen, *dao* 道 in HNZ occupies the central cosmological position, in that it is the root of the cosmos. In the text's several cosmogonic accounts, *dao* 道 stands at the beginning when the cosmos was an undifferentiated void, and it causes the initial differentiation of Heaven and Earth, yin and yang, etc. The nature of that initial cosmological phase has important implications for how *dao* 道 operates in the diversified cosmos. Most importantly, *dao* 道 remains constantly present throughout the cosmos, acting as the central support of the myriad things and author of their natural transformations. It also maintains the primordial unity and unfathomable obscurity of the cosmic origin. The opening passage of Chapter 1, "Originating in the Way" (*Yuan Dao* 元道), says of *dao* 道:

> It covers Heaven and upholds Earth.
> It extends the four directions
> and divides the eight end points.
> So high, it cannot be reached.

So deep, it cannot be fathomed.
It embraces and enfolds Heaven and Earth
It endows and bestows the Formless.
Flowing along like a wellspring, bubbling up like a font,
it is empty but gradually becomes full.
Roiling and boiling,
it is murky but gradually becomes clear.[29]

This passage, the opening verse of HNZ, evokes well the authors' sense that *dao* 道 is a pervasive, ever-present phenomenon. The very dimensions of the cosmos follow along with it, and it extends to all points within Heaven and Earth. The end of the opening verse is also significant in its portrayal of the Way's function as the support and author of the phenomenal world:

It stretches out the four binding cords and restrains yin and yang.
It suspends the cosmic rafters and displays the Three Luminaries.
Intensely saturating and soaking,
Intensely subtle and minute.
Mountains are high because of it.
Abysses are deep because of it.
Beasts can run because of it.
Birds can fly because of it.
The sun and moon are bright because of it.
The stars and timekeepers move because of it.
Qilins wander freely because of it.
Phoenixes soar because of it.[30]

This part of the verse emphasizes how various parts of the cosmos—and by implication, *every* part of the cosmos—behaves in its characteristic way because of *dao* 道. Each of the things listed "uses" (*yi* 以) *dao* 道 in order to do its characteristic activity or hold its

[29] Major et al., 48, HNZ 1/1/3-4.
[30] Major et al., 49, HNZ 1/1/6-8. Several terms here may require explanation. First, "stretches out" (*heng* 横) and "restrains" (*han* 含) in English seem to imply more tension than in the Chinese. *Heng* 横 is simply "to stretch out horizontally" in the sense of "the horizon stretched out before him." *Han* 含 literally means "to hold in the mouth" and by metaphorical extension, "to contain within," so the sense is more passive than the English "restrain" suggests. "The cosmic rafters" (*yuzhou* 宇宙) is translated elsewhere as "time and space." See above, n.22. The "Three Luminaries" are the sun, moon, and stars/planets. *Qilin*s are mythical Chinese animals which, along with phoenixes, appear as auspicious omens. They are often translated as "unicorns." The "timekeepers" (*li* 歷) are the constellations and other celestial bodies used to reckon time on scales longer than a day or month.

characteristic attribute.[31] In fact, even though the authors can point to other more specific ways of "using" *dao* 道, they maintain that it lacks any of the accompanying characteristics of other things that can be "used" in a conventional sense:

> The most exalted Way
> generates the myriad things but does not possess them,
> completes the transforming images but does not dominate them.
> Creatures that walk on hooves and breathe through beaks, that fly through the air and wiggle on the ground,
> depend on it for life, yet none understands its Potency;
> depend on it for death, yet none is able to resent it.
> Those who attain it and profit are unable to praise it;
> those who use it and lose are unable to blame it.[32]

There are several important characterizations of the Way in this passage. First, the Way literally generates (*sheng* 生) the myriad things, but it does not "possess" (*you* 有) them. As before, *dao* 道 is seen as the reason the myriad things exist in the first place, but because it does not possess them, the authors assert that *dao* 道 bears no direct, controlling relationship with things once they come into being. Similarly, *dao* 道 is what causes the trigrams to "complete" (*cheng* 成) their ordinal cycle, but it does so without specifically "dominating" or "directing" (*zai* 宰) them. In the *Yijing*, the lines of the sixty-four hexagrams are understood to "transform" (*hua* 化) according to a specific order, and the HNZ authors assert that this process can be attributed to *dao* 道, but not because of any direct control. This is also why those who experience profit or loss are unable to praise or blame *dao* 道—because even though it is behind the transformation of

[31] *Yi* 以 can be translated as "use," but it is more of a grammatical particle rather than an active verb, and means something more like "to use in order to do X" or "to do X by means of…", where X is the verb that follows it. The sense of all of these phrases, therefore, is not necessarily that each thing uses *dao* 道 as a tool, but rather that *dao* 道 is the property by which these things all happen naturally.

[32] Major et al., 51, HNZ 1/1/19-20. The "transforming images" (*hua xiang* 化象) are the eight trigrams (*ba gua* 八卦), which form the basis of the divinatory and cosmographic system of the *Yijing* 易經.

good and bad fortune, it is not a causal factor for their gain or loss in the same way that observable, material conditions are. Nevertheless, the authors maintain that *dao* 道 is indeed the author of such alterations.

As I have shown above, the HNZ authors attribute to the *dao* 道 a primary cosmological place, but these most recent examples point to the pragmatic valence of the term. The sense that we get from the above passage is that the sequence of change and transformation in the cosmos, including the vagaries of individual fortune, all happen because of *dao* 道. However, *dao* 道 does not cause these things to happen in the sense of exerting active control over them. Instead, the HNZ authors suggest that change and transformation happens naturally, as a matter of course, and that this fact can simply be *ascribed* to *dao* 道. The pragmatic valence of *dao* 道 in this passage, therefore, is the property of spontaneous, natural change. It is *the fact that* things change and transform of their own accord, often seeming to accord with orderly cycles or patterns. This property figures prominently in the practical methods advocated by the HNZ authors.

The HNZ authors contrast spontaneous, natural change with contrived, human-centered change, and this contrast also differentiates inferior methods from the "techniques of the Way."[33] Humans tend to initiate change based on their limited ego-centric concerns, and in so doing often impede the proper functioning of the cosmos. For instance, in HNZ 1.6 the authors observe:

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[33] "Techniques of the Way" (*dao shu* 道樹) is a relatively common term in HNZ, used to denote the sagely methods of thought and conduct that make use of the special faculties cultivated by the sage. It is conceptually related to "Techniques of the Mind" (*xin shu* 心術) in that Techniques of the Mind refers to the specific set of inner cultivation techniques used by sages to control their heart-minds (*xin* 心) so that they will naturally accord with the Way. Techniques of the Way is more of a catch-all term for the fundamental *dao*-centric method of the sages. I cover this and related concepts in greater detail below in my Chapter V.

In ancient times, Gun of Xia made a city wall twenty-four feet high, but the Lords of the Land turned against him and those who dwelled beyond the seas had deceitful hearts. [His son] Yu understood that the world had become rebellious and thereupon knocked down the wall, filled in the moat surrounding the city, gave away their resources, burned their armor and weapons, and treated everyone with beneficence. And so the lands beyond the Four Seas respectfully submitted, and the four Yi tribes brought tribute. . . . Thus when a contrived heart is hidden in your chest, your purity will not glisten and your spiritlike Potency will not be whole. When what lies within your own person is not known to you, how can people from afar cherish you?[34]

The HNZ authors use this example to illustrate a case of "letting go of the great Way and relying on inferior methods."[35] Sage-king Yu's father, Gun, sought the loyalty of the Lords of the Land and the submission of foreign peoples by aggressive shows of strength, creating high earthen walls and accumulating weapons. This strategy backfired when the world rebelled against him. Yu corrected the problem by reversing his father's aggression and instead adopted a policy of beneficence. The problem, we learn, is that Gun apparently had "a contrived heart hidden in [his] chest" (*ji xie zhi xin cang yu xiong zhong* 機械之心藏於胸中), whereas his son Yu did not and therefore Yu's "purity glistened" (*chun bai cui* 純白粹) and his "spiritlike Potency was whole" (*shen de quan* 神德全).[36] Moreover, the last line of the quoted passage implies that Gun may not have known he had such a heart inside of him. It also means that Yu necessarily "knew what lay within his own person" (*zai shen zhe zhi* 在身者知). The important point is that Yu did not determine his actions by contriving a plan to get what he wanted, but instead, "complied with the norms of the Way and followed the naturalness of Heaven and Earth"

[34] Major et al., 54-55 with my emendations, HNZ 1/3/2-6. For more information on the mythology behind Gun and Yu, see Major et al., 55 n.22, n.24.
[35] Major et al., 54, HNZ 1/3/1.
[36] Interestingly, the "contrived heart," *ji xie zhi xin* 機械之心, is literally "a heart of mechanisms and contrivances." The compound *jixie* 機械 in modern Chinese means "a mechanism" or "mechanical," and both components carry a mechanical sense in classical Chinese.

(*xun dao li zhi shu, yin tian di zhi ziran* 循道理之數, 因天地之自然).[37] This was a case of his using the Techniques of the Way.

Because the Way is the cosmic root, the Techniques of the Way will necessarily be more comprehensive than any other method. To make this point more vividly, the HNZ authors use the analogy of fishing with a line and fishing with a net:

> Now if someone spends an entire day pole-fishing along a riverbank he will not be able to fill up even a hand basket. Even though he may have hooked barbs and sharp spears, fine line and fragrant bait, and, in addition, the skills of [legendary anglers] Zhan He or Juan Xuan, he would still be unable to compete with the catch hauled in by a trawling net . . . Why is this? It is because what he is holding is small [by comparison].
>
> If you stretch out the world and make it your basket
> and follow the courses of rivers and oceans and make them your trawling net,
>
> How could you lose any fish or miss any birds? Thus the arrow cannot match the spear; the spear cannot match the trawling net; but the trawling net cannot match the Formless Image.[38]

This analogy clearly applies to more than just fishing, and the point is that methods that rely on narrow interests are not as comprehensive and effective as those that rely on the most expansive interests of the Way. The fisherman using a pole focuses only on catching one fish at a time. No matter how effective he may be in that endeavor, the method limits him to one fish at a time. The trawling net catches many fish at once, but it is still limited to the endeavor of fish-catching. The method of "the Formless Image" (*wu xing zhi xiang* 無形之像) necessarily encompasses any given endeavor and is universally applicable. By "using" *dao* 道 in this way, one can metaphorically "use" the whole world and its physical landscape as one's basket and net.[39] The reasoning for this

[37] Major et al., 55, HNZ 1/3/11-12.

[38] Major et al., HNZ 1/2/21-25. As Major et al. note (54 n.20), the "Formless Image" is a metaphor for the Way, which lacks any kind of form.

[39] I suspect that there is a bit more detail to the metaphor. The basket is what one wishes to fill, and the net is what one uses to fill it, therefore by using the "Formless Image" one seeks to benefit the entire world by using all of what is relevant to the task. I am not entirely confident, however, that the text fully supports this reading.

assertion primarily relies on the cosmological valence of *dao* 道, but as we have seen in the example of Gun and Yu, the expansiveness and pervasiveness of the Way also has a pragmatic valence central to personal conduct. When we examine the practical implications of relying on the Way—how one follows *dao* 道 on a practical, personal level—the internal landscape becomes much more important than the external.

The inward turn and the subsequent expression of purity and spiritlike Potency will be important for understanding the foundations of how people are able to follow the Way in the first place. The HNZ authors consistently emphasize the "interior" (*nei* 內) as the site where one finds all the resources necessary for cultivation and eventually for sagely action. The "exterior" (*wai* 外) is the site of all the things which, when afforded undue attention, distract one from the Way. For instance, "sages internally cultivate the root [of the Way within them], and do not externally adorn themselves with its branches."[40] Just as the Way is the root of the cosmos, it is also the root of each individual, and sages "know how to guard this root."[41] Guarding the internal root that is the source from which things arise is essentially what the HNZ authors refer to as the Techniques of the Way.

The HNZ authors use *de* 德, Potency, to denote the force of actions or processes that conform with *dao* 道, and therefore also to denote in certain situations the moral and charismatic force of the sage. As we observed in the section on cosmogony above, the HNZ authors often refer to antiquity as the time of "utmost" or "perfect" (*zhi* 至) Potency.

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[40] Major et al., 59, HNZ 1/4/22.
[41] Major et al., 59, HNZ 1/4/25. "The myriad things all have a source from which they arise; [the sages] alone understand how to guard this root" (*wanwu you suo sheng, er du zhi shoul qi gen* 萬物有所生, 而獨知守其根).

This is because antiquity was closer to the cosmic origin, and therefore less differentiated from the Way. The *de* 德 of the situation was such that people excelled at their endeavors, interacted well with one another, and natural disasters did not happen.[42] In ages more differentiated from the Way, the overall *de* 德 in the situation declined, leading to a greater level of entropy, but since individual things can and do conform to the norms of the Way, there can be individual instances of *de* 德. For instance, in HNZ 1.12 the authors use water as an example of something that conforms especially well to the Way, and therefore exhibits "Perfect Potency."[43] For humans, the HNZ authors give a direct definition:

> To block off the nine orifices,
> to store up the attention of the mind,
> to discard hearing and vision,
> to return to having no awareness,
> to vastly wander outside the dust and dirt and freely roam in the activity of effortlessness, to inhale the yin and exhale the yang, and to completely harmonize with the myriad things; this is Potency.[44]

The context of this passage is a discussion of how sages "entrust their spirits to the Numinous Storehouse and return to the beginning of the myriad things.[45] In defining Potency in terms of how the sage behaves, this passage identifies the moral character of *de* 德.[46] It also identifies the source of Potency in sages as their ability to stay close to

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[42] See, for instance, the description of *zhi de zhi shi* 至德之世, the age of Utmost Potency, in Major et al., 104-105, HNZ 2/25/27.

[43] See Major et al., 62-63, HNZ 1/5/24-1/6/7. Water is a particularly important image here and throughout classical Daoist literature because its natural properties are taken as metaphors for the Way. For more on water as a metaphor for the Way, see Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

[44] Major et al., 96, HNZ 2/14/9-10.

[45] Major et al., 95, HNZ 2/14/1. The "Numinous Storehouse" (*ling fu* 靈府) is a technical term in Daoist inner cultivation materials, and refers to the metaphorical abode of the numinous mind (*shen* 神) and/or repository of *jing* 精.

[46] In certain other contexts in HNZ Major et al. even translate *de* 德 as "moral Potency" since in those cases it denotes the normative force of sagely action that influences others to act well. The basic meaning of *de*

the Way and interact harmoniously with the myriad things. We learn that doing so requires restricting sensory input and concentrating the mind's powers of attention. Even more fundamentally, if mysteriously, it requires "returning to having no awareness" (*fan wu shi* 反無識) and/or "returning to the beginning of the myriad things" (*gui yu wanwu zhi chu* 歸於萬物之初). Both of these phrases emphasize the feature of return to a cosmological and psychological root as a basic element of sagely practice. In both cases, the root is elsewhere characterized as vacuous, tranquil, quiet, and undifferentiated.

HNZ 2.13 covers the topic of how exactly one cultivates Potency, and brings us to the next set of terms important for the root of HNZ's ethical program:

> Tranquility and calmness are that by which the nature is nourished.
> Harmony and vacuity are that by which Potency is nurtured.
> When what is external does not disturb what is internal, then our nature attains what is suitable to it.
> When the harmony of nature is not disturbed, then Potency will rest securely in its position. . .
> This may be called being able to embody the Way.[47]

Those people who "embody the Way" (*ti dao* 體道) do so by implementing and responding to certain innate properties of their particular, contextualized existence. As we learned above, the HNZ authors maintain that these personal properties are internal to an individual. This passage mentions the first important property, nature (*xing* 性), and later goes on to discuss the next two, destiny or life-circumstances (*ming* 命) and authentic responses or essential factors (*qing* 情). Together these three form a compound,

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德 as the force derived from conforming to the Way remains, however. In other early Chinese texts, *de* 德 has often been translated as "Virtue." The controversy surrounding the use of Virtue for *de* 德 is beyond the present discussion.

[47] Major et al., 103, HNZ 2/17/8-9.

"the essentials of nature and destiny" (*xingming zhi qing* 性命之情) that becomes the basis for HNZ's practical ethics.

Before proceeding to *xing* 性, *ming* 命, and *qing* 情, I should briefly re-emphasize the importance of the internal-external dichotomy in HNZ. As I mentioned above, the HNZ authors consistently maintain that all the necessary resources for ideal moral action are internal to the individual. However, this does not mean that the sage must neglect the external. Indeed, as we will see in the discussion of *ming* 命 and *qing* 情 below, external conditions determine much of the internal resources on which the sage draws. The important point of the internal-external distinction is that to act optimally one must rely on certain parts of one's own individual experience when navigating a situation, and not allow the consistency of that experience to be disrupted by extrinsic factors.

The HNZ authors believe one's innate faculties flawlessly process information from one's environment to produce impulses toward ideal action. The problem people encounter that prevents them from enacting the ideal is that they mistakenly identify extrinsic impulses as the ones they ought to follow. HNZ 1.16 explores this problem by explaining why sensory pleasures like passionate music and the excitement of hunting always leave one unfulfilled:

> [The reason for this is that] you do not use what is intrinsic to bring contentment to what is extrinsic but, rather, use what is extrinsic to bring contentment to what is intrinsic. So when the music is playing, you are happy, but when the songs end, you are sad. . . . If you examine the reasons for this, you cannot grasp their shapes, yet every day because of this, you injure your vitality and neglect your [deepest] realizations. Therefore, if you do not realize the intrinsic [nature] that lies within you, then you will bestow your natural endowment [of Quintessential Spirit] on external things and use it to falsely adorn yourself.[48]

[48] Major et al., 70, HNZ 1/8/3-5.

The "intrinsic" (*nei* 內) is the same term translated elsewhere as "internal"; likewise, "extrinsic" (*wai* 外) is elsewhere translated as "external." The sense of the passage is that consistent "contentment" (*le* 樂) is only achievable through that which is consistently present in one's experience—namely, the "intrinsic." We know from the context of the passage that the main focus of "the intrinsic" is one's innate nature, *xing* 性. "Realizing" or "attaining" (*de* 得) one's internal resources, one then is able to interact with the external world more consistently and successfully, without squandering one's vitality. This is in marked contrast to the situation where one focuses instead on "obtaining" (*de* 得) only external goods, hoping thereby to bring internal contentment. The HNZ authors believe that this approach is fundamentally flawed, because, as they say in HNZ 1.17, "The essentials of the world: / do not lie in the Other / but instead lie in the self; / do not lie in other people / but instead lie in your own person."[49] In this case, the "essentials of the world" (*tian xia zhi yao* 天下至要) refers to the most basic elements of the world one needs to understand to act well—all of which can be found within one's own person.

When one succeeds in grasping these most essential elements of one's person, the result is unification with the Way, and therefore the attainment of Potency and sagely action. HNZ 1.18 discusses how the sage ends up metaphorically "possessing the entire world" (*you tian xia* 有天下) not by wielding temporal power, but instead by "self-attainment—that's all" (*zi de er yi* 自得而已).[50] The authors explain, "What I call 'self-

[49] Major et al., 71, HNZ 1/8/15-16.

[50] Major et al., 72, HNZ 1/8/20-21. This is my own translation of *zi de er yi* 自得而已. Major et al. have "simply realizing it [the Way] yourself." Although we can reasonably infer the object of *de* 得, "to get, to attain," as the Way, I do not think it is necessary for understanding the sense of the passage. The object seems to be intentionally left out so that the force of the statement rests on the verb *de* 得. That is, the passage emphasizes the act of self-attaining, or the spontaneous character of the attainment, not necessarily

attainment' means to fulfill your own person. To fulfill your own person is to become unified with the Way."[51] Here we learn that self-attainment consists of "fulfilling your person" (*quan shen* 全身), which we could also translate "completing your person." Since the Way is the cosmic principle that generates and sustains the myriad things, as well as leads the processes of natural change, it makes sense that one's individual inner resources would also be generated and regulated by the Way. Thus, when one attains or realizes (*de* 得) these basic innate characteristics, one becomes "unified with the Way" (*yu dao wei yi* 與道為一).

Later in this passage, we learn more about what it means to fulfill or complete one's person:

> [As for exciting sensory pleasures], sages experience them but not so much as to dominate their Quintessential Spirit or to disrupt their vital energy and concentration or cause their minds to be enticed away from their genuine dispositions and nature. . . . [Likewise, as for the distractions of hardship], sages experience them, but they do not make them worried or angry or make them lose what makes them self-contented. What are the reasons for this? Because they intrinsically have the means to penetrate to the Mechanism of Heaven, and they do not allow honor or debasement, poverty, or wealth to make them weary and lose their awareness of their Potency.[52]

The examples cited here—of living with the means to enjoy many sensory pleasures, and of living in the hardship of poverty and obscurity—normally cause people to become mired in addiction or "depressed, and unable to concentrate on anything," respectively.[53] Both situations normally cause one's attention to break from the internal and fixate on the external, thus ruining the integrity or wholeness of one's person. Sages can go through

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what is attained. Moreover, NY has several instances of zi 自+verb constructions that resonate strongly with the sense here. For instance, see GZ 16.1/115/22-23, 16.1/116/14, and 16.1/117/28-29.

[51] Major et al., 72, HNZ 1/8/25.

[52] Major et al., 72-73 with my emendations, HNZ 1/8/27-1/9/3.

[53] See Major et al., 72, HNZ 1/8/27 and Major et al., 73, HNZ 1/9/2, respectively. The passage works on a parallelism between the description of problems caused by both luxury and hardship. Luxury causes one's attention to be unduly fixated and poverty causes one's attention to be unduly dispersed.

the same conditions, but retain their personal integrity because their minds are not "enticed away from their genuine dispositions and nature" (*churan shi qi qingxing* 怵然失其情性), and do not "lose what makes them self-contented" (*shi qi suo yi zile* 失其所以自樂). We know from previous passages that one's "genuine dispositions and nature" (*qingxing* 情性) are innate, and that it allows one to be content (*le* 樂) with external circumstances.[54] We learn here that these qualities are important because they are "the means to penetrate to the Mechanism of Heaven" (*yi tong yu tianji* 以通于天機) and thereby consistently conform to the Way and maintain "awareness of one's Potency" (*zhi de* 志德).[55] So, no matter the material means they happen to possess, sages are able to make optimal use of whatever external circumstances they find because they know how to make use of innate, internal resources. These resources are the key to accessing the Way and Potency, and therefore to ideal action in general. The rest of this chapter explores just what these innate resources are, and how they allow one to participate in ideal action.

C. *Xing* 性: Human Nature or Innate Endowment

"Nature" (*xing* 性) is the most important term in HNZ's account of anthropology and human psychology. The opening line of Chapter 11 mostly encapsulates the text's approach: "Following nature and putting it into practice is called 'the Way'; / attaining

[54] I have not cited a passage that mentions genuine dispositions *qing* 情 in this respect yet, but the HNZ authors do consider *qing* 情 innate in the same way. See below for more on the relationship between the two.
[55] The "Mechanism of Heaven" or "Heavenly dynamism" (*tianji* 天機) is "a metaphorical term for the spontaneous nature and patterns of the cosmos, infused by the Way." Major et al., 95n.47.

one's Heaven[-born] nature is called 'Potency.'"[56] This line equates *dao* 道 with the practice of following one's *xing* 性, and *de* 德 with attaining or grasping what one's *xing* 性 is.[57] This is significant because we begin to see the relationship between the practical and cosmological. *Dao* 道 here is the same *dao* 道 encountered above in the cosmological sense. *Dao* 道, The Way, is both the root of the cosmos and the root of each individual thing within it. In this case, the method for coordinating with the Way relies on identifying and following one's *xing* 性. So what, precisely, is *xing* 性?

Xing 性 is a concept readily translated as "nature," and refers to the set of all qualities with which a thing is imbued simply by virtue of its basic constitution.[58] For human beings, this includes the form of the body and the composition of the mind, as well as one's basic disposition to certain actions. In the case of these very general characteristics, we could translate *xing* 性 as "human nature," and it will include things like the tendency for humans to have four limbs and a head, to walk upright, live in social groups, and to be "benefited" (*li* 利) by food and "harmed" (*hai* 害) by cold and the elements. The HNZ authors hold that each species among the myriad creatures, however, has its own *xing* 性:

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[56] Major et al., 397, HNZ 11/93/20.

[57] The second part of the line works on a pun between *de* 得 and *de* 德, which is a common trope in many early Chinese texts.

[58] Dan Robins has recently suggested that xing 性 (at least in late Warring States literature) perhaps is not so readily translated as "nature," especially in the case of "human nature." This suggestion is based on a very specific understanding of the term "human nature" to mean *universal* human nature, in the sense that it is used in the West and in modern Chinese (as *ren xing* 人性). However, as long as we do not extend these assumptions, I find that the translation "nature" works very well in most cases. As Robins points out, the more important sense of *xing* 性 is that it indicates properties of organisms that are self-so (*ziran* 自然), and therefore spontaneous. See Dan Robins, "The Warring States Concept of *Xing*" in *Dao* 10 no.1 (February 2011): 31-51.

> Now consider the myriad things of this world, even spiders and wasps that creep and crawl. All know what they like and dislike, what brings them benefit and harm. Why? It is because of the nature within that never leaves them. If it were to suddenly leave them, their bones and flesh would have no constant guide.[59]

So the *xing* 性 of insects, for instance, will be different from that of humans because insects have a different physical form, behave differently, and are benefited and harmed by different things.

Xing 性 also determines the kinds of reactions things can have to situations. For instance, part of a human's *xing* 性 is the ability to feel certain emotions, so in a given situation one aspect of a person's reaction can be emotional. The same is not true of insects because insects cannot react with emotion. Similarly, certain things are beyond human capabilities by nature. For instance, humans can only run so fast, so when startled we cannot respond by running away as swiftly as a horse could.

Because *xing* 性 determines what kinds of reactions one can have, and which are more likely given one's native endowment, it often has a slight vector quality. That is, it includes not only what something is capable of doing, but also what it is likely to do. It is thus often appropriate in certain contexts to translate *xing* 性 as "innate dispositions."[60] For instance, as mentioned above, humans have the tendency to be benefited by food and harmed by the elements, and this is part of their *xing* 性. This means that humans will

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[59] HNZ 1/9/20-21, Liu et al., 75, with my emendations.

[60] See below for how *qing* 情 is also often translated as "innate dispositions." The relationship between the two terms is quite complicated. We can safely say that *qing* 情 always has a vector property, and therefore always indicates a disposition to proceed in a certain direction. *Xing* 性, however, only occasionally indicates a tendency to a specific direction. The major distinction in those cases is that *xing* 性 provides the *capacity* to act in a specific direction, while *qing* 情 provides that actual instance of the disposition.

generally seek food when hungry and seek warmth when cold. Thus, this part of their *xing* 性 is a disposition toward food and away from cold.[61]

Even though *xing* 性 can be translated as nature, and even innate nature, it is not entirely given and determined at birth. HNZ and other early Chinese texts often emphasize how *xing* 性 is something that one is endowed with by Heaven at birth. By citing Heaven as the power that endows one with *xing* 性, the authors emphasize the defining feature of *xing* 性 as something entirely beyond one's ability to choose. That does not, however, mean that *xing* 性 is fixed once and for all at birth. Indeed, as Graham notes, another important aspect of *xing* 性 is that it provides not only one's initial endowment at birth, but also the endowment one possesses as one grows and changes throughout one's life.[62] The HNZ authors also admit that "physical form and innate nature cannot be changed" (*xing xing bu ke yi* 形性不可易).[63] This is only to say, however, that *xing* 性 cannot be changed because one wills it to change beyond certain limits of what is possible. In HNZ 19.4 the authors argue that one's *xing* 性 places limits on what one can do, but that within those limits one can cultivate abilities, and one's abilities can descend into weakness through disuse.[64] *Xing* 性 can also evolve with changing circumstances, though again, not outside the basic parameters of what human-*xing* 性 can encompass. For instance, HNZ 14.36 holds that:

As a general rule, human nature

[61] So in this instance, the fact that people are disposed to seek food when hungry is due to *xing* 性, while an actual instance of their pursuing food is due to *qing* 情.
[62] A. C. Graham, "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature" in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 13-14.
[63] Major et al., 57, HNZ 1/4/2.
[64] Major et al., 773-775, HNZ 19/204/20-27.

is glittering when young,
is violent and vigorous when mature,
and loves what brings it benefit when elderly.
In the course of one's life, a person undergoes these several alterations.[65]

So again, as Graham noted, even though one has only a single *xing* 性, it can and does undergo some alterations over time. Nevertheless, the overall trajectory of the alterations—as from youth to old age—is itself something encoded in *xing* 性, and therefore encompasses one's limits and abilities at each stage of life.

