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Heidegger's Daoist Turn

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Abstract

Heidegger's "Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man" (1945), one of three dialogues composed by Heidegger after the defeat of National Socialist Germany published in *Country Path Conversations* (*Feldweg-Gespräche*) explores the being-historical situation and fate of the German people by turning to the early Daoist text of the *Zhuangzi*. My article traces how Heidegger interprets fundamental concepts from the *Zhuangzi*, mediated by way of Richard Wilhelm's translation *Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland* (1912), such as naturalness, letting/releasement (*Gelassenheit*/*wuwei*), the unnecessary (*wuyong zhi wei yong*) and the useless (*wuyong zhi yong*) in the context of his hermeneutical and political situation. I consider to what extent this dialogue, along with his other discussions of the *Zhuangzi* and intensive engagement with the *Daodejing* from 1943 to 1950, constitute a "Daoist turn" in Heidegger's thinking that helped shape his Postwar thought.

Keywords

Daoism – intercultural philosophy – translation – uselessness – Zhuangzi

1 Introduction: Heidegger and East Asian Philosophy

The historian Heinrich Wiegand Petzet (1909–1997) recounted in his *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929–1976* how Heidegger visited Bremen in October 1930 to give a lecture that would eventually become "On the Essence of Truth" (*Von Wesen der Wahrheit*).[1] Heidegger surprised everyone at a dinner

1 Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). For

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party after the talk by asking his host for a copy of an obscure book called the *Parables of Zhuangzi* (*Reden und gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse*) that had been translated from two English translations around two decades earlier by Martin Buber.[2] Heidegger proceeded to read the Zhuangzian dialogue about the joy of fish and the joy of watching the fish from the bridge above, a conversation between Zhuangzi (莊子) and Huizi (惠子; Hui Shi 惠施) on the possibility of genuinely knowing the joy of fish, delving into its meaning for his audience.[3]

Confirming his continuing attentiveness to this Daoist text, Heidegger himself cited the Buber edition of selections from the *Zhuangzi* in a discussion of "Picture and Word" ("Bild und Wort") in Bremen in 1960.[4] Heidegger refers to the story of the artisan of the "bell stand" in Buber's rendition of *Zhuangzi* chapter 19, "Fulfilling Life" (*dasheng* 達生), in which "a non-instrumental artistry is an image of how to live; the wooden bell stand (*Glockenspielstande*) appears as if it were the work of spirits and is formed through a responsive artistry born of the 'fasting that calms the heart-mind' (*zhai yi jing xin* 齋以靜心) without relying on instrumental technique, skill, expectation, or calculation."[5] The connection between usefulness and uselessness will also be at play in Heidegger's references to Richard Wilhelm's translation of the *Zhuangzi* that appear in works from 1945 and 1962, and which will be the primary focus of this chapter.

Petzet repeatedly notes Heidegger's engagement with Chinese and Japanese thought and culture. Heidegger's "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer" (1959) confirms that this engagement goes back to as early as 1921.[6] Heidegger held a seminar on *Husserl's Logical Investigations* attended by Shūzō Kuki (九鬼周造) who became his friend and introduced his work into

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an overview of Heidegger and East Asian thought, also see Bret W. Davis, "Heidegger and Asian Philosophy" in François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, eds., *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 459–471; and Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on his Work* (London: Routledge, 1996). Also see Bret W. Davis, "Heidegger and Daoism: A Dialogue on the Useless Way of Unnecessary Being," in David Chai, *Daoist Encounters with Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

2 Martin Buber, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-tse* (Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1910). On the significance of Buber's interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* in relation to Heidegger, see chapter 4 of Eric S. Nelson, *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought,* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 109–129.

3 Petzet, *Encounters*, 18.

4 Martin Heidegger, *Zum Wesen der Sprache und zur Frage nach der Kunst* [GA 74] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2010), 185. Compare Petzet, 1993, 169 and Nelson, 2017, 120.

5 Nelson, 2017, 120. Herman translates "wooden bell stand" as "chimepost" in Herman, 1996, 59. Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 [Collected Annotations on Zhuangzi], eds. Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 and Wang Xianqian王先謙 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995).