One's *xing* 性 is in one sense human nature, but there is also an individual, personal element to *xing* 性 that will be just as important for HNZ's ethics. This is basically a further implication of *xing* 性 as basic endowment. Just as *xing* 性 determines one's general shape as a human, it also determines one's particular shape. In this sense it is something like a genetic disposition.[66] For instance, HNZ 19.4 cites Yi's long left arm as the reason for his extraordinary skill at archery.[67] Part of his *xing* 性 was to have his body develop so as to give him more ability—or at least capacity—than others in this regard.

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[65] Major et al., 554, HNZ 14/137/8-9. HNZ Chapter 14, "Sayings Explained" (*Quan Yan* 詮言), consists of a set of "sayings" (*yan* 言) followed by the HNZ authors' comments. The sayings presumably existed before the HNZ authors made use of them. The first part of this quotation, outlining the three stages of human nature, is a saying. The authors, however, immediately agree with the point about human nature, and use it to support a different point. I have therefore cited it as evidence of the HNZ authors' own views on human nature.

[66] Roth uses a similar description for *xing* 性 in his Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Zhuangzi. See Harold Roth, "Zhuangzi," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/zhuangzi/. Ames also addresses the genetic aspect of *xing* 性, but provides important clarifications about how, at least in Mencius, it is decidedly not a static property. See Roger T. Ames, "The Mencian Concept of *Ren Xing* 人性: Does it Mean 'Human Nature'?" in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, edited by Henry Rosemont, Jr. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991): 143-175.

[67] Major et al., 776, HNZ 19/205/14. Yi is a legendary archer of antiquity. His long left arm allowed him to bend a bow more deeply. See Major et al., 776 n.30.

The overall content of *xing* 性, then, includes basic human qualities and abilities, as well as qualities and abilities specific to individuals. One's *xing* 性 therefore determines what one is capable of, and puts boundaries on the set of possible responses one could have in a particular situation. As HNZ 9.17 has it, "If one's strength surpasses his burden, lifting it will not be heavy; / if one's ability is appropriate to the task, accomplishing it will not be difficult."[68] When one tries to force a reaction that is beyond one's capabilities, the HNZ authors say that this "harms" (*hai* 害), "scatters" (*hua* 滑), or "coerces" (*po* 迫) one's nature.[69] As we learned above, one of the fundamental imperatives of HNZ's ethics is to keep one's nature whole, and not do violence to it. When one reaches beyond the capacities afforded by one's *xing* 性, one's person becomes disrupted internally. HNZ 11.5 explains that,

> The nature of human beings has no depravity; having been long immersed in customs, [people] change. If one changes and forgets the root, it is as if [the customs one has acquired] have merged with one's nature.
> Thus
>> The sun and the moon are inclined to brilliance, but floating clouds cover them;
>> the water of the river is inclined to purity, but sand and rocks sully it.
>> The nature of human beings is inclined to equilibrium, but wants and desires harm it.
>
> Only the sage can leave things aside and return to himself.[70]

When the sage "leaves things aside and returns to himself" (*qian wu er fan ji* 遣物而反己) he is able to act in accordance with his full native capacities. We will see in the next chapter just what the sage does to "leave things aside," but for now it is important to note

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[68] Major et al., 310, HNZ 9/72/8-9.

[69] The particular passage that uses these last two verbs is Major et al., 256, HNZ 7/60/11, and it is actually the inner harmony engendered by following one's *xing* 性 that is "scattered" in that passage, but both verbs are consistent with many other examples throughout the text. *Hai* 害 "to harm" is used in the next passage cited below.

[70] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/95/28-11/96-1.

that "returning to the self" indicates relying on *xing* 性 as a guide for how to act. HNZ 11.5 continues:

> Someone who boards a boat and becomes confused, not knowing west from east, will see the Dipper and the Pole Star and become oriented. Nature is likewise a Dipper and Pole Star for human beings.
>
> If one possesses that by which one can see oneself, then one will not miss the genuine dispositions of things.
>
> If one lacks that by which one can see oneself, then one will be agitated and ensnared.[71]

This passage resonates with the overall vision for ethics in HNZ: as complicated and confusing as the world may be, one constantly and inherently has very close at hand all the necessary tools to orient oneself. Here we learn that *xing* 性 is the orienting capacity each person possesses to navigate well her individual world. We also learn that when one relies on *xing* 性 in this way, it is a case of "possessing that by which one can see oneself" (*you yi zi jian* 有以自見), and that this capacity for "seeing oneself" or "spontaneous perception" allows one also to apprehend the "genuine dispositions of things" (*wu zhi qing* 物之情).[72] "Genuine dispositions" (*qing* 情) are another foundational concept in HNZ's ethics and will be covered below. It is also important to note that, as before, lacking the ability to work with one's *xing* 性 leads to agitation and disorder within oneself.

The HNZ authors conceive of this disruption as disordered psycho-physical energy (*qi* 氣), and the effects include loss of vitality, anxiety, and inability to

[71] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/1-3.

[72] It is difficult to render in English, but by giving two possible translations of *zi jian* 自見 ("seeing oneself" and "spontaneously perceive" I have tried to capture the dual meanings possible in the original. *Zi* 自 modifies the verb *jian* 見 "to see, to perceive," and means "self-originated, automatic, spontaneous" or simply "self." In one way it seems to indicate the object of what is perceived ("to see one's self") but in another it seems to indicate the manner in which something is perceived. In the latter case the meaning is more like "to perceive something spontaneously." This passage, HNZ 11.5 is absolutely central to ethics in HNZ, and I return to these issues in much greater detail below in my Chapter V.

concentrate or act effectively. Indeed, "the actions of one who gives free rein to desires and loses [awareness] of his nature have never been correct."[73] Thus, in order to flourish, one must understand one's innermost capabilities and limits, and act only within those constraints.

In early China, there is also an extensive debate about the overall character of human *xing* 性, and its relevance to ethics. Mencius, in responding to Yangist arguments about what constitutes *xing* 性, famously holds that human *xing* 性 is "good" (*shan* 善), and that nurturing it to develop along its natural course will necessarily lead to upright behavior. Xunzi famously disagrees, arguing that human *xing* 性 is "ugly" (*e* 惡), and that, in the absence of civilizing influences, people will naturally develop toward immorality. As Graham notes, however, the debate about *xing* 性 in early China is only tangentially about inherent goodness or badness.[74] Certain figures do hold definite views on the issue of goodness or badness, but only enumerate them when challenged. Otherwise, they tend to use *xing* 性 in its overall valence of natural endowment and fit it into their ethics accordingly.

The HNZ authors do not address the debate about the goodness or badness of *xing* 性, but they are adamant that the defining attribute of human *xing* 性 is tranquility.

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[73] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/4-5.

[74] Graham, "Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 57-58. Graham demonstrates how Mencius only argues for the goodness of nature when someone directly puts the question to him. Otherwise, Mencius treats *xing* 性 only as it is relevant to the rest of his ethical program. When replying to the question about the goodness or badness of nature, however, Mencius needs to be consistent with the rest of his program, and Graham argues effectively that he is. The point, however, is that the Mencian doctrine of human nature as good is not necessarily the focal point of the entire Mencian program. Xunzi likewise argues for the ugliness of nature as a direct challenge to Mencius on that particular issue, but it is by no means the pivot of his program.

Cultivating tranquility and calm also has the opposite effect of attachment to lusts and desire, which harm *xing* 性. Returning to a passage cited earlier,

> Tranquility and calmness are that by which the nature is nourished.
> Harmony and vacuity are that by which Potency is nurtured.
> When what is external does not disturb what is internal, then our nature attains what is suitable to it.
> When harmony of nature is not disturbed, then Potency will rest securely in its position.
> Nurturing life so as to order the age,
> embracing Potency so as to complete our years,
> This may be called being able to embody the Way.[75]

"Nourishing" (*yang* 養) is essentially the opposite of harming or scattering, and as we might expect, the way one nourishes *xing* 性 is the opposite of how one harms it. As we saw above, the *xing* 性 is internal, and when there is undue focus on the external, the internal is harmed. So cultivating tranquility and calm allow one to focus instead on the internal and reap the benefits that this brings. In a crucial passage, HNZ 1.5 explains why it is so important to do this:

> The affairs of the world cannot be deliberately controlled.
> You must draw them out by following their natural direction.
> The alterations of the myriad things cannot be fathomed.
> You must grasp their essential tendencies and guide them to their homes.
>
> When a water mirror comes in contact with shapes, it is not because of wisdom and precedent that it is able to flawlessly reflect the square, round, crooked, and straight. Therefore, the echo does not respond at random, and the shadow does not independently arise. They mimic sounds and forms and tacitly grasp them.
>
> That which is tranquil from our birth is our heavenly nature. Stirring only after being stimulated, our nature is harmed . . . Thus those who break through to the Way do not use the human to change the heavenly. Externally they transform together with things, but internally they do not lose their genuine responses.[76]

The affairs of the world cannot be "controlled" (*wei* 為) by any human means, because things behave and transform how they do simply as a matter of course. So the best one

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[75] Major et al., 103, HNZ 2/17/8-9.
[76] Major et al., 53, HNZ 1/2/11-16.

can hope for is to “follow their natural direction” or “accord with how they are of themselves” (*yin qi ziran* 因其自然).[77] This passage cites all of the HNZ authors’ common metaphors to describe this process—namely, the mirror, echo, and shadow. These are all things that respond flawlessly, immediately, and spontaneously to things they encounter in their environment. The HNZ authors insist that humans are also able to do this, but only in so far as they maintain the original tranquility of their *xing* 性. It is extremely important to note here how *xing* 性 seems to function as a kind of faculty for processing information about the world and deciding how to respond. I will cover more of the process behind this in the section on *qing* 情 below, but here we see a clear instance of how the HNZ authors believe *xing* 性 gives one the ability to discern appropriate responses to one’s environment, as effectively as a mirror, echo, or shadow can.

HNZ 14.5 illustrates this property of *xing* 性 to discern appropriate responses with an example more relevant to the human sphere:

> Whether ascending or descending,
> bowing with clasped hands or yielding to another,
> moving quickly or slowly,
> circulating forward or back,
>
> do so spontaneously.
> If they are not inherent to your person by nature, none among your spontaneous feelings will tally with them. Do those things that come spontaneously, and do not abandon the prescribed framework. That’s it. What need is there to apply a precedent? Thus,
>
> those who sing spontaneously do not work at being sorrowful.
> Those who dance spontaneously do not strive at being graceful.
>
> Those who sing and dance but do not work at being sorrowful or graceful [can do so] because in all cases there is nothing rooted in their minds.[78]

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[77] Literally, “accord with their self-so-ness.” I discuss self-so-ness in greater detail in Chapter V.
[78] Major et al., 562-563, HNZ 14/139/13-15.

This passage refers to ritual performances, and insists that the most effective execution of these actions will happen when "there is nothing rooted in the mind" or one "lacks a rooted mind" (*wu gen xin* 無根心). This apparently means not straining to make one's external actions fit into a pre-conceived pattern. Just as in HNZ 1.5, the affairs of the world cannot be "controlled" (*wei* 為), so here the best singers and dancers do not "make" (*wei* 為) themselves sorrowful or graceful, but rather sing and dance "spontaneously" (*bu de yi* 不得已).[79] If one does not rely only on one's *xing* 性, then one's inner, spontaneous feelings (*qing* 情), will not match one's outward actions and one will be disordered as in the passages above.

It would seem that, contrary to my characterization here, the HNZ authors do think that individuals' *xing* 性 ultimately all boil down to this capacity for tranquility, and that if everyone followed their *xing* 性 as the authors suggest, they would all behave very similarly—and apparently rather blandly. However, the important point from these examples is that, while the HNZ authors consistently *characterize* human *xing* 性 as tranquil, this does not reduce the *content* of human *xing* 性 to bland tranquility. People still have individual, contextually-constituted *xing* 性. The authors simply insist that, when allowed to function properly, human *xing* 性 conduces to a *state* of tranquility. This tranquility, moreover, is what allows the proper functioning of the specific contents of *xing* 性 in one's given environment. So when the HNZ authors insist that human *xing* 性 is tranquil, it means that, when properly expressed or enacted, any given individual

[79] I address the issue of why *bu de yi* 不得已 should be translated with this sense of spontaneity in Chapter V.

xing 性 will always conduce to tranquility and equanimity. Outwardly, one's actions may be quite vigorous and exuberant (as I like to imagine the example of the dancer), and the internal promptings leading to that kind of expression may be similarly vigorous and exuberant, but the harmony between inner prompting and outer execution will produce a state of balance, equanimity, and tranquility.

The HNZ authors describe *xing* 性 in terms of what is endowed by Heaven and what causes one's bodily constituents to coalesce and develop in a characteristic way. This explicit description, however, belies the implied practical principle that defines *xing* 性 as limits and possibilities inherent in one's individual, contextualized endowment. We know that *xing* 性 is central to HNZ's practical ethics, in that the authors often assert the need to "revert" to one's nature in order to act well. In terms of experience then, *xing* 性 is the set of personal resources one brings to a situation. If experience is chiefly a matter of interacting with one's environment, then the opportunities for how an individual can proceed in any situation are constrained by her personal abilities and limits, as well as the resources available in the environment.

Xing 性 then, will cover the basic parameters of the individual's side of the inter-action that takes place in experience. If there are two parts to the inter-action that takes place in experience, and *xing* 性 constitutes the resources for further action that the individual brings, then there should be a corresponding part for the resources available in the environment. In the HNZ, *ming* 命 "destiny," "fate," or "circumstances" fills this role.

D. *Ming* 命: Destiny, Fate, Allotment, or Circumstances

HNZ contains four distinct uses of *ming* 命, all of which have some precedent in earlier literature, but *ming* 命 as the collection of life circumstances in which one finds oneself will be the most important for understanding the text's ethics.[80] The most basic meaning of *ming* 命 is simply "a command" or "to command," and it is used several times in this capacity, especially in Chapter 5 "Seasonal Ordinances" (*Shi Ze* 時則). This is the basic sense of *ming* 命 in the more particular usage of *tianming* 天命, "the Mandate of Heaven." This term, coined by the victorious Zhou to justify their appropriation of Shang land and people, refers to the moral right by which legitimate governments rule. By the Eastern Zhou period, it becomes shorthand for a government's moral authority to rule, and occasionally is used as a set phrase in this capacity in HNZ.

As the concept of *tian* 天 evolved, however, that which *tian* 天 "commanded" also evolved. Since *tian* 天 was seen to control many of the unpredictable happenings in the cosmos, one of the things it controlled was the length of time a person remained alive and how his life was eventually cut off. With this understanding, *ming* 命 comes to mean "allotment," or as *tianming* 天命, one's "Heavenly allotment" or "the years allotted by Heaven." This is also the main sense operating when we translate the term as "fate," especially in relation to a person's (usually untimely) death. For instance, "When the capital of Liyang became a lake in one night, those of courageous strength and sage

[80] Michael Puett reviews some of these senses, though only in Confucian sources, in a very helpful article on the history of *ming* 命. See Michael Puett, "Following the Commands of Heaven: The Notion of *Ming* in Early China," in *The Magnitude of* Ming*: Command, Allotment, and Fate in Chinese Culture*, edited by Christopher Lupke (Honolulu: University of Hawaiì Press, 2005).

wisdom shared the same fate with the cowardly and unworthy."[81] In this example, the "fates" (*ming* 命) of both the worthy and unworthy were "the same" (*tong* 同) because they all died when the capital of Liyang flooded. *Ming* 命 as "fate" can also encompass all of the many life circumstances one does not get to decide, but which instead are decided for one. For instance, the area of the world one is born into has nothing to do with one's choices—it is simply part of one's *ming* 命. Likewise, the character of the political climate when one is born is not something one gets to choose—it is simply part of one's *ming* 命.

Still further along the evolution of *ming* 命 is the more capacious sense HNZ uses of *ming* 命 as all of one's circumstances throughout life that are out of one's control. This meaning is more like "destiny" than "fate," because it refers to the things one encounters along the way to death, and not primarily to death itself. Significantly, this sense of *ming* 命 only appears in HNZ when it is used in conjunction with *xing* 性 to form the compound *xingming* 性命 "nature and destiny" or "innate dispositions and given circumstances." This is the sense of *ming* 命 most essential for understanding HNZ's ethics. HNZ 1.19 discusses the origin of both *xing* 性 and *ming* 命:

> Now our nature and destiny emerge from the Ancestor together with our bodily shapes. Once these shapes are completed, our nature and destiny develop; once our nature and destiny develop, likes and dislikes arise.[82]

Here we learn that *ming* 命, like *xing* 性, is a product of the Ancestor—a euphemism for the Way. When both *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 are fully formed they give rise to the phenomenon of likes and dislikes. There is, therefore, a natural order to the way one's

[81] Major et al., 106, HNZ 2/18/6.
[82] Major et al., 73, HNZ 1/9/7-7-8.

life proceeds, and the passage goes on to say that "those who realize the Way, when impoverished are not cowed, when successful are not proud."[83] This description is linked to nature and destiny, and we know that sages' tranquil *xing* 性 allows them to remain unperturbed in such situations. We can therefore understand from this that the situations of, for instance, poverty and success, are part of their *ming* 命. This sense of *ming* 命 is the same as "Heaven's decree" (*tianming* 天命) in HNZ 14.8: "If you trace to the source Heaven's decree, you will not be deluded by bad or good fortune."[84] The sense here is that *ming* 命 includes events both auspicious and inauspicious—and this means conceivably any and all events one encounters—and that if one "traces it to the source" (*yuan* 原) then one can understand the alterations between auspicious and inauspicious well enough to not be deluded about the difference. The point is that, just as it is necessary to clearly and consistently be aware of one's personal endowment (*xing* 性), one must also be clearly and consistently aware of the circumstances in one's environment (*ming* 命).

Xing 性 and *ming* 命 appear together as a compound frequently in HNZ, and they are the essential internal and external components needed for ideal action. However, the compound of *xing* 性 and *qing* 情, "innate nature and genuine dispositions," occurs even more frequently, and adds depth to the picture of HNZ's moral psychology. Similarly, the phrase *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情, "the essentials of nature and destiny" or "authentic responses of one's endowment to one's circumstances" is the key to the foundation of HNZ's ethics.

[83] HNZ 1/9/9, Liu et al., 74.
[84] HNZ 14/133/7, Liu et al., 540.

E. *Qing* 情: Essential Qualities or Authentic Responses

The term *qing* 情 in classical Chinese seems to take one of several valences depending upon the context in which it is used. The two most common terms for translating *qing* 情 are "feelings/emotions" and "the facts of the situation." In modern Chinese the character takes on both of these meanings, and functions differently depending upon the character with which it is paired in a compound. A. C. Graham notes that after the advent of Neo-Confucianism in the Song, *qing* 情 takes on the more definite meaning of "passions."[85] In classical Chinese *qing* 情 does indeed carry meaning that would make both "feelings" and "facts of the situation" seem appropriate in certain contexts. The meaning of *qing* 情 is actually not quite met by either of these options, but rather *qing* 情 represents a separate philosophical concept that manifests as both the essential facts or qualities of a situation and a kind of affective content in human experience.

In one important sense, *qing* 情 in HNZ means, as elsewhere, the essential properties of a thing. As Graham puts this concept, "the *qing* 情 of X is what X cannot lack if it is to be called X."[86] The significance of this definition is that *qing* 情 refers only to properties without which something cannot be *called* X, and not properties without which something cannot *be* X. As Graham notes, *qing* 情 is only one of several concepts that contributes to a thing's characteristics.[87]

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[85] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 59.
[86] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 63.
[87] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 60.

The *qing* 情 of something, "is often contrasted with its *xing* 形 'shape' or *mao* 貌 'guise, demeanor.'"[88] Because it has to do with naming and not being, *qing* 情 refers to a specifically intangible reality, but a reality nonetheless. In this respect, things which can be said to have *qing* 情, "essential qualities" or "essence" need not be said to exist in the sense of being *shi* 實 "solid, really existing." When early Chinese authors apply the concept of *qing* 情to human beings, the result is a sense that certain inclinations are what essentially define humans. ZZ argues that the *qing* 情 of mankind includes the tendency to divide the world into right and wrong (*shi fei* 是非), and thereby obscure the underlying patterns for harmonious action provided by Heaven.[89] Mencius argues that the "four sprouts" (*si duan* 四段) of virtue and the tendency toward good are the *qing* 情 of humans.[90] Graham also makes much of the idea in *Lüshi Chunqiu* and elsewhere that there are *qingyu* 情欲 "essential desires."[91] The idea here is that, among the many desires that humans have, there are some which are actually essential to human nature and not learned, and which are "few and easily satisfied."[92] In this same sense, in *Xunzi* and in the *Liji* the *qing* 情 of humans is taken as the unlearned impulses we more readily associate with actual emotion. "In these texts, but nowhere else in pre-Han literature," Graham notes, "the word refers only to the genuine in man which it is polite to disguise, and therefore to his feelings."[93] In both cases of unlearned behavior, we see the intimate connection of *qing* 情 with *xing* 性.

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[88] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 60.
[89] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 61-62.
[90] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 62.
[91] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 63.
[92] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 63.
[93] Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 64.

Qing 情 is intimately related to *xing* 性 in that *qing* 情 refers to actual phenomena—as opposed to the conditions which give rise to them—which are genuinely part of a person's innate endowment. These phenomena include things like desires, impulses and emotions. With this we have the basic parameters for a definition of *qing* 情 that will cover its meaning both as the genuine or essential facts of a situation and the affective impulses which are the genuine or essential facts of a person's inner life.

Chad Hansen criticizes Graham's treatment of *qing* 情 on the grounds that it, like other traditional readings, relies too heavily on Western "folk-psychology" to define terms like desire and emotion.[94] Although this part of Hansen's argument is not strictly relevant here, his solution to the "problem" of using Western folk-psychological concepts does provide a sense of the meaning of *qing* 情 which will be useful in understanding how the term is used in HNZ. Hansen argues for an overall meaning of *qing* 情 as 'reality responses' or 'reality input.' The idea here is that, since the *qing* 情 of X has to do with naming that thing 'X', "the *qing* of a thing are the reality-related, extralinguistic criteria that practically guide use of its name."[95] According to Hansen, *qing* 情 are phenomena which humans encounter regardless of what set of conventions they are using to evaluate the world. Hence they are the input from reality—what is "actually there" regardless of what anyone says or thinks about it—that humans subsequently use to linguistically evaluate the world.

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[94] Chad Hansen, "*Qing* (Emotions) 情 in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought" in *Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, edited by Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995): 181-211.
[95] Hansen, "*Qing* 情 (Emotions) in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought," 196.

For Hansen then, *qing* 情 can come to mean feelings because in some instances the input it provides is in the form of pleasure, anger, sadness, hate, etc:

> *Qing* 情, in sum, are all reality-induced discrimination or distinction-making reactions in *dao* executors. They guide the application of terms in real time in real (and inevitably unique) situations. Thus the fundamental sensory distinctions . . . are *qing* 情. But so also is the reality feedback we get from executing a *dao*^guiding discourse.[96]

According to Hansen, the "feedback" type of input engenders more specific affective states like pleasure, sadness, etc. *Qing* 情 is thus not defined as these various affective states, but does provide the input or impulse for their arousal. It is "feedback" input because it changes continuously as one engages with a situation. Hansen's conception of how this process actually works is not really relevant here, but it will suffice to reiterate two distinctions he makes about *qing* 情. First, *qing* 情 are genuine, prelinguistic responses to actual situations encountered by humans; and second, these responses are (normally) interpreted and given meaning by socio-linguistic conditions.

The sense of *qing* 情 as the actual configuration of circumstances is central to all the other meanings of *qing* 情 in HNZ. It is in this sense that *qing* 情 means the underlying subtle but detectable reality patterned on the quasi-mechanical workings of Heaven, and in turn, the Way. This sense derives meaning from the HNZ's overall view of correlative cosmology and the notion of *ganying* 感應. *Ganying* 感應, "stimulus and response," is the idea that in a universe composed of various *qi*氣, those *qi* 氣 with corresponding affinities will resonate with each other, and a change in one will cause a change in the other—just as identically tuned strings on a musical instrument will

[96] Hansen, "*Qing* 情 (Emotions) in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought," 183. The superscript emendation to *dao* 道 is Hansen's idiosyncratic way of differentiating various meanings of Chinese terms. Here, he refers to *dao* 道 as a "guiding discourse," which is itself a rather idiosyncratic interpretation.

resonate together when only one is struck.[97] In such a universe then, the various *qi* 氣 that make up the world and everything in it, including living things like humans, are constantly changing, causing attendant resonant changes in other things and in turn changing again. Although this type of system is not actually mechanical in the Newtonian sense of a vast, cosmic clockwork, it does exhibit certain underlying "patterns" (*li* 理) which can be discerned and spontaneously accorded with so that one's actions will always be effective. According with *li* 理 is like going with the grain of the universe, as it were, instead of against it, and the outcome is always ultimately what is appropriate.

Qing 情 is probably the most exotic of the terms I have covered in this chapter, but it is also one of the most important. It will therefore be especially helpful to explore its practical implications. In the HNZ's system of correlative cosmology, *qing* 情 functions as a response in the matrix of *qi* 氣 that makes up a person, thing, or situation. The *qing* 情-response is something like a wave in the medium of *qi* 氣, which can then interact with and affect other people, things, or situations. In this way, the idea of *qing* 情 gives a naturalistic account of how people, things, and situations interact and transform, using the tools of the HNZ's correlative cosmology. At the same time, *qing* 情 also describes a phenomenon of practical cause and effect. Different situations and objects arouse different responses in people because of the dynamics of their personal constitutions and contexts. *Qing* 情 is the name for this commonly observed

[97] Fore more on the idea of *ganying* 感應, and the stringed intstrument metaphor in particular, see Charles Le Blanc, Huai-nan Tzu*: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought: The Idea of Resonance (Kan-Ying* 感應*) with a Translation and Analysis of Chapter Six* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985), 139-142, and *passim*. See also Major et al., 875.

phenomenon. Thus the pragmatic valence of *qing* 情 is: the fact that people have spontaneous, characteristic responses to stimuli.[98] These responses, moreover, then contribute part of the parameters of the next moment of the situation as it "transforms" (*hua* 化). So, we should note that while *qing* 情 practically means the basic facts of a response, it can also be something to which something else can respond.

The important point about the pragmatic valence of *qing* 情 is that *qing* 情-responses function quasi-mechanically according to the principles of change in the cosmos. The *qing* 情 of a situation or the *qing* 情 of one's reaction are "essential" in the sense that they happen as a matter of course; the situation or reaction must have that particular *qing* 情, otherwise it would be a different situation or reaction. In the HNZ's cosmology, *qing* 情 are part of how the cosmos functions as an ordered system. However, on the practical level they represent the fact that the "essential" parameters or brute realities of things one encounters do, in fact, exist, and that these facts can be grasped. Since, given these essential parameters, one has one's own "essential" reaction internally, this means that there is a basis for reliably interacting with the world, without distortion or delusion.

Although *qing* 情 are produced quasi-mechanically, as a matter of course, it is important to note that they are not deterministic, as they would be in a mechanical system. The HNZ's cosmology of constantly transforming and resonating *qi* 氣 works on certain principles of order, but these are importantly not mechanistic laws. *Qing* 情-responses are true to the internal facts of one's endowment and the external facts of one's

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[98] Accordingly I will translate qing 情 as genuine/authentic impulses/responses in contexts where this meaning is most operative. Otherwise, I will use "essential facts of a situation" or similar.

environment, but they do not point toward one and only one appropriate action. Many actions could theoretically "tally" with one's *qing* 情, but the important point for HNZ's ethics is that whatever action one chooses it must be "true" or "square" with one's *qing* 情.

The culminating term to unpack the basis of HNZ's moral philosophy is *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情. This term combines *xing* 性, *ming* 命, and *qing* 情 and means, "the essential responses of one's nature to one's situation." The phenomena of *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情 works something like this: as one encounters situations in the world (*ming* 命), one's nature (*xing* 性) reacts to all of the contextual factors to produce a response (*qing* 情) based only on the most fundamental elements of one's person and of the situation. These reactions are therefore the most authentic and guileless level of human interaction with the world, and provide the basic guide for full participation with one's environment. Being authentic, they are also expressions of the transformations authored by *dao* 道, and therefore the practical means by which one accords with the Way.

F. Conclusion

The upshot of uncovering the practical ethics implied in the HNZ's explicitly cosmological treatment is a better appreciation for the mutual reinforcement of both aspects. That is, the sage can experience the Way as the cosmic root because he can experience the Way as the root of his own person and his own experience. When he acquires the habits of thought and action that de-emphasize external concerns and focus instead on internal promptings, it creates a quality in his experience that he can detect as

the Way. Since this quality is pervasive, linking each moment of experience together in a coherent pattern, that pervasive quality becomes for him the ordering principle of the cosmos, as well. Likewise, by positing the quality as the root of the cosmos, he reinforces the practical importance of the Way.

The practical consequence of acquiring sagely habits is a fundamental shift in character that allows the sage to deal with his world in a very different way. The HNZ authors insist that this method is effective in all situations precisely because it is so fundamental. Moreover, the sage's focus is always radically situated in a concrete situation, so it becomes clear how this method can respond well to particular situations. By cultivating habits that allow him to engage more completely with his environment, making more effective use of his personal endowments, the sage is able to live more intelligently and to positively impact those around him.

Here is one area where reading Dewey while reading HNZ seems to create a problem. Dewey's own ethic of participation emphasizes the need to live more intelligently, but he also places great emphasis on the value of democracy, and specifically on collaborative dialogue to arrive at new methods for solving problems in concrete experience. The methods advocated in HNZ seem counter to that impulse, in that the authors hold that the sage possesses everything he needs to act well within his own person and his own subjective experience of the environment. However, as I have outlined above, the HNZ authors' concept of a human's personal endowment (*xing* 性) and circumstances (*ming* 命) includes the same kind of the involvement with other people that Dewey emphasizes. The sage is still responsible to other people, and indeed allows the needs and concerns of others to influence his actions through the communication of

qing 情. His situation or life circumstances (*ming* 命) are also shaped by all of the interactions he has with others, so that when he follows the promptings of his most basic faculties for responding ot those conditions, there is already built in, as it were, a conversation with others.

Moreover, although Dewey emphasizes democratic conversation, it is almost always as a social good, but not necessarily as a personal good. Gregory Pappas argues that Dewey develops a personal ethic meant to support the public project of democracy.[99] In particular, Pappas identifies courage and open-mindedness as the most important personal habits of thought and action for those individuals engaged in Dewey's ideal of democracy. There is therefore a personal side to Dewey's very publicly-centered ethics, but one which is always cognizant of the input from others and from one's environment. Reading Dewey alongside HNZ can therefore put us in a better position to keep in mind the importantly social and inter-active aspects of HNZ's foundational concepts for ethics.

This helps to remind us that the ethic we find in HNZ is a personal ethic, which is nonetheless inherently social. It focuses on how individuals conduct themselves through inter-active experience with their environments. Because one's environment includes other people, ideal conduct necessarily takes account of others, as well as affects them. This chapter covered the essentials of how the HNZ authors think ideal action is possible in the first place, and focused on the root of personal conduct and cultivation. The next chapter fills in the details about the actual practices involved in this ethic.

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[99] See especially Pappas, *John Dewey's Ethics*, 209-251

Chapter V:
Branches: *Huainanzi*'s Practical Ethics

In the previous chapter, I outlined several concepts in HNZ that provide the basis for the text's view of ideal action. The authors maintain that such action is possible because humans are endowed with a clear and tranquil nature (*xing* 性), which can respond spontaneously to one's given circumstances (*ming* 命), thereby supplying natural impulses (*qing* 情) that can guide ideal action. The current chapter explores the practical methods whereby the authors believed a person could actualize the sagely potential inherent in human nature.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the HNZ authors conceive of the roots of sagely action in explicitly cosmological terms. The root of sagely action, the Way (*dao* 道) is also the root of the cosmos. Thus, much of HNZ's instruction on the methods of ethical cultivation will also make use of cosmological terms and valences. As Roth has argued extensively, however, the inner cultivation tradition beginning with NY and continuing in HNZ is very much a tradition of practical application.[1] As such, we can expect that HNZ's cosmological terminology will describe embodied practices, applicable to anyone with the standard human equipment of a mind, a body, desires, sense organs, breath, etc. My task in this chapter, therefore, will be to uncover the implicit practical account of ethics expressed in HNZ's explicit, but often exotic language.

[1] See my discussion of Roth's work above, Chapter III.

In pursuing this goal, I will once again approach HNZ with the "positional advantage" (*shi* 勢) provided by my reading of John Dewey's account of habit and experience in ethics. In particular, I will make the connections in HNZ necessary to demonstrate how the text's practical ethics recommends certain habits of thought and action that allow sages to perceive a subtle quality of harmony or balance in any given situation, and to allow the parameters of that situation to determine how best to act so as to sustain that quality, and thereby effect a mutual flourishing of self and environment. This will mean that sages perceive and follow "inner" promptings, but in so doing more fully participate in their "outer" environments. Moreover, the path laid out by such promptings will grow entirely from the total context of a particular situation, and therefore will be unique. This means that, while sages can be said to follow the objective standards of the Way, the more immediately relevant factor in their conduct will be their subjective experience of the Way. Finally, I will argue that the sage's individual experience of the Way is just as important to the HNZ's conception of *dao* 道 as the status of *dao* 道 as root of the cosmos, and suggest that the experience should be even more fundamental for our understanding of *dao* 道.

A: The Cosmic Import of Cultivated Action

In the previous chapter, we saw examples of how the HNZ authors place ethical cultivation in a cosmic context. In moving to the personal, practical level of ethical cultivation, it will be helpful to first look at a few examples where these cosmic aspects are said to actually make a difference on that level. This will also further establish the

link between cosmic and practical contexts, and introduce some more key terms for HNZ's model of ethical cultivation.

First, HNZ Chapter 6 "Surveying Obscurities" (*Lanming* 覽冥) opens with stories about two individuals who, although lacking temporal power, were able to produce fantastic, quasi-magical results due to the sheer moral force of their words and actions:

> In ancient times, Music Master Kuang played the tune "White Snow," and because of that, spiritlike creatures descended [from Heaven]; wind and rain arrived violently; Duke Ping became impotent and ill; and the lands of the state of Jin reddened [with drought].
> The Commoner Woman cried out to Heaven. Thunder and lightning beat down; Duke Jing's lookout tower collapsed; his limbs and body were broken and slashed; and floodwaters gushed from the sea.[2]

As Major et al. explain, Music Master Kuang was ordered by Duke Ping of Jin to play the sacred music "White Snow" in an inappropriate ritual context, and The Commoner Woman (*shu nü* 庶女) cried out at the injustice of being falsely accused of murder.[3] In both cases, something happened counter to the ethical standard of the Way, and because the individuals involved were highly cultivated, their responses impacted the rest of the cosmos. The HNZ authors use this passage—and "Surveying Obscurities" in general—to illustrate the principle of *ganying* 感應 or sympathetic resonance, the mysterious process by which certain phenomena may affect others at a distance due to their shared material-energetic constituents (*qi* 氣). These two cases draw a link between the movement of *qi* 氣 in highly cultivated individuals and the greater patterns of *qi* 氣 in the cosmos. The important point is that these two individuals count as highly cultivated precisely because their *qi* 氣 resonates on a similar level with the fundamental constituents of the cosmos.

[2] Major et al., 214, HNZ 6/49/27-28.
[3] See Major et al., 214 n.1 and 3.

The passage continues, explaining how Music Master Kuang and The Commoner Woman worked their magic:

> By concentrating their essences and disciplining their attention,
> abandoning their [mundane] responsibilities and storing up spirit [energy],
> upward, they penetrated to the ninefold Heaven, rousing and putting into action the utmost essence.[4]

This passage makes clear that the two exemplars were able to affect even the workings of weather in the heavens. The "utmost essence" (*zhi jing* 至精) belongs to Heaven, and is "roused and put into action" (*ji li* 激勵) when the exemplars' own "concentrated essence" (*zhuan jing* 專精) "penetrates" (*tong* 通) to Heaven.[5] Unfortunately, this passage does not describe how they concentrate essence, but it does link that process with "disciplining attention" (*li yi* 厲意), "abandoning [mundane] responsibilities" (*wei wu* 委務), and "storing up spirit [energy]" (*ji shen* 積神). Many of these terms will reappear when we examine the HNZ's program of ethical cultivation below.

The text goes on to give several more examples of fantastic occurrences that were purportedly due to the potency of cultivated individuals. In all of these cases, the authors return to their point that the cosmos works on laws of resonance, causing "things in their various categories" (*wu lei* 物類) to be "mutually responsive" (*xiang ying* 相應).[6] This, the authors assert, is profoundly mysterious, and cannot be "assessed by knowledge," nor "explained by argument."[7] However, since the entire cosmos works on these principles, it is possible to become familiar with how they work by observing one's own experience

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[4] Major et al., 215 with my emendations, HNZ 6/49/29.
[5] Per Major et al., reading *li* 厲 as *li* 勵 at HNZ 6/49/29. The concept of Heavenly or "utmost" *jing* 精 here is reminiscent of NY Verse I, where *jing* 精 is said to form the basis of the constellated stars—which, in turn, affect seasonal weather patterns. See Roth, 46, GZ 16.1/115/17, and above, Chapter III.
[6] Major et al., 216, HNZ 6/50/14.
[7] Major et al., 218, HNZ 6/51/2-3.

of them: “from what is within the palm of one’s hand, one can trace [correlative] categories to beyond the extreme end point [of the cosmos].”[8] This insight will be characteristic of the text’s entire approach to ethical cultivation.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, and as we will see in greater detail below, in all cases of exemplary action, sages act based on what originates from within their own persons. More specifically, they act only according to the promptings of their pure, tranquil nature (*xing* 性), which all humans share, and which lies at the root of all individual human minds. The process of cultivation involves techniques of inner cultivation the same or similar to those found in other classical Daoist texts examined above in Chapter III. These techniques in HNZ allow sages to avoid becoming entangled in the “branches” of external concerns and limited points of view that the authors see as common impediments to ideal action. Because the originally clear, tranquil human *xing* 性 is seen as the root, one who comprehends it can comprehend all of the branches, as well. This means that, although the text often veers into cosmological explanations of the sage’s powers, the basis always remains firmly established in individual experience. As we see in the above examples from “Surveying Obscurities,” even cases involving the mysterious, quasi-magical effects of sympathetic resonance can be traced to their foundation of individual cultivation.

This suggests that an individual’s personal “root” will be the link between ethical cultivation and the greater cosmic significance of sagely action. The personal root, the authors claim, is also the cosmic root. The cosmic root is profound and impenetrable, but the personal root, while also difficult to grasp, is always present in human experience. It

[8] Major et al., 217, HNZ 6/50/18-19.

therefore serves as the touchstone for ethical cultivation. The root of the individual person, according to the HNZ authors, is one's individual *xing* 性, and certain psychological states and perceptual faculties associated with it. Therefore, in moving forward, it will be helpful to examine the HNZ authors' treatment of human psychology and its relationship to ethical cultivation.

B: Human Psychology and the Basis for Techniques of Ethical Cultivation

HNZ Chapter 11, "Integrating Customs" (*Qisu* 齊俗) deals primarily with how to create proper ritual and cultural norms, and examines the nature of such norms and what it means for humans to conform to them. As such, it engages many issues in moral psychology, and will be helpful in setting out the basic ground upon which the text builds its argument for individual ethical cultivation.

In HNZ 11.5, the authors argue that cultural diversity is an extrinsic matter of custom, and not, as it may sometimes seem, a matter of intrinsic difference between people from varying backgrounds. They note that infants of the various "barbarian" peoples on the periphery of the Chinese cultural sphere are identical in their cries and babbles, but cannot communicate with one another when they grow up "because their education and customs are different."[9] From these and similar examples elsewhere, the authors conclude that all such differences are, ultimately, contingent on circumstances and do not indicate any difference in *xing* 性. This does not mean, however, that customs and education do not profoundly influence how people think and act.

[9] Major et al., 403, HNZ 11/95/25.

Continuing in HNZ 11.5, the authors claim that "original human nature" (*yuan ren zhi xing* 原人之性) is "pure and clear" (*qing ming* 清明), but that it can be "obstructed and sullied" (*wu hui* 蕪濊) by external influences.[10] This is significant, as it reveals the basic problem that ethical cultivation in HNZ is meant to overcome. As discussed in the previous chapter, one's *xing* 性 determines all of the basic faculties and inclinations one draws upon when interacting with one's environment. *Xing*'s 性 original clarity and tranquility allows for ideal interaction, but the HNZ authors conceive of *xing* 性 as somewhat changeable. This means that under all but ideal conditions, one will have to work to recover the original purity and clarity of *xing* 性.

If one does not work to recover the purity and clarity associated with original *xing* 性, then one will act just as automatically from learned customs as if those customs were part of one's *xing* 性 from the beginning:

> The nature of human beings has no depravity, but having been long immersed in customs, it changes. If it changes and one forgets the root, it is as if [the customs one has acquired] have merged with [one's] nature.[11]

The phrasing of this passage will be crucial to understanding HNZ's outline of ethical cultivation. On the one hand, the authors concede here that *xing* 性 is indeed changeable—that is, it is not given once and for all at birth, but rather responds to life conditions by adapting to the social realities of one's situation. On the other hand, there remains in *xing* 性 a "root" (*ben* 本), which one can "forget" (*wang* 忘) or lose touch with. When one loses touch with the root of *xing* 性, only then does one function purely according to learned behaviors. In that case, it is "as if [the customs one has acquired]

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[10] Major et al., 403, HNZ 11/95/24.
[11] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/95/28-29.

have merged with *xing* 性" (*ruo he yu xing* 若合於性). Note that the authors do not say that in such cases *xing* 性 has transformed to become something depraved, but that it is only *as if* it has so transformed. Presumably, if a person in that case could manage to become aware of the root of *xing* 性 once again, then he would be "cured" of the depravity, as it were. Recovering awareness of the root of one's *xing* 性 is the primary focus of HNZ's ethical project.

Indeed, HNZ 11.5 continues by giving a helpful example:

> Someone who boards a boat and becomes confused, not knowing west from east, will see the Dipper and Pole Star and become oriented. Nature is likewise a Dipper and Pole Star for human beings.
>
> If one possesses that by which one can see oneself, then one will not miss the genuine dispositions of things.
>
> If one lacks that by which one can see oneself, then one will be agitated and ensnared.[12]

This passage encapsulates the basic problem that HNZ's ethical program seeks to overcome. People generally make the mistake of thinking that their own culturally-determined standards provide a reliable basis for ethical action. However, those standards are not reliable precisely because they are contingent and relative. People in this situation are disoriented, as when they cannot determine where the cardinal directions lie. However, if they can recover a reliable standard to guide them, then they can reorient themselves—in the same way that the Dipper constellation and the Pole Star can reorient one to the cardinal directions. The HNZ authors often write about the process of reorienting oneself to the reliable standard of *xing* 性, or ultimately of *dao* 道,

[12] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/1-2.

as “seeing oneself” (*zi jian* 自見) or “returning to oneself” (*fan ji* 反己).[13] We can equate this process of perceiving oneself or returning to oneself with staying in touch with the root of *xing* 性, as discussed above. The themes of special perception and return or reversion to an original state will both be extremely important, and I examine them at length below.

For now, it is important to note that this is the general orientation of HNZ’s ethical project, and that a person who can “leave things aside and return to himself” (*wei wu er fan ji* 遺物而反己) is identified as the sage.[14] This process is extremely difficult, and its results are extraordinary, so the authors emphasize that only the sage can do it (indeed, to do it is to become a sage). Moreover, “those who have not heard the Way have no means to return to nature.”[15] So, even sages cannot successfully revert to their true natures without the methods and practices associated with the Way.[16] I take up the precise nature of these methods and practices below, but “Integrating Customs” continues with several more passages that help to explain the nature of HNZ’s practical ethics.

HNZ 11.6 takes up the importance of tranquility for effectively managing situations:

> Whenever one is about to take up an affair, one must first stabilize one’s attention and purify one’s spirit.

---

[13] Note that *zi jian* 自見 can also be translated as “self-seeing” or “spontaneously perceiving.” In any case, it is an adj-verb construction that can mean either “self-seeing” in the sense of perceiving one’s self (as opposed to other people), or in the sense of an act of seeing that arises entirely on its own, and which is therefore spontaneous, natural, automatic, or unbidden. In the context of HNZ 11.5, the former translation makes more sense, but it is important to note that the latter is also operative. I return to the significance of the latter translation below.
[14] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/1.
[15] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/5.
[16] The Way (*dao* 道) in this sense means both the cosmological Way, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the body of methods and practices advocated by the HNZ authors as the correct path to sagehood. On the Way as methods and/or practices, see A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), 13ff.

When the spirit is pure and the attention is stable,
only then can things be aligned.
It is like pressing a seal into clay:
if it is held straight, [the impression] will be straight;
if it is held crookedly, [the impression] will be crooked.[17]

Here we find language reminiscent of that used to describe Music Master Kuang and The Commoner Woman's extraordinary powers. In order to make the correct impression on a situation—that is, to meet its demands appropriately—one needs to "stabilize one's attention" (*ping yi* 評意) and "purify one's spirit" (*qing shen* 清神). Further along in the passage, the authors imply that these processes result in the kind of return to the self or *xing* 性 mentioned above. One whose attention and spirit are stabilized and pure will be able make an accurate assessment of the situation. But, if "one's hearing is lost in slander and flattery / and one's eyes are corrupted by pattern and color," then one's assessment will not be accurate—based as it is on extraneous concerns like flattery or ornamentation.[18] Moreover, the relevant concerns for accurately assessing situations are all internal to the person. Here, this means *qing* 情 and *xing* 性—"spontaneous responses and nature."[19]

The authors also note that in cases like this *qing* 情 and *xing* 性 cannot be fabricated, and that the sage simply responds to how they exist in the moment of the situation—without trying to modify *qing* 情 or *xing* 性. "Though one who forces oneself to cry feels pain," the authors warn, "he does not grieve."[20] That is, in the context of a

[17] Major et al., 405 with my emendations, HNZ 11/96/7-8.
[18] Major et al., 405, HNZ 11/96/10.
[19] Major et al., 405, HNZ 11/96/10. Major et al. translate *qing* 情 here as "feelings," which is somewhat appropriate in the context, but misses some of the important aspects of *qing* 情 discussed in the previous chapter. In this particular passage, it would be more accurate—if far less elegant—to translate *qingxing* 情性 as "nature and the innate responses arising spontaneously therefrom."
[20] Major et al., 406, HNZ 11/96/10-11.

funeral one can force oneself to act as if one's *qing* 情 and *xing* 性 move one to wail with grief, and this may actually make one experience anguish. Nonetheless, someone who does that is not actually grieving because the actions are not based on the authentic promptings of *qing* 情 and *xing* 性. The person in that situation is relying on external, not internal standards—i.e. he cries because he thinks it is right to cry, or because he wants others to believe he is sad, not because he is authentically moved to cry. The basic orientation laid out by such examples is that ideal action can only be motivated by such authentic promptings.

However, it is not enough for action to be motivated by authentic promptings; it also needs to match with or be appropriate to the situation. In HNZ 11.9, the authors offer definitions for Rightness and Ritual—terms key to Confucian ethics, and early Chinese ethical thought in general—that clarify this point: "Rightness is following the patterns and doing what is appropriate; / Ritual is embodying spontaneous responses and establishing a design."[21] As the passage goes on to explain, what this means is that Rightness and Ritual each have two crucial components, which implicitly match up to internal and external circumstances. Rightness (*yi* 義) is a matter of "following the inherent patterns" (*xun li* 循理) one finds when properly attuned to one's *xing* 性, and then "doing what is congruent [with those patterns]" (*xing yi* 行宜). Similarly, proper Ritual (*li* 禮) is created when one first "embodies [i.e. gives outward expression to] spontaneous responses" (*ti qing* 體情), and then "establishes a [cultural] design" (*zhi wen*

[21] Major et al., 409, with my emendations, HNZ 11/98/1. Note that this definition of *yi* 義 is essentially identical to that given in *Zhongyong* 20. See Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 101. Ames and Hall's interpretation of the *Zhongyong* highlights many concepts that are strikingly similar to HNZ 11, and HNZ 11 can be read, in part, as a Daoistic response to many of the ideas found in the *Zhongyong*. On this point, see also Ames and Hall, *Focusing the Familiar*, 116 n.5.

制文) that supports them. For the HNZ authors, this explains why the "enlightened ruler," like the ancient sage-kings before him, wears simple, elegant clothes that are sufficient to cover his body and allow for a proper range of movement, but which do not "strive for an extraordinary or beautiful appearance."[22] Ideal conduct externalizes and satisfies one's authentic inner promptings, and stops short of striving to influence others or force the situation to conform to self-centered desires. In that sense it is appropriate to both internal and external conditions.

HNZ 11.10 further develops this theme, defining several sagely characteristics in terms of the internal and external factors in a situation:

> What is called "clarity" does not refer to seeing another, it is seeing oneself, that is all.
> What is called "acuity" does not refer to hearing another, it is hearing oneself, that is all.
> What is called "attainment" does not refer to understanding another, it is understanding oneself, that is all.
>
> Thus the person is where the Way is lodged; when the person is achieved, the Way is achieved.[23]

This passage works to clarify a point about the basis of accurate perceptions. It may seem like clear vision consists in apprehending an object clearly ("seeing another" *jian bi* 見彼), but the HNZ authors assert that clear vision actually consists in simply apprehending one's own perception of the object clearly ("seeing oneself" *zi jian* 自見).[24] The theory here is that when one looks at an object, there are natural processes, driven by one's *xing* 性, that cause a spontaneous response within one's consciousness that we

[22] Major et al., 410, HNZ 11/96/13-14. The passage contains a parallel, not noted by Major et al., which suggests that the assessment quoted here refers not only to a ruler's literal clothing, but also all of the ritual conduct with which a ruler metaphorically "clothes" himself. In both cases, the authors think simplicity, elegance, and conformity to authentic inner promptings should be the standard.
[23] Major et al., 411, HNZ 11/98/15-16.
[24] Once again, *zi jian* 自見 can be read as "self-seeing" in the sense of "seeing onself" and in the sense of "spontaneously seeing." See my note above.

think of as perceiving the object. What we perceive is not the object itself, but an internal response to the object. That internal response happens as a matter of course, but due to various extrinsic factors, our minds often overlay preferences, fears, etc. onto the internal response, resulting in a distorted vision of the object. True clarity of vision, therefore, consists in perceiving the immediate response of one's *xing* 性 to the object, and nothing else.[25]

The above passage concludes that, given these definitions, the collection of faculties and resources that make up one's "person" (*shen* 身) is precisely "where the Way is lodged" (*dao zhi suo tuo* 道之所託), and that when one "achieves the person" (*shen de* 身得), one necessarily thereby "achieves the Way" (*dao de* 道得).[26] This is significant because it provides another illustration of the pragmatic valence of *dao* 道. *Dao* 道 itself is ultimately indefinable, but it is known in individual instances by its practical effects. Here, the authors gloss *dao* 道 as the abstract aggregate of individual instances of "achieving the person" in various respects.

The passage continues on to explain that "the achievement of the Way" (*dao zhi de* 道之得) works out to mean acuity in seeing and hearing, and "impartiality" (*gong* 公) and "compliance" (*cong* 從) in speech and action, respectively.[27] In all cases, the point is that sages' actions and perceptions are accurate—that is, they faithfully engage outer

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[25] The phrasing in Chinese is *zi jian er yi* 自見而已. *Er yi* 而已 (lit. "…and then stops") is semantically equivalent to the French *tout court*.
[26] The translation of *shen* 身 as "person" is fairly standard, and not significantly disputed. It originally means something like the physical body—as in "to carry something on one's person." However, as Major et al. note, we should understand that the term denotes "the individual person in all his or her physiological, psychological, and social aspects," including things like personality and social status that may go beyond our conventional English usage of the physical person. See Major et al., 887.
[27] Major et al., 411, HNZ 11/98/17.

reality without imposing any self-centered distortions. This, of course, works on the assumption that one's *xing* 性 always accurately responds to external conditions. Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, this is part of how the HNZ authors define *xing* 性.

When the sage is able to manage situations so gracefully, the HNZ authors compare him to a skilled artisan: "Thus the sage shapes and fashions things / the way the carpenter chops, pares, drills, and fastens; / the way the cook slices, cuts divides, and separates. / Each detail achieves what is appropriate to it, and nothing is broken or harmed."[28] A "clumsy artisan" is just the opposite, as he is "agitated in his mind, / shaky in his hands, / and makes things worse."[29] This example of virtuosic and clumsy behavior illustrates how, internally, sages are calm and equanimous (e.g. minds not agitated, hands not shaky), while externally they help each situation come to a satisfying conclusion. It is significant that the conclusion is satisfying not only to the sages themselves, but to *all* elements of the situation—including other people—and results in mutual flourishing.

In HNZ 11.20 the authors again lament the unenlightened ethos of their time, in which most people behave like the clumsy artisan above, their activity and attention geared only toward self-centered concerns. "At this point," the authors observe, people "are turbulent and confused; all day they chase after profit. They are vexed and shallow."[30] On the level of practical ethics, what happens in such a state is that "nature and destiny fly away [from each other] . . . [and] people lose [touch with] their authentic

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[28] Major et al., 411, HNZ 11/98/17-18.
[29] Major et al., 411, HNZ 11/98/18-19.
[30] Major et al., 427, HNZ 11/104/3.

responses and nature."[31] As we saw in the previous chapter, the meeting of one's *xing* 性 with the circumstances of one's life (*ming* 命) results in authentic responses (*qing* 情), which serve as the guiding impulses for ethical action. Here we learn that the key problem with customs and education in a declining age is that people become steeped in a culture of self-centered striving and wrangling for profit. This causes their *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 to "fly apart" (*fei yang* 飛揚), thus making it difficult for people to stay grounded in their *xing* 性 and *qing* 情.[32] Agitated, self-centered thinking is precisely what obstructs people from realizing their most basic nature and its authentic responses to every situation. Keeping in touch with *xing* 性 and *qing* 情 is therefore a matter of remaining tranquil and free of ego-centered bias.