6 Compare May, 1996, 11–20; and Nelson, 2017, 206–209.

Japan in the early 1930s.[7] Petzet describes Heidegger's frequent visits to the graphic artist and exhibitor of East Asian Art Emil Preetorius (1883–1973);[8] his encounter with the Thai Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Maha with whom he conversed on German Television in 1963;[9] and reporting his quip that "Mao Tse? That is the *Ge-Stell* (the enframing) of Lao-tse."[10] Contemporary readers are now in a better position to evaluate, both from Heidegger's own works as well as from reports and comments from German and East Asian contemporaries, the extent to which Heidegger engaged with Chinese and Japanese visitors, students, and translated textual sources from at least as early as 1921.

11 Heidegger and Daoism

Heidegger's works contain a limited number of non-Western references, and they primarily refer to his encounters with contemporary East Asian, in particular Japanese, intellectuals and to what we can designate "Lao-Zhuang Daoism."

The Chinese (indeed, non-Western) text that is mentioned most often in Heidegger's corpus is the *Daodejing* associated with the mysterious figure of Laozi (老子). The most frequently mentioned East Asian word in his discourse is *dao* (道). The "originary" Chinese word *dao* echoes his own originary word *Weg* (way). Heidegger notes in a number of passages how *dao*, as a primordial word, is untranslatable. He claims in "The Principle of Identity" that his own originary singular verbal word *Ereignis* (the appropriating or enowning temporal-historical event of being) is "as little translatable as the guiding-Greek word *logos* and the Chinese *dao* … It is now used as a *singulare tantum*."[11] Yet, in a passage that is conceptually closely aligned with his 1962 interpretation of Zhuangzi that will be considered further below, the *dao* appears more radically than the Greek *logos* as the inaccessible sustaining ground of things in a notable passage in *On the Way to Language*:

> The key word in Laozi's poetic thinking is *dao*, which "properly speaking" means way. But because we are prone to think of "way" superficially, as

7 Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperCollins, 1971), 5.

8 Petzet, *Encounters*, 169.

9 Ibid., 170–171, 181.

10 Ibid., 212.

11 Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 36.

> a stretch connecting two places, our word "way" has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what *dao* says. *Dao* is then translated as reason, mind, raison, meaning, *logos*. Yet *dao* could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, mind, meaning, logos properly mean to say-properly, by their proper nature. Perhaps the mystery of all mysteries [*Geheimnis aller Geheimnisse*] of thoughtful saying conceals itself in the word "way," *dao*, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so.[12]

This passage does not only interpret the *Daodejing* but directly mentions the text itself. It appears to embrace a Daoist elucidation of the relation of saying and the unsaid that reflects an ongoing concern of Heidegger's own philosophical path. First, Heidegger advocates in this passage linking *dao* with—no doubt in terms of his own understanding—the German word *Weg*. Secondly, Heidegger's "Geheimnis aller Geheimnisse" is a reference to *xuan zhi you xuan* 玄之又玄. The word *xuan* 玄 can be translated into English as mystery, profundity, or darkness. It is a recurring expression in the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, and a key expression for the later Neo-Daoist movement of "mysterious learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學). Heidegger's expression "mystery of all mysteries," the German could be translated as "secret of all secrets," differs from Wilhelm's translation of the last lines of chapter one of the *Daodejing* that speak of a yet even deeper mystery of the mystery as the *dao*'s gateway or portal: "In seiner Einheit heißt es das Geheimnis. Des Geheimnisses noch tieferes Geheimnis ist das Tor, durch das alle Wunder hervortreten" (同謂之玄。玄之又玄，眾妙之門).[13] Thirdly, letting or allowing names to revert or return to what they leave unspoken (which the Neo-Daoist Wang Bi 王弼 indicates is nothingness) is a way of reading the text's use of *fan* 反 as the very motility of the *dao* in *Daodejing* 40.

A number of scholars have argued for or against the "influence" of early Lao-Zhuang Daoist sources on the formation of Heidegger's philosophy, and there have been rich explorations of the affinities between Heidegger and

12 Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (San Francisco: Harper, 2009), 92 (translation modified).