Moreover, the HNZ authors assert that remaining tranquil and free of ego-centered bias is not something one can simply emulate, but rather it is a facility one must acquire, and is in that sense analogous to a learned skill. In HNZ 11.12 the authors use the example of Wang Qiao and Chi Songzi, two "fabled adepts whose personal cultivation had elevated them to the level of 'immortals' [*xian*] 仙, and imbued them with uncanny powers"[33]:

> If one wants to study their Way and does not attain their nurturing of *qi* and their lodging of the spirit but only imitates their every exhale and inhale, their contracting and expanding, it is clear that one will not be able to mount the clouds and ascend on the vapors.[34]

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[31] Major et al., 427 with my emendations, HNZ 11/103/29-11/104/1.

[32] It is significant here that in the first part of the phrase *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 fly away, and in the second part people lose touch with *xing* 性 and *qing* 情. One might expect the authors to conclude that, since they have flown away, people lose touch with *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 instead. However, you cannot actually be separated from your *ming* 命, as it is simply what happens to you in your life. The significant distance, therefore, is not between you and both your *xing* 性 and *ming* 命, but rather *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 from each other. This is why I chose to translate *fei yang* 飛揚 as "fly apart" when it normally means "fly up/away."

[33] Major et al., 414n.53.

[34] Major et al., 414, HNZ 11/99/14-15.

Similarly, if one wishes to emulate the ancient sage-kings of antiquity, "and does not attain their pure clarity and mysterious sagacity, yet maintains their methods, statutes, rules, and ordinances, it is clear that one cannot achieve order."[35] In both of these examples, the HNZ authors draw a distinction between emulating outward actions, and emulating "that by which the outward action was created."[36] The former is easy, and anyone can do it, but it necessarily will be out of sync with one's present circumstances.

These examples of highly cultivated action are impressive and inspirational precisely because they are examples of people responding seamlessly to the interactions of their natures and their environments, and not acting purely on a received model or formula for how they should act. Indeed, the passage describes the ancient sage kings by saying, "they embraced the great heart of a sage by responding as a mirror to the genuine dispositions of the myriad things."[37] The capacity for mirror-like responsiveness is what made the sage kings exemplary, and what led them to enlightened government, but their legacies of ordinances and laws are entirely separate from that capacity itself.

Moreover, sagely capacity is something that one must acquire, and which cannot be communicated. HNZ 11.14 discusses this problem, again using analogies from the fine and technical arts:

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[35] Major et al., 414, HNZ 11/99/17.

[36] This exact phrase does not appear in the text here, but I have adapted it from language earlier in the passage: "The songs of Hu Liang [the famous singer] can be followed, but how he created his songs cannot be [re]created." The sense is that "how he created his songs" (*qi suo yi ge zhe* 其所以哥者 lit. "his that-by-which-[he]-sang") was something that occurred only in Hu Liang's qualitative experience, based on his unique abilities and circumstances, and therefore cannot be recreated by simply reciting his songs. See Major et al., 413, HNZ 11/99/11-12.

[37] Major et al., 214 with my emendations, HNZ 11/99/16. "Genuine dispositions" here is *qing* 情. The verb "to respond as a mirror" is *jing* 鏡 "mirror" used as a transitive verb. The sense is that the ancient sage-kings responded effortlessly, automatically, and without premeditation, as a mirror does to whatever is in front of it.

> The master artisan's construction of [various intricate devices] . . . enters into the darkest of subtleties, the ultimate of spiritlike harmony. What wanders in the spaces between the heart and the hand, and is not in the realm of things, is something [even] fathers cannot teach their sons. A blind musician's abandoning thought on encountering things, releasing the spirit and rising to dance, [thus] giving it form with strings, is something [even] an elder brother cannot describe to his younger brother.[38]

This passage describes instances of great skill, and insists that personal ability is absolutely essential to their performance, and that such ability cannot be transferred to another person. The sense is that personal ability is something so intimate to one's own experience that it is excluded from even the most intimate interpersonal relationships. Moreover, even if one has the finest tools, "if one is not a good craftsman, one cannot shape the wood."[39] That is, even if one somehow manages to find a true sage as a teacher, and otherwise has all the best "equipment" for self-cultivation, if one does not actually return to one's own *xing* 性, then one cannot become a sage. There is no substitute for personal experience, and no shortcut to sagehood.

However, this does not mean that we have nothing to learn from the methods of the sages. Indeed, the HNZ authors maintain that there are consistent, broadly applicable methods for self-cultivation, even if the work and the result must be entirely individualized. In 11.17 the HNZ authors recognize that ordinary people cannot live up to the perfect model of the sage, and that expecting them to do so is unrealistic and even reckless.[40] Nevertheless:

> If people have made do without awaiting the heroes of antiquity, it is because they went along with what they had and used it. [The legendary stallion] Qiji could traverse one thousand *li* in a single day. An inferior horse requires ten rest stops, but in ten days it will still get there. Looking at it from this [perspective], [extraordinary] human talent

[38] Major et al., 416, with my emendations, HNZ 11/100/7-10.
[39] Major et al., 416, HNZ 11/100/4.
[40] See Major et al., 420-422, HNZ 11/101/23-11/102/13.

> cannot be exclusively relied on, yet the Techniques of the Way can be universally practiced.[41]

The explicit context of this passage is a lesson about effective government, but as with most examples in HNZ, it applies to self-cultivation, as well. The thrust of the passage is that, although most people will not actually become sages or perfected beings, the methods by which sages and perfected beings cultivate themselves are still beneficial to all people. The methods they employ are referred to here and elsewhere as Techniques of the Way (*dao shu* 道術). Major et al. note that "technique" (*shu* 術) in general refers to "any set of routines, protocols, or procedures that may be used to a particular effect."[42] Techniques of the Way thus refers to the procedures used to realize the Way—both in the sense of achieving insight into the workings of the Way, and in manifesting the Way in action.[43] These techniques will include both the self-cultivation practices that lead to sagely insight, and the techniques the sage uses when applying that insight in action. So, the Techniques of the Way will also necessarily include Techniques of the Mind (*xin shu* 心術)—the "forms of breath-control meditation that may lead to higher states of consciousness."[44] As Major et al. note, the HNZ authors do not include explicit instructions for how to *do* the Techniques of the Mind, but clearly refer to them as an existing program of meditative discipline with which their audience would have been familiar.[45] As I argued in Chapter III, following Roth's extensive arguments in the same vein, HNZ should be read as a later entry in the tradition of texts influenced by the contemplative techniques first described in NY. Since NY is grouped together with the

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[41] Major et al., 422 with my emendations, HNZ 11/102/8-10.
[42] Major et al., 891.
[43] For more on the history of the term *daoshu* 道術 and its use in other texts, see Roth, *Original Tao*, 181-185.
[44] Major et al., 891.
[45] See Major et al, 906.

“Techniques of the Mind” texts in GZ, and HNZ shares much of the same terminology, we can conclude that when the HNZ authors refer to Techniques of the Mind, they indicate the practice tradition associated with the GZ texts.

HNZ’s postface Chapter 21, “An Overview of the Essentials” (*Yaolüe* 要略), which summarizes and describes each of the preceding twenty chapters, says that HNZ Chapter 20, “The Exalted Lineage” (*Taizu* 泰族), “traces to the source the Techniques of the Mind.”[46] “The Exalted Lineage” indeed does have several passages that will help to clarify the significance of the Techniques of the Mind, and the nature of technique in general.

HNZ 20.31 discusses the difference between theoretical or discrete knowledge and technical or skill knowledge, and provides some key insights for HNZ’s ethical program:[47]

> What people know is superficial, and things change ceaselessly. If previously you did not know something and now you know it, it is not that your [capacity to] know has increased but that there has been an augmentation from inquiry and learning.
> Things that are frequently seen become known.
> Things that are frequently done become doable.
> . . .
> Now if you were to rely on the longevity of a single lifetime to survey
> A thousand years’ knowledge
> and the theories of past and present,
> even if they did not increase [as you were studying them] . . . it cannot be said that there is a technique [for doing so successfully].[48]

This passage makes an important comment about the nature of learning, and about the limitations of theoretical knowledge. First, the authors assert that learning in general

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[46] Major, et al., 857, HNZ 21/226/16.
[47] Theoretical/discrete vs. technical/skill knowledge is roughly equivalent to Gilbert Ryle’s famous distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how.” A thorough comparison would be illuminating, but beyond the scope of the current work. See Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), chapter 2.
[48] Major et al., 830 with my emendations, HNZ 20/220/18-20.

comes through experience. That is, both theoretical knowledge (*zhi* 知) and learned ability (*neng* 能) come from repeatedly encountering things—either by "seeing" (*jian* 見), or by "doing" (*wei* 為).[49] Moreover, when you learn something—that is, know it after previously not knowing it—what has happened is not that your basic capacities have changed, but that you have acquired something extra ("there has been an augmentation of inquiry and learning" *wen xue zhi suo jia* 問學之所加).

However, the passage also notes that the amount of things there are to learn from studying ("a thousand years' knowledge / and the theories of past and present" *qian sui zhi zhi / jin gu zhi lun* 千歲之知 / 今古之論) far surpasses the amount of time one has to spend studying in a single lifetime. Thus, the authors conclude, there is no technique (*shu* 術) one could apply to actually acquire all of that knowledge. This is significant because it implies that "inquiry and learning" (*wen xue* 問學) are themselves a technique in the sense discussed above. The authors are keen to point out, however, that it is a technique with extremely limited application.

The passage continues with several examples from the technical arts to argue that technical or skill knowledge is superior to theoretical or discrete knowledge. If one wants to know some discrete bit of information, like the height, weight, length, etc. of an object, the authors suggest that one would be far more satisfied to learn how to measure objects in general and then apply that skill to the object at hand, rather than simply to be told the height, weight, etc.[50] In that case, one not only gains the discrete knowledge one desired, but also the ability to gain the same kind of knowledge in any other situation.

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[49] Note that the text uses *zhi* 知 elsewhere in this passage to refer to both theoretical/discrete knowledge and technical/skill knowledge. The differentiation comes mainly from context and parallelism.
[50] See Major et al., 830, HNZ 20/220/22-23.

This approach is far more satisfying (and possible!) than simply learning and memorizing, for instance, the heights of all objects in the world. Now, "how much more [would a person be satisfied]," the authors rhetorically ask, "to understand how to respond to all things limitlessly?"[51] This particular skill is, of course, the purview of the Techniques of the Way.

So, in HNZ 20.31 we learn that both discrete knowledge and technical knowledge are acquired in the same way—by repeated exposure by perceiving or doing—but that technical knowledge is superior in important ways to discrete knowledge. Moreover, the expertise gained through the Techniques of the Way is a species of technical knowledge, but is so fundamental that it encompasses all other kinds of technical knowledge, which are limited to specific domains.

HNZ 20.9 gives us an important clue about what the cultivated persons learn to do when they acquire expertise in the Techniques of the Way:

> Now, the reason why an arrow
> can be shot for a long distance and penetrate a hard substance is because the bow is strong, but the reason it can hit the tiny center of a target is due to the human mind.
> Rewarding goodness and punishing wickedness is for government decrees, but the reason they can be carried out depends on Quintessential Sincerity.
> Thus, though a bow may be strong, it cannot hit the target on its own.
> Though a decree may be enlightened, it cannot be carried out on its own.
> They must be grounded in Quintessential Sincerity in order to be effective.[52]

This passage argues that the lynchpin of ideal action is the mind (*xin* 心).[53] More specifically, the emphasis seems to be on intention and direction of activity. A bow, when fully drawn and fitted with an arrow, can be shot in any direction, but a person

[51] Major et al., 830 with my emendations, HNZ 20/220/23.
[52] Major et al., 802 with my emendations, HNZ 20/212/2-5.
[53] Major et al. translates *xin* 心 here as "heart." I use mind instead of the even more accurate heart-mind to make clearer the connection to Techniques of the Mind *xinshu* 心術.

must intentionally direct it toward the target to hit a bull's-eye. Likewise, government decrees, no matter how well thought-out, cannot be effectively implemented without the ruler's "Quintessential Sincerity" (*jing cheng* 精誠). Quintessential Sincerity is an important term in "The Exalted Lineage," and refers to "complete, uninhibited integration between a person's most basic, spontaneous impulses and his or her expressed words and actions."[54] The sense here is that decrees are only truly efficacious when they emanate from the ruler's deep, personal understanding of the needs of his people, and when that understanding is communicated clearly through his words and actions. The structure of the parallelism in the first part of the above passage suggests that these are two separate examples—i.e. that the mind is the key to archery, and sincerity the key to lawmaking, but that the mind and sincerity are not otherwise related in the examples. However, in the second part of the passage, the authors bring both examples back to the need for Quintessential Sincerity.

So, the final statement of HNZ 20.9 is that ideally effective action happens when an authentic impulse arises, and then is translated into external action without any distortion. In the archery example, the archer's mind guides his body to aim the arrow at the target and release it cleanly so the arrow flies true. In the lawmaking example, the ruler has an insight about where and how to reward goodness or punish wickedness, and communicates that intention through edicts that speak to the needs and abilities of his people and ministers. The first case is relatively simple, the latter extraordinarily complex, but the basic point is the same: What cultivated persons learn to do with the

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[54] Major et al., 871. Note that this is under the Appendix A entry for "sincerity" *cheng* 誠. "The Exalted Lineage" often uses Quintessential Sincerity almost interchangeably, but adds *jing* 精 for emphasis. The binome *jingcheng* 精誠 only appears in this chapter, so there may be a more complicated reason why the authors use it here, but that is an issue beyond the scope of the current project.

Techniques of the Way is to apply their faculties to a situation, and respond to the situation based only on the most sincere responses of their *xing* 性, resulting in a clean line of response from impulse to action.

HNZ 20.10 continues with this theme, insisting that action must faithfully follow *xing* 性 to be effective. Again using examples from the technical arts, the authors point out that "a fine carpenter cannot carve metal / and a skillful blacksmith cannot melt wood."[55] This is because "the propensity of metal is that it cannot be carved, / and the nature of wood is that it cannot be melted."[56] However, by following the natural conditions of things, one can make effective use of them.

In the case of sages, they respond to the natural conditions of humanity, and lead them in cultural forms that "soothe and facilitate the nature that is already present and purify and cleanse it."[57] This treatment of sages' activity builds on the ideas about *xing* 性 in "Integrating Customs" discussed above. There, we learned that the HNZ authors believed cultural forms could influence behavior so deeply that they could cause people to act "as if" those customs were part of their nature. Here, however, the sage manages those cultural forms so that they work simply to facilitate people expressing the innate needs and wants arising from their *xing* 性 as smoothly as possible. There are theoretically limitless possibilities for cultural forms that could achieve those ends, so the sages do not focus purely on established precedent, but use actual conditions as their guide. Because this approach allows people to follow their deepest natural impulses, the authors conclude, "if you respond to their natures, the whole world will listen and come

[55] Major et al., 803, HNZ 20/212/11-12.
[56] Major et al., 803, HNZ 20/212/12.
[57] Major et al., 803, HNZ 20/212/7-8. The examples the authors use here are reminiscent of those used in the "Discussion of Rites" (*Lilun* 禮論) essay in XZ, and follow a similar argument.

along with you."[58] This implies that when people are able to follow the impulses of *xing* 性, they find it naturally compelling and self-authorizing. That is, sages do not have to coerce or entice people to follow the guidelines they provide, because the guidelines are really provided by the people's own *xing* 性, and therefore the people find them natural and follow them as a matter of course.[59]

At this point, we should be clear about whose *xing* 性 sages really respond to when they engage in sagely government. In the preceding example, sages explicitly "respond to their [people's] natures" (*yin qi xing* 因其性). However, we saw in previous passages that the sages' ability to do this stems from their ability to follow their *own xing* 性. So, the HNZ authors assert that it is precisely by following their own *xing* 性 that sages are able to effect the kind of enlightened government that allows the people to simply follow the impulses of *their* individual *xing* 性. In both cases, following the impulses of *xing* 性 is seen as the root of ideal action.

However, HNZ 19.4 gives an important caveat about following one's nature. In an age that lacks the legendary sage kings of antiquity, the HNZ authors note, "wanting to abandon study and follow nature is like abandoning a boat in the hopes that you will walk on water."[60] This passage appears in the context of the "Cultivating Effort" (*Xiuwu* 修務) chapter of HNZ, which argues that the sage's characteristic *wuwei* 無為 mode of action is decidedly *not* mere inaction, but instead the result of intense, active cultivation. Given that context, the quotation above—and the ideas in "Cultivating Effort" it

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[58] Major et al., 804 with my emendations, HNZ 20/212/25.
[59] This idea is an elaboration of sage-rulership in LZ 17, where the best ruler is "one whose subjects barely know he exists," but whose governance causes people respond to respond, "We are like this by ourselves." Mair, 79, LZ 17A/6/9-10.
[60] Major et al., 776, HNZ 19/205/15.

represents—seems to be saying something quite contradictory to the rest of the text. That is, it seems to imply that to cultivate oneself, one should rely on learning to change oneself for the better, and not simply to follow one's most basic impulses.

However, the syntax of the Chinese reveals a more subtle point: the dangerous thing is not just to follow one's nature, but to follow one's nature *after* having abandoned learning. No matter how you parse the sentence, the sense is that trying to follow one's nature without engaging in intensive study is as impossible as walking on water.[61] Earlier in this section of the text, the authors identify sage-kings Yao, Shun, and King Wen as the only examples—even among other sages—who did not "need to rely on study and inquiry to tally with the Way."[62] These three, the authors emphasize, are extreme aberrations from the norm and should not be taken as a model. For the vast majority of people, following *xing* 性 requires an extremely arduous, life-long regimen of self-cultivation.

In the above example, the HNZ authors emphasize "study" (*xue* 學) as the form of cultivation most needed to attain sagehood, but it is clear throughout "Cultivating Effort" and the rest of HNZ that the Techniques of the Way work on a more holistic understanding of "study," which goes beyond academic discipline. The HNZ's approach

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[61] There are a couple of ways to parse the sentence, *yu qi xue er xun xing, shi you shi chuan er yu zhan shui ye* 欲棄學而循性, 是猶釋船而欲蹍水也, all of which yield similar conclusions. First, we can read *qi xue er xun xing* 棄學而循性 as the object of the first *yu* 欲, which yields "wanting to abandon study and follow nature," read as a single action. Next, we can read *qi xue* 棄學 alone as the object of the first *yu* 欲, yielding "wanting to abandon study, and then afterward following nature." The second part of the sentence is more straightforward. However, it seems to me that there may be a transcription or other error that places the second *yu* 欲 after the second conjunction *er* 而, thus breaking the rough parallelism in both halves of the sentence (alternatively, the first *yu* 欲 could be placed in error before the first *er* 而). In that case, there would be a stronger connection between the actions of abandoning learning and abandoning the boat. As it stands, there is some ambiguity about just what one "wants" to do in the first half. As I noted, however, the conclusion is basically the same: learning and following nature must go together.

[62] Major et al., 774, HNZ 19/204/20-21. The authors later describe strange physical features of these and other sages and worthies that made sageliness come easily to them—e.g. Yao's multi-colored eyebrows, Shun's dual pupils in his eyes, and King Wen's four nipples.

to self-cultivation centers on developing the kind of contemplative discipline that allows one to overcome or disregard self-centered thoughts and emotions. We might think of this as mental and emotional discipline, but the HNZ authors conceive of it as a total psycho-physical discipline. HNZ Chapter 14, "Sayings Explained" (*Quanyan* 詮言) has a group of three related passages that will help to explain just what abilities one cultivates with the Techniques of the Way.

HNZ 14.51 and 14.52 are closely related, and use examples of an adept gambler and an adept charioteer to illustrate how effective action is governed by focus and self-control, and not by desire or force of will. "With a tranquil mind and settled attention," the authors explain, the skilled gambler "casts the dice in a uniform fashion, / and his movements follow definite patterns."[63] This does not mean he wins every round, but his consistency causes him to accumulate more winnings overall than his opponents. Similarly, the skilled charioteer "regulates the pace of the horse with his hands / and harmonizes his mind with the horse," and although he may not always come in first, "he invariably causes his horse to do its utmost."[64] In both cases, the authors explain that "winning is determined by technique / and not by desire."[65] That is, the key to success in these examples—and presumably, any other example—is consistency and focus, not mere force of will. The latter passage ends with the conclusion that "when you eradicate desire, technique will prevail. / When you banish knowledge, the Way will become established."[66]

[63] Major et al., 563 with my emendations, HNZ 14/139/17.
[64] Major et al., 563, HNZ 14/139/19.
[65] Major et al., 563, HNZ 14/139/18, 19-20.
[66] Major et al., 563, HNZ 14/139/20.

"Technique" (*shu* 術) here is a stand-in for the kind of focus and clarity needed to perform consistently well in a given task.[67] Since it is linked at the end with attaining the Way, we can see that it extends well beyond the domains of gambling and horse racing. The gambler's success comes from his "tranquil mind and settled attention" (*ping xin ding yi* 平心定意), which allows him to ignore the desire for a win or fear of a loss and instead simply play the best game he can. The charioteer is similarly unaffected by the prospects of winning or losing, and instead "harmonizes his mind with the horse" (*yu xin diao hu ma* 御心調乎馬), causing the horse to run the best race it can. This does not mean the charioteer somehow communicates telepathically with the horse, but rather that the "driver and [his] mind" (*yu xin* 御心) are "harmonized" (*diao* 調) "through [interacting with] the horse" (*hu ma* 乎馬).[68] In both cases, the skilled people disregard self-centered ways of thinking (e.g. desiring to win, fearing to lose) and instead interact as fully as possible with their situation, taking only the actions needed to realize the full potential of the present game or the present race. This, in general, is what the HNZ authors think "technique" (*shu* 術) does. When one "eradicates desire" (*mie yu* 滅欲), then one can be led instead by what the situation demands. Going even further, when one also "banishes knowledge" (*qi zhi* 棄智), then one can attain the universally efficacious technique known as the Way.[69]

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[67] The text here actually has *shu* 數, a common early Han homophonous loan character for *shu* 術.

[68] Here I am reading *yu* 御 as a noun, "driver," rather than a verb, "to drive [a carriage, chariot, etc.]." This seems the most reasonable, based on the parallelism, but *yu xin* 御心 could conceivably be read as two verbs, yielding something like "driving and thinking/feeling." The sense is basically the same: the horse is the center of focus between the external act of driving (e.g. working the reins, cracking the whip, etc.) and all the internal mental processes of the driver.

[69] The phrase "banish knowledge" (or "wisdom"), and the sentiment of this line, recall LZ 19. See my discussion of that passage above in Chapter III.

HNZ 14.53 adds the further point that one must attain "oneness," or singular focus, in order to attain the Way. "Too many deals impoverish the merchant. / Too much artistry exhausts the craftsman," the HNZ authors observe, concluding that "it is because their minds are not one."[70] Here, the meaning of "the mind is not one" (*xin bu yi* 心不一) seems to be that one's attention is dispersed on several things at once, instead of being collected and focused to a single point. Recalling the previous passage, the authors note that "if you possess knowledge but lack technique, though you bore with an awl you will never get through anything."[71] As in other parts of HNZ and other classical Daoist literature, "knowledge" is here associated with limited, inflexible focus on discrete facts. "Technique" here is used in the sense of the previous two passages—as a capacity for sustained, focused attention and consistent engagement with a situation. If you rely on knowledge in this sense, without the ability to focus embodied in technique, then you will not be able to "get through" (*da* 達). Given the context, and the fact that *da* 達 is often used in HNZ and elsewhere as a verb associated with "breaking through" to an awareness of *dao* 道, we can safely assume that to which one "gets through" is the Way.[72] Thus, the authors assert, single-minded focus is a prerequisite for and characteristic of the Way.

From HNZ 14.51-53, we learn that following the Way can also be described as a matter of coordinating one's *xin* 心—including thoughts, emotions, and sense perceptions—with one's actions in a way that engages and harmonizes with one's environment. Moreover, it is also a matter of doing this absolutely consistently. If the Techniques of the Way are a kind of universally-applicable technique, then following the

[70] Major et al., 564 with my emendations, HNZ 14/139/22.
[71] Major et al., 564, HNZ 14/139/22-23.
[72] Lau here reads *da* 達 instead of *tong* 通 ("to penetrate"). It is important to note that both readings could work, and for precisely the same reasons I give.

Way requires consistent, focused application of those techniques to every situation. This also implies consistently discarding self-centered desires and concerns to return one's attention only to the situation at hand.

As we may already surmise, getting the human mind to work in this way is extremely difficult, and requires constant practice. HNZ 19.5 stresses the importance of repeated practice in cultivating the *xin* 心:

> Now in the case of a blind person, his eyes cannot distinguish day from night or differentiate white from black; nevertheless when he grasps the *qin* and plucks the strings, triply plucking and doubly pressing, touching and plucking, pulling and releasing, his hands are like a blur, and he never misses a string. If we tried to get someone who had never played the *qin* to do this, though possessing the clear sight of Li Zhu or the nimble fingers of Jue Duo, it would be as if he could neither contract nor extend a finger. What is the reason for this? It is the result of first-hand expertise accumulated through long practice.[73]

The passage then continues with many examples from the technical arts of metal working and jade craft, noting how consistent application of the artisans' tools can transform rough raw materials into something extraordinarily fine, finally commenting, "how much more so is this the case for the attention of the heart and mind!"[74] This indicates that the "attention of the heart and mind" (*xinyi* 心意) is just the kind of thing which can be transformed and refined by thorough cultivation into something extraordinary. Indeed, the passage continues on with a list of qualities possessed by cultivated individuals, and concludes that these qualities are "the means by which the mind of the sage wanders."[75]

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[73] Major et al., 779 with my emendations, HNZ 19/206/16-18. The text has only "one who is blind" (*mang zhe* 盲者) because in early China the blind were routinely trained in the musical arts, since it was believed their lack of sight enhanced their ability to perceive sound. Li Zhu is a mythical minister of the Yellow Emperor, said in HNZ 1.6 to have vision "so acute that he could pick out the tip of a needle beyond a hundred paces" (Major et al., 55, HNZ 1/3/9-10). Jue Duo is another mythical figure known for his extreme dexterity.

[74] Major et al., 779 with my emendations, HNZ 19/206/20. Major et al., have simply "heart and mind" for (*xinyi* 心意), but I find it significant that "attention" *yi* 意 is included here, and translate accordingly.

[75] Major et al., 779, HNZ 19/206/24-25.

This passage is significant because it gives a subtle indication that the HNZ authors' vision of ethical cultivation is focused on personal, first-hand awareness of how the mind works, gained through repeated practice. The key phrase in the first part of the passage, explaining how people acquire virtuosic skill, is that such skill is "the result of first-hand expertise, acquired through repeated practice" (*fu xi ji guan zhi suo zhi* 服習積貫之所致). *Fu xi ji guan* 服習積貫 is the most important part, and is made up of two pairs of related terms. *Fu* 服 and *xi* 習 both have to do with qualities acquired over time. *Fu* 服 means "to be accustomed to, to be comfortable with," or perhaps "to be intimately acquainted with," since *fu* 服 also means clothing and everyday personal effects. *Xi* 習 means "to gain mastery through repetition," or simply "to practice, to put into practice." Both of these have the sense of requiring one to personally undergo a training regimen, and not simply to hear or memorize something. *Ji* 積 and *guan* 貫 both have to do with accumulation. *Ji* 積 means "to pile up, to accumulate," and *guan* 貫 means "to string together successively." Combined, the sense of the phrase is a training program consisting of repeated personal encounters with something or practice with how to do something. In the next part of the passage we learn that such a process can be applied to the very workings of the mind and attention with the fantastic result of sagely qualities.

HNZ 19.7 then drives home the importance of first-hand insight by criticizing those who rely on received instruction from texts and traditions. The authors use court scholars as an example:

> A knowledgeable scholar need not be the same sort as Confucius or Mozi. If with luminous attention, [his mind] has the capacity to penetrate things, then he will write books to illustrate matters, and they will be taken up by the learned. A scholar who truly attains clarity and illumination, who grasps the profound mirror in his mind, illuminating things brilliantly and not changing his mind on account of [whether

> something is] ancient or current, will accordingly propound his writings and clearly point out [his views]. Then, even though his coffin might close, he would have no regrets.[76]

This passage contrasts the scholar example with many others wherein people value something purely on the basis of how others esteem it, ignoring its more obvious advantages or defects. The point is that what really matters is not reputation or popular consensus that something is worthwhile, but that it actually works well or otherwise suits its purpose. In the scholar example, it does not matter whether other people regard someone as authoritatively trained in, for instance, the Confucian or Mohist traditions, but rather that he "truly attains clarity and illumination" (*cheng de qing ming* 成的清明), and "grasps the profound mirror in the mind" (*zhi xuan jian yu xin* 執玄鑑於心). Such a person "has the capacity to penetrate things" (*you suo tong yu wu* 有所通於物), and that personal ability or expertise is what is really valuable in understanding actual situations, rather than theoretical constructs or the bias of popular assumptions.

HNZ 20.20 gives another example and explains just why the personal abilities of cultivated individuals are so much more valuable than their knowledge of discrete facts:

> The reason why we respect [the great physician] Bian Que is not because he could prescribe medicines in accordance with the illnesses but because he could lay a hand on the breath and feel the pulse of the blood and understand from where illness derives. The reason why we respect sages is not because they [for instance,] set punishments in accordance with the crime but because they know from where disorder arises.[77]

Here again, the active contrast is between discrete knowledge (knowing which medicines treat which illnesses, and which punishments accord with which crimes) and technical knowledge (how to diagnose the cause of an illness, and how to find the root of a problem). Both examples relate to evaluating and solving problems, and stress that the

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[76] Major et al., 786 with my emendations, HNZ 19/209/3-5.
[77] Major et al., 816, HNZ 20/216/17-18.

important part of any such endeavor is the ability to clearly discern the underlying causes of the problem—however complex and subtle they may be—and provide a solution that addresses those causes, rather than addressing only the most obvious effects.

The HNZ authors think that this kind of clear discernment, in which one grasps the root causes of things, can be cultivated by removing the normal sources of distraction from the mind. HNZ 13.20 provides a good example of how the mind can be led astray by distraction, even to the point of ignoring basic facts about a situation:

> Among the people of Qi was someone who stole gold. Just when the market was most crowded, he arrived, grabbed it, and fled. When held by force and asked, "Why did you steal gold from the market?" He responded, "I did not see anyone, I only saw gold." When the mind is preoccupied with desires, it forgets what it does.[78]

In this example, the thief is so overcome with desire for gold that he forgets entirely the danger of stealing it in a crowded marketplace. This provides an important counter-point to HNZ 14.53, which we saw above as asserting the need for single-mindedness. The thief in HNZ 13.20 also appears to be single-minded, but the difference is that his mind is focused on his desire for a self-centered good. In that sense, he errs when he focuses on something that the HNZ authors see as a mere distraction. Single-minded attention is indeed important, but the object of that attention must be only the awareness of one's most basic impulses of *xing* 性.

However, how do we know that the desire for gold was not a basic impulse of the thief's *xing* 性? HNZ 13.20 continues by contrasting the thief with the sage, saying "those who have achieved the Way are not indifferent to obtaining [things], but are not ravenous for wealth."[79] This is because they "scrutinize the alterations of movement and

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[78] Major et al., 521, HNZ 13/129/27-28.
[79] Major et al., 521, HNZ 13/130/2-3.

rest, / accord with the due measures of receiving and giving, / order the authentic impulses of liking and loathing, / and harmonize with the occasions of happiness and anger."[80] The idea here is that sages, like all human beings, necessarily encounter situations that make them happy or angry, or which require giving or receiving, and in which they feel, for instance, cold, or hungry, or thirsty and need something to satisfy them. The difference in sages is that in all of these things they abide by the dictates of the situation and do not grasp for more than the situation can provide or than they really need. They find satisfaction in each situation—even when that means feeling negative emotions or giving up something they otherwise value—and do not excessively desire to force the situation to their advantage. Nevertheless, this approach balances the sage's needs with those of his environment, and both sage and environment end up more fulfilled than if he took a more self-centered approach.

The end of the passage has a good analogy to explain this point:

> Now the rain that drips from the eaves is sufficient to fill to overflowing a large cistern, but the waters of the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers cannot fill a leaky drinking cup. Thus the human heart is like this. If you make yourself conform to the Techniques of the Way in measurement and limitation, food will fill the emptiness; clothes will block the cold; and it will suffice to care for the body.[81]

Here, the human mind and body with its needs and desires, is compared to vessels filling with water. The large cistern has a definite amount of water that it "needs" in order to be filled, so even rainwater will eventually fill it up, with plenty left over. The leaky drinking cup always "needs" more water to fill it, so no amount will fully satisfy its parameters. Similarly, when the human mind, through practicing the Techniques of the Way, understands the root of needs and desires, it will find the appropriate satisfaction

[80] Major et al., 521, HNZ 13/129/28-13/130/1.
[81] Major et al., 521 with my emendations, HNZ 13/130/6-7.

for those, and not want for more. If, however, the mind does not understand basic needs and desires, and instead constantly wants more, it will be like the leaky cup—always grasping, but never being satisfied. The implication here is that in the example above, the thief's desire for gold was not inherent to his *xing* 性, but rather something pathological—a serious leak in his cup. Thus the focus of single-mindedness for the HNZ authors is always on the most basic root parts of the human mind, which they assert are inherently free from selfish desires. This is why they say sages "persevere in emptiness but are easily satisfied."[82]

The analogy of the human mind to a vessel that can either leak or retain water connects powerfully with how the HNZ authors think the mind-body system works, and will therefore provide a good transition to the next section. HNZ 2.9 addresses the theme of limiting distractions caused by excessive desires, but employs the characteristic classical Daoist language of inner cultivation:

> The words of one whose spirit pours away are elaborate;
> The conduct of one whose Potency is blocked is artificial.
>
> If you lack the Utmost Essence internally, yet perceive words and conduct externally, you will not be able to avoid becoming enslaved to material things. If in your choosing and rejecting your conduct is artificial, this is to seek Essence externally. If Essence leaks out completely but conduct is not curbed, this disturbs the mind and agitates the spirit, confusing and disordering their source . . . For this reason, sages inwardly cultivate the Techniques of the Way . . . They are unaware of the demands of the ears and eyes and wander in the harmony of the Quintessential Spirit.[83]

Here we get an early indication of the connection the HNZ authors draw between essence (*jing* 精), spirit (*shen* 神), and the activities of the mind. As we will see in the next section, the HNZ authors work within a system that gives quasi-physical correlates to mental and emotional processes. This means that if one "lacks the Utmost Essence

[82] Major et al., 521, HNZ 13/130/3-4.
[83] Major et al., 97 with my emendations, HNZ 2/14/15-21.

internally" and if "Essence leaks out completely," then one will be like the leaky cup instead of the full cistern—one will be "apprehensive to the last, never knowing a moment of contentment."[84]

This is HNZ's explicit language about how ethical self-cultivation works. It is a matter of limiting desires and sense pleasures so that *jing* 精 does not leak out and spirit pour away, thus blocking Potency. In one sense this is entirely literal; the HNZ authors really do think that this is how the process of self-cultivation works. Following the Techniques of the Mind first outlined in NY, breath circulation leads to refinement of *qi* 氣 into the rarified fluid *jing* 精, and *jing* 精 promotes a healthy body and mind that are then able to perceive and contact the mysterious and ephemeral *dao* 道. In another sense, however, there is an entirely practical side to this process, based in first-hand experience with the inner workings of consciousness. We have seen from the examples in this section that cultivating the Techniques of the Way is definitely a very practical process of conducting the mind in a certain way, and laboriously acquiring the habits of thought and action that allow one to minimize self-centered action and instead to rely on base-level impulses that arise from interaction with real situations.

In the next section, I will examine the HNZ's explicit treatment of the exotic terms describing the psycho-physical processes involved in self-cultivation, before moving on to the exotic, sagely abilities developed therefrom. I will show that these descriptions address all of the same practical concerns with the process of self-cultivation outlined in this section. This means that, however exotic the HNZ author's explicit

[84] Major et al., 97, HNZ 2/14/18.

description of ethical cultivation may be, there is always nonetheless a more primary practical instruction implicit within it.

C: The Pscyho-physiology of Ethics in HNZ

Ethical self-cultivation in HNZ is a matter of developing uniquely human faculties to their fullest extent. As such, the authors provide an attendant account of the human mind-body system to explain what happens when one cultivates this system. This account is deeply indebted to the tradition of inner cultivation reviewed above in Chapter III, and should be taken as a later entry into that same tradition.

HNZ 1.17 gives a basic account of the role the mind places within the systems of the body:

> The mind is the master of the Five Orbs. It regulates and directs the Four Limbs and circulates the blood and vital energy; gallops through the realms of accepting and rejecting, and enters and exits through the gateways and doorways of the hundreds of endeavors.[85]

Here we see that the role of the *xin* 心 is essentially as director or "master" (*zhu* 主) of various physical and mental processes. The Five Orbs refer to the five centers of the energetic system of *qi* 氣 thought to animate the body and mind, and correlate to the lungs, liver, spleen, gall bladder, and kidneys.[86] This energetic system exists alongside the physiological systems of the body, and mutually interacts with it, but is nonetheless conceptually separate. As we see here, the *xin* 心 is thought to direct both energetic and physiological systems. It also plays the central directorial role in various thought processes, such as "accepting and rejecting" (*shifei* 是非), and initiating and concluding

[85] Major et al., 71, HNZ 1/8/9-10.
[86] For more information, see Major et al. on *wu zang* 五藏, 900.

actions ("entering and exiting through the gateways and doorways of the hundreds of endeavors" *chu ru yu bai shi zhi men hu* 出入于白事之門戶).

The passage continues on to explain that, "the essentials of the world / do not lie in the Other / but instead lie in the self; do not lie in other people / but instead lie in your own person. / When you fully realize your own person, then all the myriad things will be arrayed before you."[87] It then links this process with the techniques of self-cultivation discussed above when it says, "When you thoroughly penetrate the teachings of the Techniques of the Mind, then you will be able to put lusts and desires, likes and dislikes, outside yourself."[88] Once you are able to achieve this, several interesting psycho-physical changes occur:

> There is nothing to rejoice in and nothing to be angry about,
> nothing to be happy about and nothing to feel bitter about.
> You will be mysteriously unified with the myriad things,
> and there is nothing you reject and nothing you affirm.
> You transform and nourish a mysterious resplendence
> and, while alive, appear to be dead.[89]

Together, these parts of the passage assert that the *xin* 心 all individuals possesses as part of their person (*shen* 身) is also the locus of "the essentials of the world" (*tianxia zhi yao* 天下之要). Moreover, when "the person is realized" (*shen de* 身得) then one can understand these essential facts of the world and "the myriad things will be arrayed before you" (*wanwu bei* 萬物備). The authors also imply that this can be achieved by using the Techniques of the Mind and eliminating lusts and desires, and likes and dislikes. The person who does this transcends such dualities and is "mysteriously unified with the myriad things" (*wanwu xuan tong* 萬物玄同), and "while alive, seems to be dead" (*sheng*

[87] Major et al., 71, HNZ 1/8/16-17.
[88] Major et al., 71, HNZ 1/8/17-18.
[89] Major et al., 72, HNZ 1/8/18-19.

er ru si 生而如死). Major et al. note that this last description is reminiscent of Nanguo Ziqi's trance in ZZ 2/3/15, where his "body is like withered wood and his mind like dead ashes."[90] Roth has identified this as the introvertive side of a "bimodal mystical experience" present in the ZZ and operative throughout classical Daoism.[91]

The important point for HNZ's practical ethics is that this passage begins to describe how one goes about cultivating the mind. We read earlier in NY that with inner cultivation, "by means of the mind you store the mind" (*yi xin zang xin* 以心藏心).[92] Building on this tradition, HNZ 1.19 implies that the mind, as master of the psycho-physical systems of the mind and body, directs the process of self-cultivation, even to the point of grasping the most basic properties of the person and thereby the myriad things.

HNZ 18.1 gives us another useful definition of mind:

> Starting from a single edge,
> it extrapolates without limit.
> Roaming across the eight directions,
> it gathers everything into a single straw.
> It is called "the mind."[93]

Here, the HNZ authors point out the mind's ability to extrapolate and synthesize information as its defining features. The thing which can, on the one hand, start with a single bit of information and discern limitless implications, and on the other hand synthesize limitless information into a single thread, is the human mind. This definition is significant because it indicates the properties of *xin* 心 that the HNZ authors thought explained why self-cultivation is possible, as well as the properties of *xin* 心 that one actually develops when engaged in self-cultivation. On the one hand, this description

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[90] See Major et al., 72n.62.
[91] See Roth, "Bimodal Mystical Experience."
[92] Roth, 72, GZ 16.1/116/20.
[93] Major et al., 720 with my emendations, HNZ 18/185/23.

appears in the "root" passage of HNZ Chapter 18, "Among Others" (*Renjian* 人間), and is therefore important in setting up the tone and themes of the chapter. It explains the human abilities that make it possible for one to, "look at the root and know the branches, observe the finger and see the return [path], hold to the One and respond to the many, grasp the essentials and order the details."[94] This is the substance of sagely conduct, and the abilities of the mind make it possible to "hold to the One" (*zhi yi* 執一)—where the One is understood to be "that from which the wise act, [which is] known as the Way."[95]

On the other hand, the faculties of the *xin* 心 are the tangible object of cultivation in the HNZ's ethical program. HNZ 18.24 recalls the definition in the chapter's root passage, and asserts that one "who has the Way transforms externally but does not transform internally . . . within, one has a unified and stable grasp; without, one can withdraw and extend, expand and contract, close and open."[96] It is precisely because the cultivated person has a "unified and stable grasp" (*yi ding zhi cao* 一定之操) on the properties of the mind within that he is able to consistently use the mind's ability to extrapolate and synthesize to understand external conditions and "transform" (*hua* 化) appropriately. The important thing here is that one's inner condition must be absolutely consistent and unstirred by self-centered emotions like fear or lust. However, as we saw above, the thing which one consistently grasps within is itself dynamic. Thus, what the cultivated person develops a unified and stable grasp on within is a *quality* of mind—usually characterized by stability, clarity, equanimity, etc. This means that sages will bring a certain consistency of inner experience to all of their interactions, and it is that

[94] Major, et al., 720 with my emendations, HNZ 18/185/23-24.
[95] Major, et al., 720, HNZ 18/185/26.
[96] Major, et al., 750 with my emendation, HNZ 18/199/18-20.

consistency which the HNZ authors emphasize as the thing one must cultivate and maintain.

To understand how to maintain such a consistency of inner experience given the dynamic, embodied nature of the human condition, the HNZ authors draw on the anthropology developed by both the classical Daoist inner cultivation tradition and the early Chinese medical tradition. They begin a systematic treatment of these topics in HNZ Chapter 7, "Quintessential Spirit" (*Jingshen* 精神). As Major, et al. note in the introduction to "Quintessential Spirit," this "is the first chapter of the *Huainanzi* to introduce human beings systematically into the grand scheme of things."[97] This follows once again the cosmological and organizational root-branch scheme organizing the text. Chapters 1 through 6 treat the Way and cosmic origins, Heaven, Earth and the differentiation of the myriad things, and in Chapter 7 we come down to the human world.

HNZ 7.1 and 7.2 lay out a detailed conception of what a human being is, in cosmic, biological, and psychological contexts. HNZ 7.1 begins with a familiar rehearsal of the text's cosmogony, but focuses on the primordial material that separated into Heaven and Earth, which also corresponded to yin and yang. It then explains that during the mixing of *qi* 氣 that created the myriad things, "the turbid *qi* became creatures; / the refined *qi* became humans," and therefore that "the Quintessential Spirit is of Heaven; / [and] the skeletal system is of Earth."[98] This means that, while humans are generally of a more refined substance than other animals, they nonetheless have both "Heavenly" qualities and "Earthly" qualities. The Earthly qualities are the various aspects of our physicality—typified by the skeletal system, the most solid of our physical parts. The

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[97] Major, et al., 234.
[98] Major, et al., 240 with my emendations, HNZ 7/54/27-28.

Heavenly qualities are the various cognitive faculties associated with the *xin* 心—typified by the "Quintessential Spirit" (*jingshen* 精神), the most rarified constituent of our minds.

HNZ 7.2 continues the parallel description of the human in terms of Heaven and Earth. Quoting LZ 42, the HNZ authors say that on the Heavenly side, "through the blending of *qi* 氣, [the myriad things] become harmonious," and give an account of how the physical body develops *in utero*.[99] "In this way," the authors continue, "the physical body is completed / and the Five Orbs are formed."[100] This extends the parallelism even further, associating the Five Orbs with the Heavenly aspects of the human being, and establishing that it is within the Five Orbs—that is, the greater pscyho-energetic system in general—that the harmonization mentioned in LZ 42 occurs. The authors then go on to explain various functions of the Five Orbs, attributing to each the regulation of one of the five sense organs. They also correlate various celestial and atmospheric phenomena with the five orbs and other parameters of the human body, and conclude "in this way human beings form a triad with Heaven and Earth, and the mind is the ruler of this."[101] To "form a triad with Heaven and Earth" (*yu tiandi xiang can* 與天地相參) recalls a concept most well known in XZ, in which humans play an equal role with Heaven and Earth in cosmic flourishing.[102] This is the only place in HNZ where any such phrase appears, so the greater point is simply that the HNZ authors think that the mind, and its regulation of the psycho-energetic systems, is the means by which humans participate in the higher functioning of the cosmos.

[99] Major, et al., 241-2 with my emendation, HNZ 7/55/8-10.
[100] Major, et al., 242, HNZ 7/55/10.
[101] Major, et al., 242, HNZ 7/55/14.
[102] See John Knoblock and Jue Zhang, *Xunzi*. Library of Chinese Classics. (Changsha: Hunan Publishing House, 1999), 535, XZ 17/80/3.

However, it is important to note that although the opening passages of "Quintessential Spirit" provide abstract cosmological glosses for the functions of the human mind and body, they nonetheless simply describe the human mind and body. That is, the topic of discussion in "Quintessential Spirit" is the psycho-physical processes with which all humans, *qua* humans, are intimately familiar. In what follows, even though the text refers to substances and properties like *jing* 精 and *shenming* 神明 as connected with various cosmic forces, throughout those discussions the substances and properties still primarily refer to the things that make human cognition, emotion, sense perception, etc. work. As described in my previous chapters, the pragmatic valences of these terms will always connect with basic human cognitive functions.

HNZ 2.11 also gives a few definitions for basic human qualities that connect closely with the language from "Quintessential Spirit." Here, the authors note that all humans are normally endowed with the five sense faculties, and the same tranquil quality of *xing* 性, so theoretically they should produce the same instinctive responses (*qing* 情). And yet, "some penetrate to spiritlike illumination, and some cannot avoid derangement and madness. Why is that?"[103] The answer is "that by which they [the faculties and tendencies] are controlled is different."[104] The authors then elaborate, giving explanations for two important terms:

> The spirit is the source of consciousness. If the spirit is clear, then consciousness is illumined.
> Consciousness is the storehouse of the mind. If consciousness is impartial, then the mind is balanced.[105]

[103] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/7-8.
[104] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/8.
[105] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/8-9.

Here, "spirit" (*shen* 神) and "consciousness" (*zhi* 智) appear almost as sub-levels of the mind. We know from earlier in the passage, and from the many others quoted above, that the mind is what controls the body and energetic systems. However, we learn in this passage that the mind is itself comprised of "deeper" parts. We also know from previous examples that the HNZ authors recommend a consistency and equanimity of mind, which here is attributed to "consciousness being impartial" (*zhi gong* 智公).[106] The "source of consciousness" (*zhi zhi yuan* 智之淵) is, in turn, "spirit" (*shen* 神). *Shen* 神 is therefore a very basic level of mind that precedes even consciousness.

Shen 神 is also closely related to the term Quintessential Spirit (*jingshen* 精神), which links *shen* 神 with "essence" (*jing* 精), the most rarefied and potent form of *qi* 氣 that animates the human being. Quintessential Spirit is both the quintessence of *shen* 神—*shen*'s most essential and rarefied form—as well as the *jing* 精 of *shen* 神—its pscyho-physical basis in the human energetic system. The HNZ authors' understanding of *jing* 精 is extremely similar to, and clearly influenced by, NY and the classical Daoist inner cultivation tradition. With that understanding in mind, HNZ 2.11 goes on to warn that "to work at reclaiming the Quintessential Spirit once it has already overflowed externally is to lose the root and seek it in the branches."[107] *Jingshen* 精神 "overflows externally" when one becomes attached to external objects, and disordered within.

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[106] Major et al. normally translate *zhi* 智 as "cleverness" or "intelligence," understood as "any mental faculty that can produce tangible results in the world, encompassing both quickness of wit and breadth of knowledge." Major et al., 912. In the present passage, however, *zhi* 智 is used in a way that makes "cleverness" or "intelligence" somewhat inappropriate. Cleverness, intelligence, etc. usually imply some faculty of discrimination, and if *zhi* 智 here is truly "impartial" (*gong* 公), then discrimination would be impossible. The sense of *zhi* 智 in the present case is thus something more like the very property of mind itself that makes cleverness, intelligence, etc. possible—hence, "consciousness."

[107] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/12-13.

The authors explain further that "when the mind goes somewhere, the spirit swiftly lodges there. By returning the spirit to emptiness, this lodging dissolves and is extinguished."[108] As Major et al. explain in a note, this description refers to the process of attention.[109] The authors claim that when one's mind settles on some object, the *shen* 神 "lodges there" (*zai zhi* 在之), bringing its essence (*jing* 精) with it. Thus, attention is a process of projecting *jingshen* 精神 onto various objects. In the proper functioning of attention, one would withdraw the *jingshen* 精神 from the object and "return the spirit to emptiness" before moving on to a new object, thus dissolving it back into its origin during the interval. If one does not make such a clean break and "leaves behind" some *jingshen* 精神, this is when *jingshen* 精神 "overflows externally" (*yue yu wai* 越於外).

The process of attention is described here in terms of *shen* 神 and *jingshen* 精神, but these terms also have an identifiable pragmatic valence. That is, we can just as easily phrase this account of human psychology using terms like attention, distraction, and fixation. In that case, the HNZ authors describe attention as a process in which one invests mental energy in one object, withdraws it, and extends it to the next object. If, however, one remains fixated on certain objects, then one's capacity for attention diminishes, and one's psychic life becomes disordered. If one can instead control attention sufficiently, and completely withdraw it from one object before investing it in another, one can ensure a properly functioning psychic life. This latter situation allows one to engage effectively with any object or situation one encounters, and the HNZ

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[108] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/14-15.
[109] Major et al., 101n.63.

authors consequently describe it as “the wandering of the sage” (*shengren zhi you* 聖人之遊).[110]

HNZ 7.3 has an even more detailed description of how the psycho-physical process of attention works, and why controlling it results in sagely qualities:

> When the Five Orbs can be subordinated to the mind and their functioning is without error, then fluctuating attention will be done away with, and the circulation [of vital energy] will not be awry.
> When fluctuating attention is done away with and the circulation is not awry, then the Quintessential Spirit is abundant, and the vital energy is not dispersed.
> When the Quintessential Spirit is abundant and the vital energy is not dispersed, then you are functioning according to Underlying Patterns.
> When you function according to Underlying Patterns, you attain equanimity.
> When you attain equanimity, you develop penetrating awareness.
> When you develop penetrating awareness, you become spiritlike.
> When you are spiritlike,
> with vision, there is nothing unseen;
> with hearing, there is nothing unheard;
> with actions, there is nothing incomplete.[111]

Here, the progression to ideal mental functioning starts with the Five Orbs. As we learned above, the Five Orbs are the energetic correlate of the physiological system of organs in the body, and they control the various senses. The Five Orbs are also thought to be involved with the generation and expression of emotion. In the current passage, if the controlling faculty of *xin* 心 can “subordinate” (*shu* 屬) the sensory and emotional functions of the Five Orbs, then “fluctuating attention” (*bo zhi* 勃志) will cease and the vital energies will circulate as they should. This matches well the description in HNZ 2.11 of how mental disorder occurs, so it is no surprise that eliminating it leads to an abundance of *jingshen* 精神.

[110] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/15.
[111] Major et al., 243, HNZ 7/55/21-24.

The important development we see in HNZ 7.3 is the introduction of the concepts of Underlying Patterns (*li* 理) and the various faculties of spiritlike, "penetrating awareness" (*tong* 通).[112] Underlying Patterns will become important later on, but for now it suffices to note that attaining such "patterning" leads to "equanimity" (*jun* 均). Both terms have a sense of regularity and consistency, which we learned above is integral to ideal human functioning. Even more significantly, when one is consistently equanimous, this opens the door to being penetrating, and being penetrating is what leads to being spiritlike. Being penetrating, as the translation suggests, refers to having a penetrating awareness—that is, perceiving things that go beyond superficial appearances and penetrate to the fundamental or "root" level of a situation. This faculty of discernment is usually only attributed to spirits and gods, so when humans attain it they become "spiritlike." We then learn that being spiritlike includes the ability to be completely comprehensive in sight, hearing, and action. These faculties will also be important for my discussion below.

It is significant also that *shen* 神 here is the same *shen* 神 used to denote the most subtle level of *xin* 心 in the examples above. This is certainly deliberate, and indicates that the HNZ authors considered the most subtle level of *xin* 心 to be in the same category of things as spirits and gods, and therefore responsible for humans' cultivated ability to have similarly penetrating awareness.

HNZ 7.4 develops the theme of clear perception and action by explaining in greater detail how people normally lose *jingshen* 精神. "When the eyes and ears are enticed by the joys of sound and color, then the Five Orbs oscillate and are not stable,"

[112] *Tong* 通 is simply "penetrating / to penetrate," and "awareness" is supplied from context.

the HNZ authors explain, and echo the account given in HNZ 7.3 to conclude that this instability causes the *jingshen* 精神 to "course out" through the eyes and ears.[113] When this happens, it depletes one's internal fund of *jingshen* 精神, and "then when either good fortune or misfortune arrives, although it be as [apparent as] hills and mountains, one has no way to recognize it."[114] The important point here is that loss of *jingshen* 精神 affects not only one's actual perception of things, but also one's judgment. That is, while lusting after certain sense objects can literally impair one's senses, it also distorts one's ability to judge whether something is a case of "good fortune or misfortune" (*fu huo* 福禍), and therefore whether it is something that should be pursued or avoided. For instance, in the case of the thief in the marketplace above, fixation on gold in one sense causes the thief to literally misapprehend the situation (he saw only gold, and did not see the people), and in another sense causes him to confuse a dangerous situation for a lucrative opportunity.