13 Laozi 老子, *Laozi dao dejing zhu jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋 [Annotations to Laozi's Way and Virtue], annotated Wang Bi 王弼 and ed. Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016); Richard Wilhelm, trans., *Lao-tse: Tao te King: Das Buch des alten Meisters vom Sinn und Leben* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1911), 11. On the image of the gateway, compare Steven Burik, "Thinking on the edge: Heidegger, Derrida, and the Daoist gateway (*Men* 門)." *Philosophy East and West* 60.4 (2010): 499–516.

Daoism.[14] Xia Kejun argued in his remarkable book *A Waiting and Useless Nation: Zhuangzi and Heidegger's Second Turn* for a Daoist "turn" in Heidegger's thinking in the mid-1940s.[15] It is clear that Heidegger deploys images and ideas from the *Daodejing* in a number of texts, such as "The Uniqueness of the Poet" (1943), "A Three-way Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, and a Guide" (1945) that would appear in part in the 1960 text *Gelassenheit*, and most famously "The Thing" (1950). This time period of 1943–1950 should be kept in mind for our later discussion, as it is the period of his most intense explicit engagement with early Daoist texts, along with his discussions in the 1960s that refer back to the issues of this period surrounding the conclusion of the Second World War.

Heidegger's different reflections on the *Daodejing* have their own features, while each of them addresses *Daodejing* 11 and takes up Daoist nothingness (*wu* 無) and images of the emptiness that makes the wheel (the empty spokes) and the vessel (the empty space between) possible.[16] Nothingness and emptiness are not new themes in Heidegger's thinking. Already in his University of Freiburg inaugural address (July 24, 1929), "What is Metaphysics?", Heidegger speaks of the nothing (*Nichts*) in a virtual Daoist-like manner as generative of possibility and being (*Sein*) itself.[17] Furthermore, Heidegger and his Japanese interlocutor note of "What is Metaphysics?" in the 1959 "A Dialogue on Language" how readily this lecture on the nothing, in which "emptiness is the loftiest name for being," was understood in Japan while being accused of nihilism and incoherence (most notably by Rudolf Carnap) in Europe.[18]

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14 Compare May, 1996 and Steven Burik, *The End of Comparative Philosophy and the Task of Comparative Thinking: Heidegger, Derrida, and Daoism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).

15 Xia Kejun 夏可君, *Yige dengdai yu wuyong de minzu: Zhuangzi yu Haidege'er de di'erci zhuanxiang* 一個等待與無用的民族：莊子與海德格爾的第二次轉向 [*A Waiting and Useless Nation: Zhuangzi and Heidegger's Second Turn*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2017).

16 On the problematic of nothingness in Heidegger and *wu* 無 in the *Zhuangzi*, see David Chai, "Daoism and wu." *Philosophy Compass* 9.10 (2014): 663–671; David Chai, "Nothingness and the Clearing: Heidegger, Daoism and the Quest for Primal Clarity." *The Review of Metaphysics* 67.3 (2014): 583–601; and David Chai, *Zhuangzi and the Becoming of Nothingness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019).

17 Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

18 Heidegger, 1971, 19; on the difference over the significance of the nothing in Heidegger and Carnap, see Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger and Carnap: Disagreeing about Nothing?" in François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, eds., *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 151–156.

Whether this situation described here counts as an "influence" or not can be disputed. It does help clarify Heidegger's attentiveness to East Asian Daoist and Buddhist conceptions of nothingness and emptiness that emerges in a number of published and recently appearing previously unpublished works: especially the three dialogues from 1944/45 published as *Feldweg-Gespräche* (GA 77), translated into English as *Country Path Conversations*, that refer to the *Laozi* in the first conversation and the *Zhuangzi* in the third conversation.[19]

It is evident from these references in *Country Path Conversations* (1944–1945) that Heidegger was also reading and reflecting on the *Zhuangzi* through the interpretation of the 1912 translation of the Sinologist Richard Wilhelm, *Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland*.[20] It is reported by both Heidegger himself and the visiting Chinese scholar Xiao Shiyi 蕭師毅 that they spent the spring and summer of 1946 co-translating chapters of the *Daodejing* into German.[21]

It is extraordinary that Heidegger spent 1943–1946, the closing years of the Second World War and the defeat and occupation of Germany, extensively reading, reflecting on, and for a time conversing with Xiao about these two early Daoist classics, engaging in a partial translation of one of them that has noteworthy resonances in Heidegger's later language and thinking.