HNZ 7.4 thus concludes that excessive indulgence in distracting sense objects ultimately weakens one's sense faculties, and that "obstinate preferences disorder the mind, and cause the nature to fly about [from one thing to the next.] . . . If you do not quickly eliminate them, your attention and vital energy will diminish."[115] This conclusion is significant because in the case of the senses, it is always external things (the five colors, five sounds, etc.) that confuse and disorder, whereas the source of disorder in the *xin* 心 is "obstinate preferences" (*qu she* 趣舍 lit. "preferences lodging in one place"). Since preferences are a function of the *xin* 心, this seems to imply that disordered *xin* 心 suffer from internal problems. However, as we have seen in examples above, the

[113] Major, et al., 244, HNZ 7/56/1-2.
[114] Major et al., 244 with my emendations, HNZ 7/56/2-3.
[115] Major et al., 245 with my emendations, HNZ 7/56/7-8.

problem is not necessarily preferences in general, but *obstinate* preferences in particular, because these are arbitrarily imposed based on an external standard, rather than spontaneously arising from the *xing* 性. Indeed, the present passage notes that the disordered *xin* 心 causes the *xing* 性 to "fly about," instead of remaining in its natural, tranquil state where it can produce reliable, harmonious preferences that will not diminish the "attention and vital energy" (*zhi qi* 志氣).

HNZ 1.21 adds some detail to this picture, focusing instead on the controlling faculty of *shen* 神:

> People who are covetous and filled with desires
> are blinded by political power and profit
> and are enticed by their lust for fame and station.
> If by surpassing the wisdom of others they hope to grow tall in the eyes of the world, then their Quintessential Spirit will daily be squandered and become increasingly distant from them. If they indulge in this for long and do not reverse this pattern . . . then their spirit will have no way to reenter. Thus throughout the world there are sometimes the misfortunes of people who lose themselves through blindness and stupidity. This is the same thing as the tallow of a candle: the more the fire burns it, the more it melts and eventually disappears.[116]

Here we see a similar statement of the mistakes made by those who focus too much on external factors, to the detriment of their *jingshen* 精神. The passage describes people who live entirely by external standards—e.g. covetously seeking to attain what others have, worrying about their reputation and what advantage it can bring them, etc.—and says that such unbridled desire will cause their "*jingshen* to be squandered daily" (*jingshen ri yi hao* 精神日以耗). This, in turn, will eventually cause the *shen* 神 itself to disappear.

[116] Major et al., 76, HNZ 1/10/4-7.

So, in this passage there is an even stronger statement linking ethical development to psycho-physiological processes. The HNZ authors set up a parallel process of moral and energetic decay, giving a psycho-physiological interpretation of both. Keeping in mind the pragmatic valences of the terms, the HNZ authors essentially argue that self-centered habits of thought ill equip people to deal effectively with their environments—even to the point of impairing the mental faculties of perception and discernment. This is because self-centered habits of thought are not just deemed "bad" or "wrong" relative to a moral standard, but because they practically impair one's ability to deal effectively with the world.

HNZ 1.21 also gives the positive, sagely side of this account and says, "The more that the vital essence, spirit, vital energy, and awareness are tranquil, the more they will be abundant and strong."[117] This part of the passage explicitly links tranquility with strength and abundance of psycho-physiological faculties. It then says that, based on this, sages preserve such tranquility by "nourishing their spirits" (*yang qi shen* 養其神), "harmonizing and softening their vital breath" (*he ruo qi qi* 和弱其氣), and "pacifying their bodies" (*ping yi qi xing* 平夷其形).[118] These are all references to the techniques of inner cultivation stressed as integral parts of the Techniques of the Way. Individuals cultivated through these techniques are able to "plunge and soar through life along with the Way."[119]

Once again, it is important to note here that, although the HNZ authors employ rather abstract terminology, they nonetheless give practical explanations of observable

[117] Major et al., 76, HNZ 1/10/7-8.
[118] Major et al., 76, HNZ 1/10/8-9.
[119] Major et al., 76, HNZ 1/10/10.

phenomena. Sages cultivate habits of thought and action that are not self-centered, and are therefore not subject to the turbulence caused by interacting with situations from a self-centered perspective. This keeps them alert to all of the parameters and possibilities of a situation, and leaves all of their faculties intact to engage with it. Sages are therefore able to take better account of themselves and all other factors in the situation, leading the entire complex of elements to a more satisfying conclusion.

This balance between self and environment lies at the heart of HNZ's ethical vision, and requires the sagely ability to accurately determine one's needs and impulses in a situation, without veering into self-centeredness. This ability is also characterized by a balanced and stable energetic system. For instance, HNZ 7.12 notes that sages "eat enough to maintain their vital energy / and wear clothes sufficient to cover their bodies. They satisfy their genuine responses and do not look for more."[120] The overall point of the passage is that, while people do have certain innate needs like food, water, and warmth, these are easily satisfied on the individual level and cannot be fulfilled more by getting even more food, even more water, etc. Thus, sages simply determine, for instance, how much food they need and eat only that amount, thus satisfying the demands of the situation precisely, and not disturbing their inner harmony with excess. Moreover, they know precisely how much they need because they can gauge their "genuine responses" (*qing* 情). As we saw in the previous chapter, *qing* 情 are the pure responses of one's *xing* 性 to circumstances, without any overlay of selfish concerns.

[120] Major, et al., 255, HNZ 7/59/16-17.

Sages are able to balance their self and their environment so well because they are able to act only based on *qing* 情, and they are able to do this precisely because their energetic systems are well tuned. HNZ 7.12 continues, explaining this principle:

> When someone is extremely angry, it shatters his yin energy,
> and when someone is extremely happy, it collapses his yang energy.
> Great sorrow destroys his interior,
> and great fear drives him mad.
> Yet if you eschew the dust [of daily living] and relinquish attachments, you will be as calm as if you had never left your Ancestor and thereupon will become greatly penetrating.[121]

Extreme emotions—and, based on earlier examples, extreme cases of lust and desire—cause disruptions in the energetic system that interrupt the proper functioning of the *xin*, making it impossible to perceive and follow one's *qing* 情.

Major, et al. note the allusion in this passage to the ZZ "sitting and forgetting" (*zuowang* 坐忘) passage discussed above in Chapter III, and indeed it addresses the same theme of quieting the mind and thereby becoming "greatly penetrating" (*da tong* 大通).[122] The HNZ passage also continues with instructions on inner cultivation similar to the "sitting and forgetting" passage in ZZ:

> Purify your eyes and do not look with them;
> still your ears and do not listen with them;
> close your mouth and do not speak with it;
> relax your mind and do not think with it.
> Cast aside clever brilliance and return to Vast Simplicity;
> Rest your Quintessential Spirit and cast aside wisdom and precedent.[123]

As we learned above in Chapter III, the instructions to purify and shut down the various sense perceptions refer to techniques of apophatic breath meditation included in the Techniques of the Mind. As Major et al. note, the distinctive phrase "cast aside wisdom

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[121] Major et al., 255 with my emendations, HNZ 7/59/20-21.
[122] See Major et al., 255n.49. The ZZ passage is ZZ 6/19/21.
[123] Major et al., 256, HNZ 7/59/21-22.

and precedent" (*qi zhi gu* 棄知故) also links this passage to the Syncretic Daoist writings discussed in Chapter III, all of which emphasize the importance of inner cultivation.[124] The point is that, although HNZ is rather short on detailed instructions for how to actually sit down and practice inner cultivation, passages like this make it clear that the rest of HNZ's understanding of practical ethics is backed by the greater classical Daoist tradition of inner cultivation.

It is also significant to note that the last line of the above passage specifically links *jingshen* 精神 with casting aside wisdom and precedent. This drives home the point that purifying and regulating one's psycho-energetic system is indeed a process of acquiring the habits of thought and action whereby one relies only on direct observation of and engagement with present circumstances. "Wisdom and precedent" is used here and elsewhere in classical Daoist literature to refer to the established standards of good judgment purportedly recorded in classical literature. The cultivated person in HNZ breaks the habit of making judgments based on these established standards, and instead institutes habits of relying only on direct observation and assessment.[125]

HNZ 7.12 also features several phrases common to the classical Daoist literature on inner cultivation that seem to refer to states of profound, ineffable calm achieved through breath meditation. For instance, cultivated individuals become "as calm as if they had never left their Ancestor" (*mo ruo wei shi chu qi zong* 漠若未始出其宗), and they "return to Vast Simplicity" (*fan tai su* 反太素). These terms, which work using a

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[124] Major et al., 256n.50. For more on the significance of the phrase *qi zhi gu* 棄知故, see Roth, "Who Compiled the *Zhuangzi*?" 93-98.

[125] That direct observation and assessment, however, would have to appreciate the fact that canonicity or established precedent often are practically important for other people's judgment. That is, they are social realities that the cultivated person must observe. The HNZ's authors argument on this point is simply that things like "wisdom and precedent" should not be the absolute basis from which one makes observations and assessemnts.

metaphor of return or reversion, will be extremely important in section E below. For now, we should simply note that, during the process of acquiring the habits of thought and action associated with the Techniques of the Mind, practitioners encounter a kind of experience that the authors of classical Daoist texts characterize as profoundly calm and/or undifferentiated and simple.

HNZ 7.13 also mentions how, once one encounters this kind of experience, one tends to then identify it in various situations outside of the context of breath cultivation:

> The exterior that has no exterior;
> that is supremely grand.
> The interior that has no interior;
> that is supremely precious.
> If you are able to know the grand and the precious,
> where will you go and not get to [it]?[126]

The first part of this passage uses paradoxical language to describe something presumably similar to that encountered in the states of profound simplicity and calm mentioned above. Major et al. rightly point out that the paradoxes are meant to indicate a state of non-duality, in which "subject and object are part of one whole."[127] That is, the terms interior and exterior imply relative positioning, but the state described here is so simple and undifferentiated that there can be no separation, making interior and exterior impossible. In the last part of the passage, the HNZ authors assert that once one gains the ability to access an awareness of this state ("is able to know the grand and the precious" *neng zhi da gui* 能知大貴), then one will be able to detect an element of similarity in every situation one encounters ("where will you go and not get to [it]?" *he wang er bu sui*

[126] Major et al., 257 with my emendations, HNZ 7/60/3-4.
[127] Major et al., 257n.52.

何往而不遂).[128] The lesson here is that the states of profound tranquility and equanimity achieved through apophatic breath cultivation can also be found in any other context in life, provided one has developed the ability to access them. In fact, the ability to access them is precisely the technical knowledge gained in the Techniques of the Way, and constitutes the establishment of sagely habits.

This lesson also implies that, because the quality of calm and simplicity found in such states can always be found in every other situation, the quality is somehow more foundational or original than any particular situation. This, at least, is the interpretation of the HNZ authors. With this in mind, we can make better sense of the practical meaning behind the HNZ authors' claims that sages focus on "roots" and do not get distracted by "branches."

As we saw in many examples from Chapter 4, the root-branch metaphor organizes all of HNZ, and the authors denote *dao* 道 as the ultimate root of both the cosmos and the human mind. Using the understanding developed in the present chapter, however, we can read claims like the following from the concluding lines of "Quintessential Spirit" in a different light: "If you use hot water to stop something from boiling, the boiling will never stop. But if you really know its root, then all you need to do is put out the fire."[129] We could interpret this passage using the cosmological understanding of *dao* 道 as the root of everything, and explain that cultivated people, by knowing this cosmic root, can peer into the deep inner workings of the cosmos and thereby formulate direct, effective

[128] Note that Major et al. (257n.53) explain that the authors here refer to the practitioner "merging with the Way." This interpretation makes sense in the greater context of the passage, but it is never explicitly stated in the text. I think this passage does indeed refer to a situation the authors would (or could) describe as merging with the Way, but I also think it is important to emphasize that "merging with the Way" is itself a gloss for the process described here.
[129] Major et al., 260, HNZ 7/61/2.

solutions to problems. However, this is a particularly good example because the passage in which it appears, HNZ 7.16, overtly deals with human psychology, and brings the root of the mind into line with the root of the cosmos.

The passage deals with several examples of benighted political leaders who had "never *not* acted selfishly, and not desired [for themselves]," and thereby brought misfortune on themselves and ruin on their people.[130] The HNZ authors then argue that if these bad examples had "matched their genuine responses to the situation and relinquished what they did not really need, if they had taken their inner selves as their standard and not run after external things," then they would not have encountered disaster.[131] The root in this situation had nothing to do with cosmic forces and the rulers' failure to understand them, but rather lay entirely within their minds. The rulers failed to interact well with their individual situations by not "matching their genuine responses" (*shi qing* 適情) and not "relinquishing what they did not need" (*ci yu* 辭餘). Thus, the root in these examples is the root of the individual person—that which one relies on when "taking the inner self as the standard" (*yi ji wei du* 以己為度).

With this example we can join the threads of technical knowledge from the previous section, with HNZ's psycho-physiological account of cultivation. The HNZ authors envision the human being as a creature composed of both coarse and rarified ingredients. The more rarified ingredients include all human psychological attributes, and function by means of an energetic system of circulating *qi* 氣. As we saw above, the abstract presentation of psychological phenomena as the working out of *qi* 氣, *jing* 精, *jingshen* 精神, etc. belies a relatively straight-forward practical account of human

[130] Major et al., 259, HNZ 7/60/27.
[131] Major et al., 260, HNZ 7/60/29-30.

psychology. Using the language of energetic systems, the HNZ authors claim that the root of human problems lies precisely in wasting mental energy and attention on self-centered pursuits. They claim that a flourishing human mental life, exemplified by the figure of the sage, is one in which the person focuses purely on their most basic, unself-conscious reactions to various situations, disabling or ignoring the reactions that come from preconceived judgments or selfish desires.

The flourishing human mental life, moreover, can only be achieved by cultivating certain habits of thought and action by training in the Techniques of the Way, which emphasize the kind of apophatic breath cultivation detailed above in Chapter III as part of the classical Daoist tradition. This training is once again described using the language of energetic systems, which belies the pragmatic meaning of assiduously training attention and gradually gaining the ability to access a quality of profound calmness and clarity in every situation.

As many passages in this section indicate, profound calm and clarity are important in the first place because they allow one to engage with and participate in one's environment more fully. In the next section, I will explore further some of the sagely faculties of discernment and judgment that make up the practical features of this engagement and participation. This will also make clear just what it is that sages perceive and act in accord with, so that in the following section I can examine those objects to help explain the source of ethical norms in HNZ.

D: Sagely Faculties of Perception and Judgment

The opening chapter of HNZ, "Originating in the Way" (*Yuandao* 原道), has several important descriptions of the actions of sages. One common theme in these descriptions is the idea, encountered throughout my discussion so far, that sages "match with" or "respond to" their situations perfectly, and that they do so effortlessly, as a matter of course. For instance, HNZ 1.8 says that sages:

> do not allow the human to obscure the heavenly
> and do not let desire corrupt their genuine responses.
> They hit the mark without scheming;
> they are sincere without speaking;
> they attain without planning;
> they complete without striving.[132]

As we saw in the previous section, the sages' ability to do this resides in their ability to perceive and follow their innate responses or genuine impulses (*qing* 情). This ability, in turn, is the result of a properly functioning heart-mind, expressed in terms of a well-tuned energetic system.[133]

This picture portrays sages as people who participate fully in their environments by bringing all of their resources to bear on a situation, but still refrain from striving to control the course of events. As is common in classical Daoist literature, such people are said to end up exerting the most lasting and widespread influence on their environments. Because sages rely on the innate responses (*qing* 情) of their natures (*xing* 性) to circumstances (or "destiny," *ming* 命), much of the sages' special technique lies in the ability to perceive these subtle impulses, and in the faculty of spontaneously accurate judgment that allows them to follow them. Understanding these sagely faculties of

[132] Major, et al., 58, HNZ 1/4/9-10.
[133] Indeed, HNZ 1.8 ends this description of sages by noting how "their vital essence circulates into the Magical Storehouse." Major, et al., 58, HNZ 1/4/10.

perception and judgment will therefore be helpful in understanding the greater picture of ethical self-cultivation in HNZ.

HNZ 1.9 has a long description of sages that addresses all of the important aspects of their participation with their environments, and is therefore worth quoting at length:

> Sages internally cultivate their root
> and do not externally adorn themselves with their branches.
> They protect their Quintessential Spirit
> and dispense with wisdom and precedent.
> In stillness they take no deliberate action, yet there is nothing left undone.
> In tranquility they do not try to govern, but nothing is left ungoverned.
> What we call "no deliberate action" is to not anticipate things when acting.
> What we call "nothing left undone" means to adapt to what things have [already] done.
> What we call "to not govern" means to not change how things are naturally so.
> What we call "nothing left ungoverned" means to adapt to how things are mutually so.
> The myriad things all have a source from which they arise;
> [sages] alone understand how to guard their root.
> The hundred affairs all have a source from which they are produced;
> [sages] alone understand how to guard this gateway.
> Thus exhausting the inexhaustible,
> reaching the limit of the infinite,
> illuminating things without bedazzling them,
> and inexhaustibly responding to things like an echo [responds to sound]:
> This is what we call "being released by Heaven."[134]

This passage begins with familiar themes, noting that sages focus only on their internal root, and do not pay excess attention to their "branches," or non-essential elements of their person. As expected, they guard their internal fund of *jingshen* 精神, and do not rely on "wisdom and precedent," instead fully engaging and participating in their present circumstances.

The rest of the passage gives greater detail to this process of participation. First, sages "take no deliberate action," or engage in *wuwei* 無為, and yet nothing is left

[134] Major et al., 59-60 with my emendations, HNZ 1/4/22-26.

undone (*wuwei er wu bu wei* 無為而無不為). This phrase, originating from the LZ, is a standard description for ideal action in classical Daoist literature, and here the HNZ authors give it a parallel with governing (*zhi* 治), and further explain both. The important theme in both descriptions is that sages do not impose their wills or self-centered concerns on a situation, but accept the circumstances and engage them just as they are. They neither "anticipate things" (*xian wu* 先物) when they act, nor do they "change how things are naturally so" (*yi ziran* 易自然). This leads them to simply adapt their conduct to the demands of the situation by "adapting to what things have [already] done" (*yin wu zhi suo wei* 因物之所為) and "adapting to how things are mutually so" (*yin wu zhi xiangran* 因物之相然).

Further developing the parallelism between *wuwei* 無為 and *wuzhi* 無治, the HNZ authors then assert that both "things" (*wu* 物) and "affairs" (*shi* 事) have unique origins, and that sages alone know how to "guard" (*shou* 守) these origins. From the preceding explanations, we can understand that the "root" of things is their property of being self-so (*ziran* 自然), and the "gateway" of affairs is their being "mutually so" (*xiangran* 相然). I take this to mean that sages realize the uniqueness of "things"—the various elements that make up any situation—and treat them as such, not imposing preconceived judgments by "anticipating" what will happen in a situation or how things will be. Likewise, they recognize that "affairs" are complex arrangements of things, such that all elements of a situation mutually contribute to its character, and that all elements must be engaged if the "affair" is to be handled successfully. In both cases, the authors emphasize "adaptation"

(*yin* 因), rather than assertive action. Allowing things and situations to unfold without assertive intervention is what the authors mean by sages "guarding their root/gateway."

As we know from the preceding sections, acting without self-centered motives is extraordinarily difficult, and is usually accompanied or preceded by states of profound absorption. It is not surprising then that HNZ 1.9 proceeds to a paradoxical description of how sagely action "exhausts the inexhaustible," etc. The most significant part of this description is the penultimate line, in which we learn that sages "inexhaustibly respond to things like an echo [responds to sound]" (*xiang ying er bu fa* 響應而不乏). This is a common metaphor in HNZ, and well characterizes the authors' vision of sagely action. An echo happens as a response to sound reflexively, without calculation and as a matter of course. The sound of the echo also entirely parallels the original sound, with adjustments coming only from the acoustic properties of the environment. Likewise, sages produce their responses to situations spontaneously, without excessive calculation, and the character of their response comes only from the most basic parameters of their *xing* 性 and of the situation. In this way, they engage with the fullness of their situation and participate with it using all of their personal resources. This allows sages to act in mutually beneficial ways no matter where they are or what situations arise. Recalling a line from ZZ, this effortless freedom and confidence is what the HNZ authors call "being released by Heaven."[135]

In acting this way, sages exist in a different mode of life than uncultivated people. "Those who attain the Way," the HNZ authors say, have "empty minds, but their

[135] The phrase "being released by Heaven" (*tian jie* 天解) recalls ZZ 3/8/21 "the emancipation of the gods" (*di zhi xian jie* 帝之縣解). The ZZ context is a story with a similar lesson about not augmenting one's *qing* 情 simply to satisfy external demands. See Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, 28.

responses are exactly matched [to their situations]."[136] The ability to "exactly match" (*dang* 當) one's "responses" (*ying* 應) to the situation requires an "empty mind" (*xin xu* 心虛), but also requires—as noted in the previous passage—restraint from "anticipating" (*xian* 先). HNZ 1.11 treats the subject of anticipating at length, and begins by stating that "to anticipate and initiate is the road to ruin; / to follow is the source of success."[137] "Anticipation" here means to act before one sees exactly how a situation will unfold—in other words, to be assertively proactive. The HNZ authors go on to explain how those who act this way almost always have a hard time acting effectively because they substitute self-centered, goal-oriented decision making for the kind of spontaneous judgment that arises from one's *xing* 性. This latter style of action they term "following" (*hou* 後), and explain that "'following' does not mean being stagnant and not developing or being congealed and not flowing. It is, rather, to value revolving according to the norms and uniting with the right moment."[138] This describes the same situation we saw above in which the sages "respond as an echo" to their environments. "The norms" (*shu* 數) here refer to the norms outlined by the "Patterns of the Way" (*dao li* 道理), which will be extremely important below. For now, the important thing to note is that sages are not entirely passive, and that the HNZ authors believe that acting in an unpremeditated, non-goal-oriented way definitely does not mean acting randomly or without any kind of judgment. Instead, we learn here that sages' judgment is based on following norms that emerge from the Patterns of the Way. As we will see in the next section, however, the term *dao li* 道理 will also need its own set of qualifications.

[136] Major et al., 60 with my emendations, HNZ 1/4/28.
[137] Major et al., 61, HNZ 1/5/7.
[138] Major et al., 61 with my emendations, HNZ 1/5/15-16.

If sagely judgment is based on following the norms of the Way, then another important sagely faculty will be the ability to perceive these subtle patterns and distinguish them from the other contents of consciousness. HNZ 8.8 deals with some of these issues, and states:

> When spirit illumination is stored up in the Formless,
> and the Quintessential *qi* reverts to ultimate genuineness,
> then the eyes are clear, but they are not used for seeing;
> and the ears are comprehensive, but they are not used for hearing;
> the mouth is apt, but it is not used for speaking;
> and the heart is orderly and penetrating, but is not used for thinking and planning.[139]

Here, the authors emphasize how the cultivated and replete energetic systems of sages allow their senses to function without error, but also insist that their abilities go beyond simple perceptual clarity. The sense here is that, even though sages have, for instance, very clear vision and hearing, they do not allow sensory stimuli to disrupt their inner tranquility. That is, when the authors say that sages have clear vision but do not use their eyes for seeing, they do not mean that sages literally refrain from using their eyes to receive visual stimuli, but rather that they refrain from using their eyes in the way that uncultivated persons use their eyes. The passage goes on to describe what happens when sages attain these faculties:

> [Under such circumstances,]
> there are responsibilities but no intentional action,
> harmonious actions but no boastfulness.
> There is true realization of the instinctive responses invoked by [one's] nature and life circumstances, and these are not confusedly mixed with wisdom and precedent.[140]

Here, we again get an indication that sages are not entirely quietist and passive, but actually do have "responsibilities" (*wei* 委), and do act, but without ego-centric goals or

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[139] Major et al., 280, HNZ 8/24-26.
[140] Major et al., 280 with my emendations, HNZ 8/64/26.

"boastfulness" (*jin* 矜). Instead, they "realize" (*zhen* 真) their *xingming zhi qing* 性命之情, as described above in my previous chapter, and do not "mix" (*za* 雜) these genuine impulses with limited perspectives based on received wisdom and established precedent. From this, we can tell that sages do, in fact, hear and see and interact with their world, but that their perception encompasses something more subtle than the mundane objects of sense perception.

HNZ Chapter 13, "Boundless Discourses" (*Fanlun* 范倫), has several passages that address the unique faculties of perception enjoyed by the sage. For instance, HNZ 13.6 says in regard to sagehood that "it is necessary to have / an ear that uniquely hears, / discernment that uniquely sees; / for only then can you take personal responsibility for implementing the Way."[141] Similarly, HNZ 13.14 says that there are "things that the sages uniquely see and [upon which] they focus their minds."[142] In both of these contexts, the things sages "uniquely see" (*du jian* 獨見) or "uniquely hear" (*du wen* 獨聞) are cases of extreme complexity, usually dealing with the affairs of government, in which a clear vision of the situation is both difficult to obtain and absolutely necessary. In a context where, as ruler, one must assess a situation based on information from ministers and advisors, the HNZ authors insist that one must rely on a stable inner sense of the situation that is not subject to the errors and ulterior motives of subordinates, or to one's own desires or preconceptions.

Indeed, HNZ 13.8 says that various mistakes in government are due to the ruler's "lack of a controlling root within and to his hearing and seeing being dragged along from

[141] Major et al., 497, HNZ 13/122/17-18.
[142] Major et al., 511 with my emendations, HNZ 13/126/24.

the outside."[143] The authors contrast this with the example of famously talented singers, describing how music,

> aroused their inclinations
> and accumulated inside of them,
> welling up and emerging as notes, so that
> none failed to be in tune with the pitch pipes,
> and all harmonized with the hearts of others [who heard them].
> How so? Within themselves they had a controlling root that let them hit exactly the low and high notes. They received nothing externally; they themselves were the standard.[144]

This example draws a parallel between conducting one's voice in song, and conducting the affairs of state. The brilliant singers cited here executed their songs well by relying purely on the guide of a "root" within. Even though they "received nothing externally" (*bu shou yu wai* 不受於外), they nonetheless match perfectly with external standards like the pitch pipes, and even "harmonize with the hearts of others" (*he yu ren xin* 和於人心). The point of this example is to show how, by skillfully observing the stable root of one's mind, one can perceive a guiding principle that will allow one to conduct oneself gracefully in whatever situation one encounters.

However, we know from some of the previous examples that what one perceives in a situation like this is not literally a kind of sense object. HNZ 13.8 draws the singer example back to the affairs of state by using another skill metaphor, noting that various successful rulers, who did maintain awareness of a stable root within, "possessed the technique for 'driving the chariot' [of state]."[145] Thus, what the sage perceives is something like what one "perceives" when one uses acquired skill knowledge. For instance, we can say that a person who knows how to ride a bike "sees" what to do to

[143] Major et al., 499 with my emendations, HNZ 13/123/11.
[144] Major et al., 499-500 with my emendations, HNZ 13/123/14-15.
[145] Major et al., 500, HNZ 13/123/18.

keep the bike upright during any given ride, and that a person who does not know how to ride a bike cannot "see" what to do, but the skilled rider does not literally perceive anything extra in that situation. Nonetheless, by engaging with a myriad of factors in the situation, she apprehends what responses are necessary to correct her balance and keep the bike upright and on course. Just like the skilled singer or the sage versed in the Techniques of the Way, her skill allows her to navigate a course of action that keeps the situation balanced and satisfying. People in all of these examples do "perceive" qualities of situations that uncultivated people miss, but the perceived quality is not itself a sense object.