What specifically was it about these Daoist texts that spoke to Heidegger in this situation of German collapse? One could joke that it makes perfect sense from a Chinese perspective to turn to Daoism when society appears to fall apart. To respond to this question, we could consider Heidegger's different ways of deploying the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*. Heidegger's initial consideration of *Daodejing* 11 in "The Uniqueness of the Poet" (1943) relates to the emptiness and non-being that safeguard being, on the one hand, and the usability of beings, on the other:

> Genannt ist das Sein in diesem Unterschied bei Lao-Tse im elften Spruch seines *Tao-Te-King*, der lautet:

19 Martin Heidegger, *Feldweg-Gespräche* [GA 77] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), translated into English as Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

20 Richard Wilhelm, trans., *Dschuang Dsi: Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland. Nan Hua Dschen Ging. Aus dem Chinesischen verdeutscht und erläutert* (Munich: Diederichs, 1969).

21 Xiao Shiyi (Paul Shi-yi Hsiao) discussed the linkages between Daoism and the problem of modern technology and his relations with Heidegger respectively in Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, "Laotse und die Technik," *Die Katholischen Missionen*, 75, 1956: 72–74 and Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, "Wir trafen uns am Holzmarktplatz," in G. Neske, *Erinnerung an Martin Heidegger* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1977), 119–127.

> Dreißig Speichen treffen die Nabe,
> Aber das Leere zwischen ihnen gewährt das Sein des Rades.
> Aus dem Ton entstehen die Gefäße,
> Aber das Leere in ihnen gewährt das Sein des Gefäßes.
> Mauern und Fenster und Türen stellen das Haus dar, Aber das Leere zwischen ihnen gewährt das Sein des Hauses.
> Das Seiende ergibt die Brauchbarkeit. Das Nicht-Seiende gewährt das Sein.[22]

> 三十輻，共一轂，當其無，有車之用。埏埴以為器，當其無，有器之用。鑿戶牖以為室，當其無，有室之用。故有之以為利，無之以為用。[23]

Heidegger elucidates in his revealing translation of this passage the relationship between the empty/the nothing (*wu* 無) and the possibility and constitution of the useful (*yong* 用) in the context of a formulation of the ontological difference between beings and being: whereas beings (*Seiende*) produce usability, non-being (*Nicht-Seiende*) grants being (*Sein*). It is the empty (*Leere*) that grants and safeguards things in the examples of the wheel, the vase, and the house.

Heidegger, as with other German intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth-century (notably, Martin Buber, Graf Hermann Keyserling, and Richard Wilhelm, among others), unites these ancient Daoist sources to the modern problematic of technology through notions of usefulness and usability.[24] The question of pragmatic usefulness has a long history in Heidegger, occupying a crucial role in the form of *Zuhandenheit* (pragmatic readiness-to-hand) in the first division of *Being and Time* and emphasized in pragmatist reconstructions.

Heidegger is concerned in his later works concerning the thing with distinguishing things from their instrumental use and their technological enframing (*Gestell*). The thing (*wu* 物) and myriad things (*wanwu* 萬物) present a significant philosophical issue in early Daoist sources that engage Heidegger's attention. This concern with the thing and modern technology is a key element of the context of his analysis of *Daodejing* 11 in which things are torn in-between the openness of emptiness, which would let the mountain be the mountain according to the later "A Dialogue on Language" that addresses Buddhist emptiness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*, Japanese *ku* 空) in the Japanese milieu, and its aesthetic implications, and the mere usability of the instrumentalized thing that has become paradigmatic of modernity. Persons have likewise been reduced to

22 Martin Heidegger, *Zu Hölderlin* [GA 75] (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 43.
23 *Daodejing* 11.
24 As I argue in Nelson, 2017, 109–129.

mere "human resources" under the totalizing regime of the technologically enclosed and reduced world that has lost the capacity to be in touch with things in their own sense.

III Heidegger and the *Zhuangzi*

There are three dialogues in *Country Path Conversations*:

1. A Three-way Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, and a Guide [*Weisen*].
2. The Teacher Meets the Tower Warden at the Door to the Tower Stairway.
3. Evening Conversation: In a Prisoner of War Camp in Russia, between a Younger and an Older Man.

While the first dialogue raises issues and themes analogous to "The Uniqueness of the Poet" (1943) and "The Thing" (1950), the third is unique. An "Evening Conversation" is unique among Heidegger's works in significant ways:

1. It is already unusual in referring to the *Zhuangzi* instead of the more typically featured *Laozi* text.
2. It is described as taking place in a Soviet prisoner of war camp in the vast Siberian forests between a younger captured German soldier and an older one.
3. It is geopolitical in that it is dated May 7, 1945, the date of the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, and engages in a dialogical reflection on the "German disaster" and not only the crisis of modernity, as is more typical of Heidegger's later discourse, even while it relates the disaster that has befallen the German people to this "more fundamental" loss of being itself.

The conversation begins with the younger soldier encountering "what is healing" (*das Heilsame*), which Heidegger further elucidates in the "Letter on Humanism" three years later.[25] He encounters it in the vast expanse of the forest that enwraps the unwholesomeness of the camp while remaining

25 Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993). This letter offers a reflection on action and the problematic of activism related to Daoist themes, as I show in Eric S. Nelson, "Responding to Heaven and Earth: Daoism, Heidegger, and Ecology." *Environmental Philosophy* 1.2 (2004): 65–74. The *Zhuangzi* places in question the contemporary opposition of the human and inhuman. On this point, see Eric S. Nelson, "The Human and the Inhuman: Ethics and Religion in the Zhuangzi." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, v. 41, (S1), December 2014: on the environmental dimensions of Daoism, also see Nelson, Eric S. "Responding with Dao: Early Daoist Ethics and the Environment." *Philosophy East and West* 59.3 (2009): 294–316. 723–739.

untouchable within these confines.[26] This encounter is not a choice, decision, or the result of the will. It occurs through being "let into [*eingelassen*] what heals," of the letting of its happening [*Veranlassung*].[27] This dialogue is shaped by the various senses of letting, allowing, and releasing related to the word "*lassen*."

The conversation is haunted by the unwholesome (*das Unheilsame*), a question taken up in the 1948 diagnosis of the pathologies of modernity in the "Letter on Humanism," and the inability of deep wounds to heal: "And what is not all wounded and torn apart in us?—us, for whom a blinded leading-astray of our own people is too deplorable to permit wasting a complaint on, despite the devastation that covers our native soil and its helplessly perplexed [*ratlose*] humans." This situation of blindness leading to devastation and perplexity is depicted, again by the older man, in light of the phenomenon of evil which is interpreted in reference to fury and malice: the "devastation of the earth and the annihilation of the human essence that goes with it are somehow evil [*das Böse*]."[28]

The conversation proceeds to situate the devastation of National Socialism and the World War in relation to a more originary devastation of humanity. The older man states:

1. "this devastation is in no way a consequence of the World War, but rather the World War is for its part only a consequence of the devastation that has been eating away at the earth for centuries."[29]
2. "Devastation" [*Verwüstung*] means for us, after all, that everything—the world, the human, and the earth—will be transformed into a desert [*Wüste*].[30]
3. "the process of the desolation of the earth and of human existence."[31]
4. the desert is "the deserted [*verlassene*] expanse of the abandonment [*Verlassenheit*] of all life."[32]

Heidegger might be said to "criticize" National Socialism in a sense in this way in this and other works of this era. He does so, however, in the *Black Notebooks* not by itself on its own terms, but rather by explaining it as part of a larger process that he controversially perceives to be expressed in communism, Americanism, and globalizing modernity itself, of which National Socialism is

26 Heidegger, 2010, 133.
27 Ibid., 133.
28 Ibid., 134.
29 Ibid., 135.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 136.
32 Ibid., 137.

another flawed and failed instance.[33] Given the devastation of the earth, and their own devastated essence, what can these two captured men do, and what then can the German people do?