HNZ 13.11 addresses the quality of balance that sages can perceive in all situations, but particularly in difficult situations. Specifically, HNZ 13.11 deals with "expediency" (*quan* 權), which is "the technique for surviving in the face of destruction," and which "only a sage is capable of understanding."[146] *Quan* 權 literally refers to the steelyard balance, a tool used to weigh objects against a standardized weight, but takes on the meaning of balance in general, and the act of metaphorically balancing competing demands to determine the best course of action.[147] In this latter sense it can mean "expediency," as Major et al. translate it here, because in many situations one does not have the option to follow ideal standards, but must make do with what is possible, or expedient under the circumstances.[148]

[146] Major, et al., 506, HNZ 13/125/13.
[147] For a detailed account of the development of this term, see Vankeerberghen (2005).
[148] Indeed, as we will see below, the circumstances of a given situation in some sense constrain the possible responses of cultivated people, and this constraint is itself part of the input that leads to ideal action. I take up this same passage again below in that context, reiterating some of the same points.

Since sages in HNZ do not rely on external standards in general, it is no surprise that expediency is their stock in trade. The significant thing they do is to adapt to the situation, and perceive what, on balance, is the most satisfying conclusion:

> When sages assess whether an affair be crooked or straight, they bend or stretch themselves and curl or straighten alongside it. They do not adhere to a constant standard, so sometimes they bend and other times they stretch. When they are weak and yielding like a thin sheaf of grass, they do not take or snatch. When they are resolute, strong, fierce, and bold and their wills are oppressive like gray clouds, they do not brag or boast. They thereby avail themselves of timeliness and respond to alterations.[149]

This passage recognizes that some situations may call for mildness and others for severity, but that the sage exercises restraint in both, intuitively balancing the needs of the situation with the form of his response, so that he never strays into excess and simply "responds to the alterations" (*ying bian* 應變) of the situation. It is significant, moreover, that once again the sage uses the parameters of the situation to lead him to his response. Indeed, the sage's course of action "derives from the power of circumstances and so cannot be otherwise."[150] "This," the authors note, "is what establishes the basis for expediency."[151] The arrangement of factors in a situation and its propensity toward certain outcomes—that is, "the power of circumstances" (*shi* 勢)—puts a natural limit on the possible productive responses of the sage. This does not mean that there is one and only one response that is *quan* 權, and which therefore will lead to a satisfying outcome, but that the parameters of the situation are given and only open to certain conclusions. Thus, what the sage perceives is a quality of balance that leads him to the expedient

[149] Major et al., 507, HNZ 13/125/21-22.
[150] Major et al., 507, HNZ 13/125/26.
[151] Major et al., 507, HNZ 13/125/27.

course, but which is also a product of perceiving the total arrangement and propensity of factors in a situation.

Another way to state this is to say that sages allow the external factors of a situation to inform their responses, but that the actual response is determined by their inner sense of *quan* 權. HNZ 13.11 ends on this note, saying that sages use "[inner] reality to pursue affairs in a suitable way" (*yi shi cong shi yu yi* 以實從事於宜).[152] Given what we know about the composition of the sage's inner life, it should not be surprising that the "reality" (*shi* 實) within refers primarily to *qing* 情.

HNZ 13.17 explains that sagely vision is about seeing the totality of a situation, eventually coming down to *qing* 情. The authors lament the fact that appearances are often deceiving, and say that "a sage can see what is obscured, and thereby know what is evident."[153] Sages do this by taking in all of the parameters of a situation, including seemingly insignificant details, and thereby perceive a totalizing vision. By appreciating the propensity of the situation, they can "assess what has yet to unfold," and "by watching trifling things, . . . [they can] know significant entities."[154] Eventually, by observing such minute detail, sages can come to know even other people's internal *qing* 情, which means they can understand a situation on its most basic, fundamental level.[155] As we saw in my previous chapter, *qing* 情 represent the subtle influencing factors in a situation, as well as the authentic impulses of one's own *xing* 性, so it is safe to conclude

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[152] Major, et al., 508, HNZ 13/126/2. The "inner" part of the translation is supplied from context and parallelism.
[153] Major, et al., 516, HNZ 13/128/14.
[154] Major, et al., 517 with my emendations, HNZ 13/128/18.
[155] See Major, et al., 517, HNZ 13/128/21.

that sages know the *qing* 情 of others by the effect those *qing* 情 have on the sages' own.[156]

From these past few examples, we can understand that sagely perception and judgment are intimately bound to one another. On the one hand, sages clearly perceive and appreciate the various factors of their environment—even seemingly insignificant minutiae—as well as how all of these factors combine to characterize the situation. On the other hand, this information also guides them to "perceive" what to do in the situation by means of their own genuine responses. Their training in the Techniques of the Way gives them the sagely habits needed to faithfully follow these authentic impulses. These two aspects of sagely perception and judgment come together in the faculty of "spirit illumination" (*shenming* 神明).

HNZ 20.1 opens with an important definition of *shenming* 神明:

> In giving life to things, no one sees [Heaven's] nurturing them and yet things reach maturity.
> In taking life away from things, no one sees [Heaven's] sending them off to death and yet things cease to exist.

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[156] Once again, this sounds like a very mysterious phenomenon, but actually has a very straightforward pragmatic meaning. Speaking in terms of *qing* 情, as in this HNZ passage, emphasizes how extremely subtle, often nonverbal cues, and even factors of which one is not fully conscious, work together to give people a *gestalt* view of a situation. HNZ simply argues that, with proper cultivation and training, such subtle factors of experience can be identified and appreciated, and that that appreciation can lead one to form better judgments about how to act in a given situation.

In fact, HNZ 13.21 contains an interesting example of the sages' use of "expedient means" that seems to imply that anything seemingly "mysterious" is, in fact, just very complex, and that sages often simplify things by using mysterious descriptions. For example, the authors claim that sages made up a custom of saying that "when two people engage in swordplay, the Grand Ancestor will bump them on the elbow." (Major et al., 523, HNZ 13/130/21.) This is explained as an expedient story the sages created to express why, when one is injured while dueling for sport, it should not devolve into a greater feud or outright hostility. What is "really" going on, supposedly, is that sages appreciated the natural feelings and motivations of people, and created this story to more effectively prevent them from engaging in further violence. The implication is that the sages who created the custom knew full well that such incidents were accidental, and had nothing to do with "the Grand Ancestor," but chose that description because it better conveyed their point.

I see no direct evidence to suggest that the HNZ authors do the same thing when they use more abstract cosmological or quasi-magical descriptions of practical ethical cultivation, but I do think it is significant to note just how aware they were of the difference between the two registers of discourse.

This is called "spirit illumination." Sages take it as their model.[157]

This description of how Heaven works recalls the description of *jing* 精 in NY, discussed above in my Chapter III. There, we found that *jing* 精 was defined in part according to its pragmatic valence, which is tied to observable effects in the world. That is, the NY authors started with the observation that things are alive, and then posited that *jing* 精 is "that by which they are alive." Similarly, the HNZ authors here observe that living things are born, grow, die, and pass away as a matter of course, but that "no one sees [Heaven's] nurturing" (*mo jian qi suo yang* 莫見其所養) and "sending them off" (*sang* 喪).

Thus, Heaven is posited as that which "causes" these observable, regular phenomena to happen, but the important element of that description is that Heaven does not actually intervene in any concrete way. *Shenming* 神明 is thus defined here as the manner in which, for instance, natural forces lead things to grow and change, but without "natural forces" actually existing as separate entities. There is no will or goal involved; natural forces simply work as a matter of course. Indeed, "natural forces" is itself simply a name for the fact that things in nature happen as they do. The focus here lies squarely on the pragmatic valence of Heaven as "that which causes things to live/die," and *shenming* 神明 simply characterizes the spontaneous and non-assertive way that Heaven does that.

In HNZ 12.44, we get another important description of *shenming* 神明, this time characterizing it as in some ways analogous to, but more pervasive than, illumination from the sun:

[157] Major et al., 795 with my emendations, HNZ 20/210/4.

> Penumbra asked Shadow: "Is the brilliance of the sunlight spirit illumination?"
> "No, it is not," replied Shadow.
> "How do you know that?" queried Penumbra.
> Shadow replied: "[Sunlight normally illuminates the entire world, but]. . . If you shut your doors and close your windows, sunlight has no means to enter your home. If it were spirit illumination,
>
> > it would flow to the four [directions] as far as they reach,
> > and there would be nowhere to which it did not extend . . .
>
> It would transform and nourish the myriad things, and yet it could not be construed as having any particular appearance . . . How could 'the brilliance of sunlight' be sufficient to denote spirit illumination?"[158]

This description shares some important elements with the description in HNZ 20.1, but adds crucial details. *Shenming* 神明 here similarly "transforms and nourishes the myriad things" (*hua yu wan wu* 化育萬物), but with nothing discernable in its action. It is also clearly a kind of illumination, as is sunlight, even if it goes far beyond sunlight in its scope and pervasiveness. The picture we get of *shenming* 神明, then, is something that is supremely pervasive, penetrating, and illuminating, and which interacts with things non-assertively to nurture and transform them.

By drawing a contrast between *shenming* 神明 and "the brilliance of sunlight" (*zhao zhao* 照照), this example also highlights the *shen* 神 portion of *shenming* 神明. That is, if *shenming* 神明 is, like sunlight, some kind of illumination (*ming* 明), then it is specifically *shen* 神-illumination. Illumination here is understood in the sense of shedding light on things—both literally as in sunlight, and metaphorically as revealing or imparting insight. From my previous discussion of *shen* 神 in the context of HNZ's view of human psychology, we can understand this designation to refer to the quality of insight enjoyed by spirits and accessible through the most subtle level of the human mind.

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[158] Major et al., 473 with my emendations, HNZ 12/117/1-4.

Shenming 神明 therefore also refers to the "illuminating" insight sages enjoy by virtue of their working from the deepest root of their *xin* 心.

Indeed, when we return to HNZ 7.3, cited above in my discussion of sagely psycho-physiology, the authors specifically link being "spiritlike" (*shen* 神) with all-encompassing vision, hearing, etc. This resonates strongly with the description of *shenming* 神明 as all-pervading illumination. Indeed, HNZ 7.3 begins with a statement about the *shenming* 神明 of "The Way of Heaven and Earth" (*tiandi zhi dao* 天地之道) and proceeds with an implicit explanation of *shenming* 神明 by describing first *ming* 明, and then *shen* 神.[159] Both parts of the explanation stress the proper functioning of the human energetic system, including conserving *jingshen* 精神 and eliminating desires, etc. Moreover, HNZ 7.3 says that one who is *ming* 明 has clear vision and acute hearing, and one becomes spiritlike by "developing penetrating awareness."

From this, it seems that *shenming* 神明 in humans consists in the ability to "penetrate" (*tong* 通), and apprehend clearly that to which one penetrates. But to what does one penetrate when one exercises *shenming* 神明? The obvious answer should be *dao* 道—and this is indeed a common response in HNZ—but based on the passages I cite in this section, it seems that the practical objects of the sage's penetrating awareness are the fundamental parameters of situations, apprehended through the medium of personal *qing* 情.

Indeed, HNZ 2.11—also discussed above in the context of human psycho-physiology—focuses on the *shen*'s 神 bright, illuminating qualities and how they allow

[159] Major et al., 243, HNZ 7/55/18-24.

the sage to penetrate or "break through" (*da* 達) to special insight. This is the passage that defines *shen* 神 as the basis of consciousness, and says that when *shen* 神 is "clear" (*qing* 清), then consciousness is illumined (*ming* 明).[160] Although the *shen* 神 itself is not explicitly linked to *ming* 明 here, the passage clearly indicates an illuminating function. It implies that if one can make one's mind clear (*qing* 清) like placid water and bright (*ming* 明) like a polished mirror, one can "give form to the nature and basic tendencies of things" (*xing wu zhi xing qing* 形物之性情).[161] But, if you instead "cover your mysterious light and seek to know [things] with the ears and eyes, this is to discard your brilliance and follow your blindness."[162] Even though this sentence does not use the word *ming* 明, it alludes to the illumination provided by engaging things with the *shen* 神 level of mind, and therefore to exercising *shenming* 神明. In describing the sages of antiquity, the passage then says that they "invariably penetrated the basic tendencies of nature and destiny" (*bi da hu xingming zhi qing* 必達乎性命之情), and it ends by declaring that "the sage [is someone who] has broken through to it" (*shenren you suo yu da* 聖人有所于達).[163]

Thus, *shenming* 神明 also refers to the sage's ability to apprehend "the basic tendencies of nature and destiny," which are often characterized as something to which one must "penetrate" or "break through." In a sense, this means that sages really do "uniquely" see and hear. That is, in apprehending the most fundamental features of a situation, sages apprehend what most people miss because most people cannot break

[160] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/8-9.
[161] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/11.
[162] Major et al., 101, HNZ 2/16/13-14.
[163] Major et al., 101, 102 with my emendations, HNZ 2/16/17, 20.

through the distortion of fixed views or distractions. In another sense, sages do not actually see or hear anything different from ordinary people, but instead apprehend differently because their experience is different. In fact, HNZ 18.26 notes that "when the sage undertakes an affair, he does not pay extra attention to it. He investigates its basis; that is all."[164] This is a complicated sentence in the Chinese, but the sense is that, although sages act extremely effectively, it is not because they invest more attention in their affairs, but because they invest attention only where it really counts—at the root.[165] Their eyesight and hearing may be clear and acute, but the real difference comes from applying their senses with a completely tranquil *xin* 心 within.

HNZ Chapter 18, "Among Others" (*Renjian* 人間) has several anecdotes that well illustrate this point. In HNZ 18.21, a court scholar tries to persuade his regent against expanding the royal residences to the west, as this would apparently be inauspicious.[166] The duke is annoyed by the criticism, and asks his tutor about it. The tutor replies that expanding one's residence is not among the three worst auguries, and the duke is pleased. However, when the duke finds out that the three worst auguries are not practicing Ritual and Rightness, engaging in unchecked greed, and not heeding advice, he realizes that they all apply to his situation and decides not to expand the residence. The point, as the HNZ authors explain, is that the court scholar acted from a sincere sense of righteous indignation, but did not account for factors like the duke's personal inclinations. The tutor used a more subtle approach, relying on keen insight into the situation, and achieved

[164] Major et al., 751, HNZ 18/200/12.
[165] The original is *shengren yu shi, bu jia you yan, cha qi suoyi eryi yi* 聖人舉事, 不加憂焉, 察其所以而已矣, lit. "when sages take up an affair, they do not add worry to it, [but only] investigate its that-which-it-uses, and that is all." It is difficult to render the last part of the sentence into English, but as I note here, the sense is that what the sage investigates is the most basic level of how the situation arose and how the affair proceeds.
[166] Major et al., 745-746, HNZ 18/197/24-18/198/6.

the same end. "The wise," say the HNZ authors, "leave the path and attain the Way," while "fools stick to the Way and lose the path."[167] The key to the Way therefore lies in responding based only on the actual factors of the situation, and not on preconceived notions about how one should act. Likewise, the key to *shenming* 神明 in the HNZ is illumination of lived circumstances by the deepest, most tranquil level of mind.

Shenming 神明 is the quintessential sagely faculty in HNZ. It combines elements of clear sensory perception with the understanding of *shen* 神 as the most basic level of mind, which is automatically and un-self-consciously engaged with one's surroundings and entirely free of ego-centered bias. The HNZ authors also imply that *shenming* 神明 involves an element of judgment, in that sages use *shenming* 神明 to "illuminate" their environment, and thereby perceive the proper way to proceed in a situation. This, of course, assumes that there is a proper way to act in any given situation, and that finding it is only a matter of approaching the situation as clearly and tranquilly as possible. If one is clear and tranquil, then the HNZ authors believe that the proper Way forward will become obvious. Sagely judgment, in this understanding, is less like deliberation and more like walking on a well-marked path.[168] In that sense it is not judgment at all, but simply "merging with the Way."

The final piece to understanding HNZ's practical ethics is to understand just what sages follow when they follow "the Way." Throughout my discussion in this chapter, I have emphasized how HNZ's program of ethical cultivation is primarily a process of training attention to deactivate or eliminate the normal habits of ego-centered thought and

[167] Major et al., 746, HNZ 18/198/4-5.
[168] Steven Angle has explored this theme, among others related to sagely perception, in mainly Confucian and contemporary Western sources. See Steven C. Angle, "Sagely Ease and Moral Perception" in *Dao* 5 no.1 (December 2005): 31-55.

action, and replace them with non-ego-centric habits. Acquiring these habits will necessarily lead one to interact differently with one's environment, and therefore will transform one's experience. Indeed, I have suggested that HNZ's ethical program in general is a process of recovering and replicating a certain unique experience, with sagehood resulting when one finally learns to experience every moment of one's life in this way. So far, we have mostly seen this quality in terms of calmness, tranquility, clarity, etc., but these terms all describe the inner world of the sage. What the sages perceive in their environment that discloses the Way to them is the quality of self-so-ness.

E: Self-so-ness, Inherent Patterns, and Sagely Experience

First, we should note that the important *object* of sagely perception is *qing* 情. As discussed above in my Chapter IV, and in various examples in the current chapter, *qing* 情 are the most basic parameters of a situation. From the individual human perspective, they are the responses caused by one's *xing* 性, with all of its personalized abilities and resources, interacting with one's entire life context (*ming* 命), including individual present situations. So if the sages' ability to act ideally is linked to their extraordinary perspicacity and clarity of insight—as I have argued they are, based on HNZ's understanding of *shenming* 神明—then the objects which sages clearly illuminate and apprehend in all situations are *qing* 情.

However, *qing* 情 are important for ideal action precisely because they arise naturally, as a matter of course. That is, as one interacts with situations in one's environment, one's *xing* 性 simply reacts by creating *qing* 情 as a matter of how the *xing*

性 works. Because they happen based only on the parameters of *xing* 性 and *ming* 命, *qing* 情 reactions also lack any considerations based on extrinsic, ego-centric concerns like fear, greed, worry, etc. They are entirely un-self-conscious because they arise on a level prior to consciousness of the self as a separate entity. This is why the HNZ authors often use the analogy of reflections in a mirror or echoes of a sound to describe the reactions of *qing* 情; just like reflections and echoes, *qing* 情 simply happen because they are part of how the cosmos naturally works.

This quality of naturalness, or of things that happen as a matter of course based on how the universe works, is the central quality that sages in the HNZ embody. This quality is famously cited in LZ 25 as the model of the Way: "People model themselves on the Earth. / The Earth models itself on Heaven. / Heaven models itself on the Way. / The Way models itself on what is natural."[169] "Natural" here is *ziran* 自然, literally "self-so" or "so of itself." HNZ uses *ziran* 自然 several times, along with a number of other phrases that evoke a similar meaning. I will explore many of these below, but the overall import of these phrases in HNZ is a sense of self-determination based on circumstances. That is, they all indicate a situation where the course of events necessarily proceeds in a certain way, based only on the natural parameters of the situation and not on willful human intervention. This is the sense of "naturally" used in LZ 25, and the characteristic I often evoke as "happening as a matter of course."

In this sense, the HNZ authors believe that sages experience the world "as it really is." The root-branch metaphor in HNZ works on a similar belief. That is, the authors characterize the root as the most basic level of all things in the world, and maintain that

[169] Mair, 90, LZ 25A/9/5-6.

the root alone is what ultimately determines how events unfold in the cosmos. The branches are incidental details or mere ornamentation, which deluded people mistake for the most fundamental level of things. In maintaining an awareness of the root, sages grasp the fundamentals of how the world "really" works. Moreover, they know that they have grasped the root because they apprehend things as they happen naturally, without adding personal analysis or reflection. That is, sages know they have grasped the root because they experience how things are *ziran* 自然, "so-of-themselves."[170]

Once again, sages are able to grasp things in this way because they have developed habits of thought and action that enable them to strictly control attention and avoid the mental turbulence that necessarily adds self-centered concerns to their apprehension of their environment. HNZ 1.14 gives a familiar rehearsal of the sages' ethical development, and adds an important description of its result:

> When the mind is not worried or happy, it achieves the perfection of Potency.
> When the mind is inalterably unified, it achieves the perfection of tranquility.

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[170] This may seem to imply that sages somehow apprehend a Kantian *Ding an sich*, but that is not the case. Sages can be said to apprehend things on the level of *ziran* 自然 only insofar as they apprehend things *minus* the normal bias of self-centered interpretation. This does not mean that sages apprehend things without any kind of conceptual apparatus. We will see below that the only object the HNZ authors think that sages really can apprehend "in itself" is their own selves—or more precisely, their own *qing* 情. As we have already seen, however, the authors also believe that *qing* 情 do represent a faithful reflection of things "out there" in the world. But, the HNZ authors also consistently maintain that *qing* 情 are produced by the interaction of *xing* 性 and *ming* 命, so they are always unique to both the circumstance and the individual. That means that even though they are determined, in part, by things "out there" in the world, they are not exact, one-to-one reflections of them. It is unclear just how much of a conceptual apparatus is involved with *xing* 性, but I see no evidence to suggest that it must be zero.

Also, it is important to note briefly that metaphysical and epistemological issues like this are incidental to the HNZ authors. They do not seem concerned at all whether *qing* 情 reflect the way things "really are in themselves" or whether the parameters of *xing* 性 are conceptual or pre-conceptual. Instead, they are very concerned about whether *qing* 情 reflect things with or without an overlay of self-centered bias and interpretation, which they have determined is the most relevant cause of human error. They aim to develop a practical method whereby people can overcome these errors and develop habits of mind that instead lead to ideal action. The importance of *ziran* 自然, therefore, is simply that the cultivated individual apprehend things that are *qualitatively* "so-of-themselves," regardless of whether they "actually are" so-of-themselves.

> When lusts and desires do not burden [the mind], it achieves the perfection of emptiness.
> When the mind is without likes and dislikes, it achieves the perfection of equanimity.
> When the mind is not tangled up in things, it achieves the perfection of purity.
>
> If the mind is able to achieve these five qualities, then it will break through to spiritlike illumination. To break through to spiritlike illumination is to realize what is intrinsic.[171]

This passage is significant because it ties specific habits of mind to the faculty of *shenming* 神明, and the faculty of *shenming* 神明 to the ability to realize things on the level of *ziran* 自然. When people cultivate habits of attention that allow them to be reliably and consistently tranquil, free from agitating lusts and desires, undistracted by external diversions, etc. then they "break through to spiritlike illumination" (*tong yu shenming* 通於神明). We learned above that *shenming* 神明 is itself often characterized in HNZ as a kind of penetrating insight, and here we learn that it consists in this suite of cultivated characteristics, essentially amounting to "realizing what is intrinsic" (*de qi nei* 得其內). What is "intrinsic" (*nei* 內) can also be translated as "internal" and refers to that which is wholly internal to one's person and not influenced by external factors. It is analogous to that which is *ziran* 自然 because no extrinsic factors make it so, but it is simply so of itself.

This passage is significant also because it gives us a clue about the nature of sagely experience. There is a clear line of development here between various mental characteristics and enlightened sagely experience. The implication is that by acquiring these mental characteristics one has already achieved the insight of *shenming* 神明 and "realized what is intrinsic." Thus, the experience that characterizes sagely insight is

[171] Major et al., 67, HNZ 1/7/6-7.

primarily defined by these characteristics of mind. Moreover, as we have seen throughout my discussion in this work, these characteristics of mind are themselves often defined as a lack of ego-centric bias, lust, desire, etc. The experience the sage, therefore, seems to center on ego-less-ness.

However, there also seems to be a sense in which ego-less-ness is uniquely compelling. HNZ 14.50 uses several analogies to explain that ideal action should be spontaneous in the sense that it arises from irresistible impulses. That is, the person acting without self-centered motives acts because the situation irresistibly moves him to do so:

> If [your motivations for acting] are not inherent to your person by nature, then your genuine responses will not tally with them. Do those things you are genuinely moved to do, and do not abandon the framework. That's it. …
> Those who are genuinely moved to sing do not work at being sorrowful.
> Those who are genuinely moved to dance do not work at being graceful.
> Those who sing and dance but do not work at being sorrowful or graceful [can do so] because in all cases they have "a mind without roots."[172]

The operative phrase in this passage, which I have translated as "genuinely moved to…" is *bu de yi* 不得已, which literally means something like irresistible. In the context, it describes things that one "cannot but do," or which one does as a matter of course given the circumstances.[173] Since the passage also mentions that the motivations for these

[172] Major et al., 563 with my emendations, HNZ 14/139/13-15.

[173] We should be careful not confuse action one is genuinely moved to do with action that comes from a mere compulsion, such as addiction. That is, addicts may be said to be "genuinely moved" to use drugs because they "cannot but do it," but this is not the situation the HNZ authors have in mind here. The defining characteristic of genuinely inspired actions is not that they are irresistible in the sense that no amount of will could resist them, but because they are irresistible in the sense that they go along with the overwhelming tide of the situation as a whole. For instance, the impulse to smile in response to my infant son is irresistible, not because I could not force myself to do otherwise, but because the fundamental pieces of my personality as a father and a human being powerfully move me to do it. I could decide that I would rather not smile at my son, and resist the genuine impulse to do so, but the HNZ authors would suggest that going against the tendency of the situation like that would more than likely lead to poor outcomes, like "wearying my spirit" or causing my son to get upset and cry (thus wearying both our spirits!). In the addict

actions should be "inherent to your person by nature" (*xing suo you yu shen* 性所有於身), and tally with one's *qing* 情, we can conclude that the authors here describe actions to which one is genuinely and irresistibly moved. The sense is that if one is attuned to one's *qing* 情 and intimately engaged with one's environment, then one will simply find oneself moved to act in a certain way. As the examples of the singer and dancer make clear, acting in this way is effortless and allows one to perform gracefully whatever action one undertakes.

HNZ 13.11, which we already encountered above, addresses somewhat different topics but still maintains that the actions of the sage are compelled by the circumstances. The passage deals with sages' ability to perceive the expedient balance (*quan* 權) in situations, and judge the best course of action. For instance, the HNZ authors claim that a person would never want to harm his father, but that if the father were drowning, the person would certainly want to grab him by the hair and drag him out of the water. In a case like this, the response "derives from the power of circumstance and cannot be otherwise."[174] "The power of circumstances" (*shi* 勢) refers to the overall propensity of the situation to develop in a certain way, based on all of its factors. In the case of the drowning father, the situation will develop such that the son either refuses to hurt his father and so lets him drown, or saves his life by dragging him out of the water by the hair. The HNZ authors find that circumstances in general, and especially ethically problematic circumstances, have a certain overall thrust or pulse to which sages are attuned, and by which they perceive how to act.

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example, the impulse to use drugs is not genuine because it is not inherent to *xing* 性, but rather something added externally.

[174] Major et al., 507, HNZ 13/125/26.

HNZ 8.5 says something similar when it notes that the "Perfected Person" (*zhi ren* 至人) acts by "following his self-so nature and aligning with inevitable transformations."[175] Here, the HNZ authors state that *xing* 性 is itself *ziran* 自然 and that by following it one "aligns with inevitable transformations" (*yuan bu de yi zhi hua* 緣不得已之化). The sense here is that change and transformation in the greater cosmos is inevitable and not controllable by humans. Nevertheless, human *xing* 性 itself transforms as an organic constituent of the cosmos, so if one "follows" (*sui* 隨) one's *xing* 性 just as it is of itself (*ziran* 自然), then one can act in accord with inevitable change. Thus, even though constant change can be overwhelming, the HNZ authors maintain that at the level of *xing* 性, one is never overwhelmed and that *xing* 性 can therefore allow one to respond in accord with change, rather than resisting it.