Through an extended conversation concerned with waiting, the two interlocutors arrive at the distinction between a waiting for "something" that is structured by anticipation and expectation [*auf etwas warten, Erwarten*] and pure waiting [*reines Warten*] in which one waits upon nothing [*Nichts*].[34] Yet this waiting on nothing cannot be an awaiting of the nothing, otherwise it would not be pure: it awaits and clings to neither being nor nothing but "waits on that which answers pure waiting."[35]

The *Zhuangzi* also refers to waiting such as in the first section from chapter six concerning waiting for the true or genuine person (*zhenren* 真人) and genuine knowing (*zhenzhi* 真知). In another crucial passage, vital energy is described as "an emptiness, a waiting for the presence of beings. The way alone is what gathers in this emptiness. And it is this emptiness that is the fasting of the mind."[36] Waiting allows a gathering in emptiness. Waiting is described by Heidegger in this 1945 conversation as a "letting come," or allowing to arrive, and a "safeguarding" that cannot be described as an expectation concerning the future. It is a waiting that empties the mind of any expectation of what is to come, instead allowing it to gather. It is indeed at this juncture of the text that Zhuangzian themes begin to emerge in the conversation, as is confirmed by the quotation in the conclusion.

The form of letting Heidegger has in mind appears useless and unnecessary. It is activity and willing that appears as the useful and necessary. Here there is an interpretive reversal against the instrumentalist paradigm that presupposes a reading of Zhuangzi and Wilhelm's translation of the *Zhuangzi*: "Only one who has learned to know the necessity of the unnecessary …" and "the unnecessary remains at all times the most necessary of all."[37]

IV Heidegger's Reliance on Wilhelm's Translation of the *Zhuangzi*

Wilhelm's translations were the primary means for German readers of Heidegger's generation to access Chinese texts, including classical and

33 On Heidegger's initial enthusiasm for and increasingly ambivalent and critical response toward National Socialism, see Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger's Black Notebooks: National Socialism, Antisemitism, and the History of Being." *Heidegger-Jahrbuch* 11 (2017): 77–88.

34 Heidegger, 2010, 140.

35 Ibid.

36 Zhuangzi, 4:9.

37 Heidegger, 2010, 143.

religious Daoist sources. In addition to his translations of the Confucian classics, Wilhelm translated into German the *Liezi* 列子 and *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (*Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi* 太乙金華宗旨), a work of inner alchemy (*neidan* 內丹) meditative techniques, with an introduction written by his friend Carl G. Jung.[38]

Despite Wilhelm's prolific quantity of translations and his sinological expertise and authority, Heidegger addresses only the two texts of Laozi and Zhuangzi and does not necessarily follow Wilhelm's translations and commentaries. For instance, Wilhelm translated the *Daodejing*'s title as *Das Buch des alten Meisters vom Sinn und Leben* ("The Book of the Old Master on Sense and Life").[39] Heidegger does not use Wilhelm's translations of *dao* 道 as *Sinn* (sense, meaning) and *de* 德 as *Leben* (life) or *Lebenskraft* (life-force). Nor would Heidegger endorse the Kantian and life-philosophical registers that Wilhelm employs to introduce the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* to German audiences. Wilhelm would describe the *Zhuangzi*, particularly chapter two, as a Chinese critique of pure reason, arguing that the paradoxes of chapter two constituted a critique of reason that refuted skepticism for the sake of the unity of life.[40] Relying on a prevalent system of classification of forms of philosophy during this period that distinguished naturalism, subjective idealism, and objective idealism, Wilhelm classified Zhuangzi's philosophy as a type of objective idealism that shared family resemblances with the discourses of Heraclitus and Spinoza, depicting Zhuangzi as having a *Gelassenheit* that was not afflicted by life's suffering.[41]

It is worth mentioning here that prior to Heidegger, in works that he was familiar with at least in part, Wilhelm and Buber utilized the words *Gelassenheit* (a condition of letting) and *lassen* (to let) in translating and interpreting Daoism. Buber could describe the I/thou relationship to God in his 1923 work *I and Thou* (*Ich und Du*) in Daoist terms of a non-indifferent and non-attached responsiveness to things and as having a "*Gelassenheit* to all things

38 Richard Wilhelm, trans., *Liä Dsi: Das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1921); and Richard Wilhelm, trans., *Das Geheimnis der Goldenen Blüte: Mit Einem Europäischen Kommentar von Carl G. Jung* (Zürich: Rascher, 1957). Jung credits Wilhelm as being one of the great inspirations in his life and work in Carl G. Jung, "Richard Wilhelm: In Memoriam" in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 53–62.