This is why, in many examples cited above, the HNZ authors maintain that one's inner life, focused on *xing* 性 and its *qing* 情 responses, is ultimately the only reliable guide for action. For instance, in HNZ 13.8 we saw the example of famous singers who were able to effortlessly hit all the right notes and thereby move their audiences because they "received nothing from outside, but made their [inner] selves the standard" (*bu shou yu wai, er zi wei yi biao* 不受於外, 而自為儀表).[176] This comment works on two levels important to my discussion here. First, the authors reassert the importance of one's "interior" life as a guide for ideal action. The standard the singers used to find perfect harmony was entirely internal and "received nothing from the outside." They made a standard, and the standard was based on their individual experience. Additionally, the

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[175] Major et al., 274 with my emendations, HNZ 8/63/1.
[176] Major et al., 500 with my emendations, HNZ 13/123/15.

syntax implies that the standard they used arose spontaneously. That is, the singers *zi wei yi biao* 自為儀表 or "self-made the standard," so their inner selves were both the standard and the means by which they made the standard.[177]

Using one's individual experience as a guide to ideal action is precisely what the HNZ authors indicate when they stress the importance of "returning to the self" (*fan ji* 反己) or "returning to *xing*" (*fan xing* 反性). For instance, HNZ 1.5 contains the text's first direct discussion of *xing* 性, and maintains that "when preferences take shape and perception is enticed by external things, [one] cannot return to the self, and the heavenly patterns are destroyed."[178] We know by now that the central problem HNZ's ethical program seeks to overcome is the distortion caused by self-centered bias, so it is not surprising that this passage cites preferences and distractions as that which block one from ideal action. It is significant, however, that ideal action is described as a matter of "returning to the self" (*fan ji* 反己). We know from context that the self here primarily refers to one's *xing* 性, and more importantly to an awareness of *xing* 性 and its *qing* 情 responses.

"Returning to the self" therefore refers to the process of metaphorically "turning away" from desires and selfish preferences to regain an appreciation for one's most basic level of mind. This is also what the authors refer to in the pivotal passage HNZ 11.5, discussed at length above, when they say "only the sage can leave things aside and return to himself."[179] Similarly, HNZ 7.14 laments how scholars of latter ages are unable "to

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[177] I suspect there may also be a third level of meaning to this phrase that suggests the singers embodied a standard that others could appreciate, even if it was entirely derived from their own internal lives.
[178] Major et al., 53 with my emendations, HNZ 1/2/15-16.
[179] Major et al., 404, HNZ 11/96/1.

get to the origins of their minds and return to their root."[180] Whether it is the "self" (*ji* 己), "nature" (*xing* 性), or "the root" (*ben* 本 or *gen* 根) that one "returns to" (*fan* 反), they all describe the same process of discarding self-centered habits of thought and action and developing habits that maintain a focus on clarity, tranquility, and un-self-consciousness.

HNZ 14.8 gives a detailed list of activities the cultivated person engages in, along with various benefits these activities confer. The authors conclude this list by saying, "as a general rule, [these things] cannot be sought after in what is outside the self, nor can you bestow them on others. You can obtain them only by returning to the self."[181] The activities of the cultivated person in HNZ 14.8 include "cultivating the Techniques of the Mind" and "following *qing* 情 and *xing* 性."[182] The benefits that accrue from engaging in these activities include having "desires that do not exceed the appropriate limits," and the ability to "comply with inherent patterns" in all of one's actions.[183]

The benefits of matching appropriate limits (*jie* 節) and complying with inherent patterns (*li* 理) indicate an important feature of cultivated action in HNZ. Coming back to HNZ 1.5, the passage also implies that returning to the self is what allows one to preserve "heavenly patterns" (*tian li* 天理). These terms, especially *li* 理, seem to indicate an objective standard that sages alone perceive and with which they accord in their actions. That is, by developing habits of un-self-consciousness, sages clearly appreciate all the factors of their present circumstances, and act in ways that complement how those factors will naturally develop. As we saw in recent examples, the arrangement

[180] Major et al., 257, HNZ 7/60/6.
[181] Major et al., 540, HNZ 14/133/10-11.
[182] Major et al., 540 with my emendations, HNZ 14/133/8-9.
[183] Major et al., 540 with my emendations, HNZ 14/133/9.

of circumstances (*shi* 勢) necessarily makes certain outcomes or transformations (*hua* 化) inevitable, and this compels sages to respond only in certain ways and not in others. Sages accept their situations and work only with what they find in their present resources, and do not try to force a situation to develop according to self-centered preferences. This picture of sagely action makes it seem as if there are underlying "patterns" to each situation, which sages can and should follow. These patterns are what Roth calls the HNZ's idea of a "normative natural order."[184]

However, I have described how the HNZ authors insist that all of the sage's resources for judging the best path of action must come from within, and that sages cannot "receive anything from the outside." So, how could sages do this and still accord with patterns that exist outside of themselves, in the greater cosmos? One relatively straightforward answer is that the HNZ authors believe that cosmic patterns of *li* 理 pervade the entire cosmos, including each person's individual *xing* 性, so that when sages act in accord with cosmic patterns they are practically following patterns that lie within their *xing* 性. This explanation is certainly defensible, given the evidence in the text, but I would like to suggest a more nuanced explanation that takes better account of HNZ's detailed psycho-physical understanding of self-cultivation.

I propose that the "patterns" (*li* 理) with which sages accord in HNZ are simply a name for the continuity that seems to emerge in the experience of cultivated persons as they interact with their environments. I have shown in this chapter how the practical object of ethical self-cultivation in HNZ is a matter of disabling certain habits of self-centered thought and action and replacing them with habits that consistently maintain

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[184] Roth, "Nature and Self-Cultivation in *Huainanzi*'s 'Original Way,'" 271.

states of tranquility, clarity, and un-self-consciousness in experience. The HNZ authors contend that when a person interacts with her environment using these cultivated habits, she is able to grasp a very subtle level of personal response to situations that can lead her to interact with her environment in mutually productive ways. Her apprehension of these subtle personal responses is not literally perceptual, but it is still a function of individual experience, so that ideal action consists primarily in maintaining characteristically sage-like appreciation of and interaction with one's environment. The HNZ authors identify sage-like experience as that most characterized by self-so-ness (*ziran* 自然), and such experience is therefore seemingly uncaused and unbidden. If a person could achieve a level of tranquility and clarity of mind such that she could be fully present and participating in her environment, and act only on her most authentic, unbidden responses to each situation, then it seems that such experience would appear to develop according to organic patterns. That is, in that scenario, the "ingredients" for experience come only from the person's individual dispositions and the overall disposition of elements in her environment, such that the combination of the two could only lead to certain outcomes. If she allows the situation to proceed only according to the propensities of these basic "ingredients" and not by forcing it to develop one way or another, then it will seem to proceed organically, as if the result simply grew as a natural result of its "ingredients."

Moreover, because the result would not be random, and indeed would even seem to be better integrated than the results of forced, ego-centric developments, this kind of experience would also seem especially ordered, as if it conformed to a greater pattern. I contend that something like this happens in HNZ's vision of ideal action, and the authors simply term the perceived order that emerges from this kind of experience "pattern" (*li*

理). If this is the case, it would mean that the practical understanding of *li* 理 as the order apprehended in the cultivated person's experience may actually be the more fundamental meaning of the term, with the larger conclusions about order in the cosmos deriving therefrom. This may even extend to conclusions about *dao* 道. That is, *dao* 道 could be the name given for the general fact that in the cultivated person's experience there seems to be an overall harmony in how the cosmos develops, including her individual contribution to that harmony in the form of un-self-conscious participation with her environment.

This understanding of *li* 理 also makes sense given the contexts in which the HNZ uses the term. For instance, in HNZ 6.3 the authors discuss complicated, seemingly mysterious natural phenomena and note that:

> Even if one has enlightened understanding, it is not possible to [explain why] these things are so. Thus investigations by ear and eye are not adequate to discern the patterns of things . . . Only those who penetrate to Supreme Harmony and who grasp self-so responses will be able to get it.[185]

Here, "discerning the patterns of things" (*fen wu li* 分物理) is clearly a matter of achieving a state of "Supreme Harmony" (*tai he* 太和), and more importantly of "grasping self-so responses" (*chi ziran zhi ying* 持自然之應). This language resonates with many of the passages I have already covered, which indicated that grasping such responses is a matter of stilling one's mind and acting un-self-consciously. This indicates that discerning the *li* 理 of things is something that happens within the experience of the individual, and which is therefore not a matter of, for instance, apprehending external sense objects. Moreover, earlier in the passage the authors say that these matters are

[185] Major et al., 219 with my emendations, HNZ 6/51/8-10.

"hard to discuss using knowledge, or to explain by means of debate."[186] This language is very similar to that used by the HNZ authors in the passages cited above on the subject of technique (*shu* 術), which we found to be a species of technical or skill knowledge and therefore centered in individual, lived experience.

HNZ 1.6 also addresses cultivated action as a kind of technique, and implies that the "norms of the Way" arise from circumstances. The passage begins by arguing for the superiority of "the great Way" over "inferior methods."[187] It concludes that "if you follow the norms of the Way and follow how Heaven and Earth are so of themselves, then none within the six coordinates will be able to be your equal."[188] Here again the norms derived from *li* 理 ("norms of the Way" *dao li zhi shu* 道理之數) are explicitly linked with the *ziran* 自然 quality of things. The passage then cites the legendary examples of sage-emperor Yu and the Divine Farmer, saying that "when Yu drained the flood, / he followed the water as his master," and that "when the Divine Farer sowed grain, / he followed the seedlings as his teacher."[189] These descriptions reiterate how sagely action follows norms, and that the norms emerge out of the specific contexts within which sages act. Yu was able to tame the floods and the Divine Farmer was able to invent agriculture because they followed *li* 理 when they engaged with water and seedlings, respectively. *Li* 理 can be posited as universal, but they are fundamentally a part of lived experience.

Later on, in HNZ 1.13, the authors give a lengthy description of the Way, and conclude with a description of how sages "use" it as their standard. At the beginning of

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[186] Major et al., 218 with my emendations, HNZ 6/51/2-3.
[187] Major et al., 54, HNZ 1/3/1.
[188] Major et al., 55 with my emendations, HNZ 1/3/11-12.
[189] Major et al., 55, HNZ 1/3/12-13.

this description they say that "to return to the root / is to be merged with the Formless," and immediately identify the Formless as "the One"—a common epithet for *dao* 道.[190] This further establishes the link between "returning to one's root" (*fan ben* 反本) discussed above and becoming immersed in *dao* 道. At the end of the passage, the authors claim that "sages make use of the one measure to comply with the tracks of things . . . Applying it as their level, relying on it as their marking cord, through the meanderings [of life], they follow it as their benchmark."[191] Here, the "one measure" (*yi du* 一度) refers to *dao* 道, which sages "use" metaphorically, as a carpenter uses tools like the level and marking cord, to find the best path through every situation in life. This implies that *dao* 道 is something that produces norms by which situations can be judged, and that it is something that is always present in every situation. This resonates strongly with the descriptions of *xing* 性 or the "root" of one's person encountered earlier, and their connection to the inner life of the sage. Given the direct reference to one's root at the beginning of the passage, it seems reasonable that the Way's norm-producing properties are understood here to reside within individual experience.

Finally, HNZ 7.6 deals with the sage's unique psycho-physical attributes, and includes a description of how sages observe *li* 理 and thereby participate as fully as possible in their environments. After emphasizing the importance of eliminating lusts, desires, and selfish bias, the passage explains that sages "use Nothing to respond to Something / and necessarily fathom its Underlying Patterns."[192] Based on the first part of the passage, we can understand "using Nothing" (*yi wu* 以無) to refer to sages' ability to

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[190] Major et al., 64, HNZ 1/6/15.
[191] Major et al., 66, HNZ 1/7/1-2.
[192] Major, et al., 247 with my emendations, HNZ 7/57/6.

"empty" their minds and achieve states of profound tranquility and equanimity from which they can engage their surroundings. "Responding to Something" (*ying you* 應有) thus describes the sages' interaction with the fullness of their environments. When they "use Nothing to respond to Something" sages thereby "necessarily fathom its Underlying Patterns" (*bi jiu qi li* 必究其理). This statement asserts that interacting with one's environment from a perspective empty of self-conscious concerns "necessarily" (*bi* 必) leads to apprehension of *li* 理. *Li* 理 are thus something that once again appear unbidden to sages in their unique experience.

Moreover, HNZ 7.6 concludes, based on the above explanation, that "there is nothing from which [sages] are too aloof; / [and] nothing with which they are too intimate."[193] This statement encapsulates the HNZ authors' idea of ideal action. Although phrased in paradox, we can make good sense of the description based on the rest of HNZ's program of self-cultivation. On one hand, sages are aloof from everything, and there is nothing with which they are too intimate. That is, they do not allow external stimuli to disrupt their inner tranquility, and even "death and life do not alter them."[194] On the other hand, they know intimately every aspect of their person and every element of their environment, and there is nothing from which they are too aloof. They do not harbor resentment or bias based on self-centered concerns, and so are open to everything they encounter.

It is worth reiterating that this level of participation in one's environment is only possible through rigorous training in the Techniques of the Way, the backbone of which is formed by the inner cultivation tradition discussed in my Chapter III. The influence of

[193] Major et al., 247, HNZ 7/57/7.
[194] Major et al., 247, HNZ 7/57/8.

this tradition is evident throughout HNZ, and is yet another reason to read the text's more explicit cosmological claims as based primarily in individual experience. By cultivating certain habits of mind, the classical Daoist practitioner would necessarily alter his experience of his environment. Indeed, I have provided ample evidence that when HNZ addresses issues of self-cultivation, the primary focus remains on consistently maintaining a certain kind of experience. If the practitioner could alter experience in such a way that his interactions seemed effortlessly more graceful, more satisfying, and more conducive to mutual harmony, then it makes sense to describe it as adhering to, or flowing along with, natural patterns that subtly conduct the development of every situation.

F: Conclusion

HNZ 7.7 is all about leaving things behind. There the HNZ authors tell us:

> Those whom we call the Perfected are people whose inborn nature is merged with the Way.
> Therefore,
> they possess it but appear to have nothing.
> They are full but appear to be empty.
> They are settled in this unity and do not know of any duality.
> They cultivate what is inside and pay no attention to what is outside.
> They illuminate and clarify Grand Simplicity;
> taking no action, they revert to the Unhewn.
> They embody the root and embrace the spirit in order to roam freely within the confines of Heaven and Earth.[195]

This paints a picture of sages as people who are profoundly quiescent and almost otherworldly in their leaving behind the characteristic "duality" of self-centered concerns. And yet,

when stimulated, they respond;

[195] Major et al., 248 with my emendations, HNZ 7/57/10-11.

> when pressed, they move;
> when it is inevitable, they go forth,
> like the brilliant glow of a flame,
> like the mimicry of a shadow,
> Taking the Way as their guiding thread, they are necessarily so.[196]

According to these lines, sages are also actively engaged in their environments. Still, this description makes it sound as if sages will only engage with the world when they absolutely have to. From my discussion in this chapter, however, it should be clear that the HNZ authors mean something quite different when they say, for instance, that sages go forth only when it is inevitable.

The description of the sage in HNZ 7.7 may seem overly quiescent because we often think of exemplary ethical figures as deeply committed to moral principles and willing to act to affect their world based on those principles. However, sages in HNZ are exemplary precisely because they discard all kinds of fixed principles and external standards. The HNZ authors believe that the fundamental root of human problems lies in the tendency to agitate and confuse the mind with self-centered desires and biases fixed to non-context-specific standards.

As I have argued in this chapter, HNZ's program of ethical self-cultivation works to transform experience by instilling in the practitioner habits of un-self-conscious thought and action. Such habits allow practitioners to detect the subtle tendencies toward harmonious action that arise as responses of their personal faculties and life histories to each situation they encounter in their environment. I also have suggested that this experience of guiding impulses may underlie the classical Daoist understanding of the norms of the Way, and even of the Way itself.

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[196] Major et al., 249 with my emendations, HNZ 7/57/16-17.

If this is the case, then classical Daoist ethics, as represented in the HNZ, can offer a compelling correction to the view of classical Daoism as amoral. That is, even though sages act only based on the promptings of their innermost personalized responses to specific situations, this does not mean that their ethical norms are entirely relative or subjective. Since their norms are not self-centered, but centered instead on the interaction of self and environment, they are not purely subjective. Likewise, since they arise only in the purportedly consistent experiences resulting from un-self-conscious habits of tranquility and clarity, they are not entirely relative. HNZ itself hints at some ways to clarify these and other issues the text raises in the context of comparative religious ethics, and I will take these up in my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER VI:
Conclusion

I did not end up following HNZ's root-branch structure, even though I alluded to it in the titles of my previous two chapters. That is, I have argued that the practical aspect of ideal action in HNZ is more foundational than the elaborated cosmological aspects. This seems to say that practical ethics are the roots, and the cosmological contexts are the branches. My most important claim in this dissertation is that we should read the concept of *dao* 道 as a fundamentally practical concept, grounded in certain kinds of experience, which nonetheless provides non-subjective norms for ideal action. This *dao* 道-experience forms the cornerstone of ethics in HNZ and in classical Daoism in general.

Classical Daoist ethics asserts that the best kind of human life is one that maintains the experience termed "*dao* 道" and which thereby leads individuals to deeper participation with their environments. In support of this ideal, it uses a sophisticated system of contemplative practices aimed at reworking practitioners' habits of thought and action so as to transform their experience. Specifically, it aims to deactivate habits of self-centered interpretation of and interaction with one's environment, and seeks to cultivate habits of profound tranquility and responsiveness to the total context of one's environment. This transformation purportedly moves the "center of gravity" in experience from one's idea of a personal ego pitted against the world, to a more unified conception of the self-environment interaction.

Individual experience is important in this process because, as the HNZ authors assert, one finds the balance between self and environment by detecting and maintaining an awareness of the self-so-ness (*ziran* 自然) in experience. The HNZ authors maintain that self-so-ness can provide a reliable guide to action, that it is uniquely compelling, and that it can be clearly distinguished from other aspects of experience. Moreover, they find that following the guide of how things are "so-of-themselves" leads to extraordinarily effective action. In fact, the authors warn in HNZ 20.9 that if, for instance, a ruler thinks he applies the Way to his government, and it does not lead to effective action, then it must be that "he has not exercised a sincere heart."[1] That is, if he was sure he was following the Way, and it did not yield good results, then he must have been deluding himself and secretly harboring self-centered motives.

However, this assessment leads to some of the questions with which I began my Introduction. In particular, it seems to imply that, as long as one remains profoundly calm and tranquil within, never operating with self-centered concerns, then theoretically any action is permissible. This is the essence of Eno's critique when he notes that slaughtering people could provide the same kind of focus and clarity Cook Ding enjoys in carving oxen.[2] Indeed, in their concept of "expediency" (*quan* 權), the HNZ authors seem to imply that if the parameters of the situation called for it, theoretically any response could be appropriate, including extreme violence. For instance, in HNZ 20.25, the authors assert that "although sages travel along crooked roads / and journey along dark paths, / it is because they wish to elevate the Great Way."[3] As an example, the

[1] Major et al., 802, HNZ 20/212/5.
[2] Eno, "Cook Ding's Dao," 142.
[3] Major et al., 821 with my emendations, HNZ 20/218/1-2.

authors cite the Duke of Zhou, who executed several noblemen to prevent an armed rebellion, because “the situation left him no alternative.”[4] This seems to authorize a certain moral flexibility when it comes to following one’s genuine responses to a situation.

Moreover, by stating that the Duke of Zhou resorted to killing because “the situation left him no alternative,” the authors also seem to imply that one should follow the dictates of the situation even to the point of committing morally questionable actions. By moving the center of ethics out of the individual and into the interaction between individual and environment, the HNZ authors risk shading into fatalism or quietism, where the individual only acts as external conditions dictate, and thus refuses to take action to prevent others from committing reproachable actions. Unfortunately, the HNZ authors do not directly anticipate these objections, but they do offer a series of indications that help begin to answer them.

In the above passage, the HNZ authors assert that, although sages may have to occasionally “travel a crooked road,” they are always positively motivated. Similarly, in HNZ 19.3, they say that “the hearts of sages never deviate, day and night, from the desire to benefit others.”[5] The significant point here is that sages operate in a different moral register from uncultivated people. They are entirely benevolent, so even if in extreme situations they end up taking actions that hurt others, they nevertheless always take a benevolent path. Indeed, HNZ 1.6 also mentions that in sages “the heart that wishes to harm others disappears.”[6] This is well and good, but the presence of positive intention and absence of negative intention are often not sufficient to provide a reliable moral

[4] Major et al., 821 with my emendation, HNZ 20/218/5.
[5] Major et al., 773, HNZ 19/204/10.
[6] Major et al., 55, HNZ 1/3/6.

standard. As we have seen, however, the moral standard of sages in the HNZ emerges out of participatory interactions, and therefore goes beyond intention. That is, even if sages actually are entirely benevolent, and truly lack all desire to harm others, the standards that guide their actions come from their sensitive engagement with their social and material environments. More precisely, they come from the internal promptings that arise when they so engage the environment. In this sense, HNZ is not fatalist or quietist. Sages do not simply resign themselves to do whatever the external situation dictates, but instead rely on a sense of the situation that includes their own background of abilities and propensities. Likewise, the arrangement of factors that make up their *xing* 性 and *ming* 命 may lead to *qing* 情-impulses that direct them to speak or act to prevent harm to others, forcefully if necessary. The point is that the norms guiding sagely action are inherently interactive, and cannot be entirely governed by subjective interest, nor entirely determined by external factors.

For instance, in HNZ 14.68 we learn that "those who possess the Way do not lose the opportune moment to accommodate others, and those who do not possess the Way lose the opportune moment to accommodate others."[7] Here, we get a sense of how inter-active and inter-personal HNZ's idea of ideal action is. The sense of this passage is that sages attune themselves to opportunities to join with other people in developing the potentialities inherent in their shared situations. There is definitely a sense in which the environment—including the elements of other people's interests, needs, abilities, etc.—dictates how the sage responses to situations, but passages like this one stress how the process is one of mutual accommodation, instead of one-sided assertion or submission.

[7] Major et al., 570-571, HNZ 14/141/28-14/142/1.

Moreover, the HNZ authors consistently characterize sages as mild, unobjectionable but charismatic people, notable mostly for their profoundly positive impact on those around them. For instance, HNZ 14.49 says of the sage:

> His conduct does not elicit scrutiny,
> and his speech does not incite criticism.
> When successful, he is not ostentatious.
> When impoverished, he is not cowed.
> When honored, he is not showy.
> When ignored, he is not bereft.
> He is extraordinary yet does not appear unusual.
> He is always appropriately deferential yet identifies with the multitudes.
> There are no means to name him. This is what is called "Great Merging."[8]

This paints a picture of the sage as someone who is remarkable precisely because he fits well in every situation. We know from the many examples in previous chapters that he is able to fit in so well because he does not impose any self-centered judgments or biases on the situations he encounters. This allows him to accept people and situations exactly as he finds them, participating deeply in his lived experience, wherever that may take him.

The HNZ authors also maintain that this kind of participation is precisely what benefits both sages and those who interact with them. For instance, HNZ 14.44 describes the way sages benefit others:

> Those who perfect Potency and the Way are like hills and mountains. Solitary and unmoving, travelers take them as their guides. They rectify themselves and find sufficiency in things. They do not offer charity to others, and those who use them likewise do not receive their kindness. Thus they are peaceful and able to endure.[9]

This characterizes the sage's benefit to the world as mostly passive, but nonetheless profound. That is, because sages are not aggressive, controlling, or self-aggrandizing, they do not seem especially conspicuous in their benefit to others. Earlier in the passage, the authors make similar statements about Heaven, which impartially illuminates the

[8] Major et al., 562 with my emendations, HNZ 14/10-11.
[9] Major et al., 560, HNZ 14/138/23-24.

world without intentionally seeking to eliminate the people's darkness, and Earth, which impartially provides the resources for human nourishment without intentionally seeking to address human needs.[10] Likewise, sages are passive in their benefit of the people, but it is similarly pervasive and similarly profound. Sages are able to benefit their world in this way because their cultivated habits of tranquility, clarity, and un-self-consciousness lead them to engage it holistically. Holistic engagement, moreover, leads organically, as a matter of course, to the mutually satisfying guides for action that the classical Daoist tradition defines as *dao* 道.

We should also bear in mind that the states of tranquility and clarity described in HNZ are extremely profound, and purchased at an enormous cost of time and effort. We should not, therefore, hold the cultivated person to the same standard as the person who is merely passive or unfeeling. That is, HNZ's vision for the best kind of human life includes the idea that habits of un-self-conscious thought and action fundamentally transform the way cultivated people interact with their environment. Although they do not directly state it, the HNZ authors clearly believe that this transformation entails definitively overcoming the root problems that ordinarily lead people to harm themselves and others in various ways—namely, ego-centered habits. HNZ does not contain a robust argument for precisely why ego-centered habits should lead to human misery, but the text works on the understanding that the best kind of human life is only possible when one can overcome them.

Moreover, this implies that those who manage to overcome ego-centered habits are in some sense incapable of the kind of errors that usually lead to human misery. This

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[10] See Major et al., 560, HNZ 14/138/22-23.

is significant because it means that, for instance, Eno is essentially correct in his argument that classical Daoism does not deem certain actions impermissible. That is, the HNZ authors really do think that the more relevant factor in ethics is the method by which one interacts with one's environment, thus theoretically permitting any activity that follows the ideal method. However, they also insist that non-subjective moral norms emerge out of interactions conducted using that method, thus putting practical limits on the range of possible actions. The sage in HNZ would never butcher people like Cook Ding butchers oxen—not because he is not permitted to, but because the HNZ authors find it impossible that cultivated habits of tranquility and un-self-consciousness would lead to such actions.

This treatment of HNZ's response does not definitively address all the possible objections to and critiques of classical Daoist ethics. I only hope to provide the beginning of a conversation, and to suggest that classical Daoism's unique answers to some of these questions merits further investigation. Even if modern Western readers cannot realistically become sages through inner cultivation training, we may find that ethical habits like tranquility and un-self-consciousness actually do benefit individuals and the world in unique ways. Likewise, we may find that the methods of training attention used in this tradition can be valuable practices for other ethical traditions.

Finally, if we find compelling the idea of an ethics of participation, in which non-subjective ethical norms emerge from inter-active experience, then HNZ and classical Daoist ethics will be illuminating. We may find more purchase in Dewey's vision, since it invokes familiar values of active problem solving, social meliorism, democratic debate, and consensus building. However, if Dewey's central idea that experience can provide

all the resources necessary for developing a responsible ethics is compelling, then it will be profitable to further investigate classical Daoist ethics. Likewise, if we find helpful the idea that reliable ethical norms can emerge from the fundamentally interactive processes of social life itself, then it will be enlightening to explore how habits of tranquility, clarity, and un-self-consciousness affect those processes. In that case, HNZ and classical Daoist ethics will challenge the ways we think about ethics in pluralistic societies, broadening our understanding of the origin of ethical norms. Indeed, the ancient saying, "the Way comes about as we walk it," is not just empty talk![11]

[11] This is my modification of a phrase from LZ 22 (LZ 22A/8/5): *Gu zhi suo wei xu ze quan zhe, qi xu yan zai*! 古之所謂曲則全, 豈虛言哉! "The ancient saying, 'the bent will be preserved whole' is not just empty talk!"

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