39 Wilhelm, 1911.

40 Wilhelm, 1969, 11, 36; also compare Nelson, 2017, 67.

41 Wilhelm, 1969, 8, 12.

and a sensibility that helps them" ("die Gelassenheit zu allen Dingen und die Berührung, die ihnen hilft").[42]

There are further differences between Wilhelm and Heidegger: while Wilhelm categorizes Zhuangzi's Daoism as a form of active immanent mysticism that embraces and unites with rather than flees from life and its forces, Heidegger rejected the concept of mysticism even as some elements of his thinking, precisely those that have been examined in relation to Meister Eckhart and Daoism, are identified by a number of interpreters with the modern Western category of "mysticism." Whereas Heidegger distrusts the category of mysticism, Wilhelm describes the *Zhuangzi* as a work of "sovereign freedom" at one with life in active (this-worldly) mysticism in contrast to passive (other-worldly) mysticism.[43] Zhuangzi is a mystic for Wilhelm who uplifts by embracing life rather than sinking away from life in self-absorption.

There are consequently substantial differences between how Heidegger and Wilhelm construe basic Daoist words and concepts. Despite the clear intellectual differences between Wilhelm and Heidegger, their interpretations are linked through translation in Heidegger's reliance on Wilhelm's renditions. It is accordingly helpful to trace the context of Wilhelm's use of the "necessity of the unnecessary" to consider why Heidegger might have adopted his (instead of Buber's) translation in this case.

In the 1945 "Evening Conversation," Heidegger does not refer here to Wilhelm's translation of *wuyongzhiyong* 無用之用 from the concluding passage of chapter four (*Renjian shi* 人間世 that Wilhelm translates as "In der Menschenwelt" / "In the Human World") in the *Inner Chapters*: "山木自寇也，膏火自煎也。桂可食，故伐之；漆可用，故割之。人皆知有用之用，而莫知無用之用也。"[44] In Wilhelm's translation, it is rendered:

> Der Baum auf dem Berge beraubt sich selbst; das Öl in der Lampe verzehrt sich selbst. Der Zimtbaum ist eßbar, drum wird er gefällt; der Lackbaum ist nützlich, drum wird er zerspellt. Jedermann weiß, wie nützlich es ist, nützlich zu sein, und niemand weiß, wie nützlich es ist, nutzlos zu sein.[45]

42 Martin Buber, *Schriften zur Philosophie* (Munich: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1962), 131. I illustrate how Buber's *I and Thou* is informed by his earlier interpretation of Zhuangzi in Nelson, 2017, 109–129. On this Daoist dimension of Buber's classic work, also see Jason M. Wirth, "Martin Buber's Dao," in David Chai, *Daoist Encounters with Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

43 See Wilhelm's introduction to his translation of the *Zhuangzi* in Wilhelm, 1969, 13.

44 Zhuangzi, 1995, chapter four.

45 Wilhelm, 1912, 36.

Nor does Heidegger refer in this context to the concluding section of chapter one that he cites and discusses at length in the 1962 lecture *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache* ("Traditional Language and Technological Language"), a discussion that connects once again usefulness and uselessness to questions concerning language and things in the epoch of technology.[46]

The "Evening Conversation" refers instead to a different passage from Wilhelm's *Zhuangzi*. "Die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen" is Wilhelm's title for the dialogue between Zhuangzi and Huizi in chapter 26 (*Waiwu* 外物, "Aussendinge" or "External Things") of the *Miscellaneous Chapters*:

> 惠子謂莊子曰:「子言無用。」莊子曰:「知無用而始可與言用矣。夫地非不廣且大也，人之所用容足耳。然則廁足而墊之，致黃泉，人尚有用乎?」惠子曰:「無用。」莊子曰:「然則無用之為用也亦明矣。」[47]

> Hui Dsï sprach zu Dschuang Dsï: 'Ihr redet von Unnötigem.' Dschuang Dsï sprach: 'Erst muß einer das Unnötige erkennen, ehe man mit ihm vom Nötigen reden kann. Die Erde ist ja weit und groß, und doch braucht der Mensch, um zu stehen, nur soviel Platz, daß er seinen Fuß darauf setzen kann. Wenn aber unmittelbar neben dem Fuß ein Riß entstünde bis hinab zu der Unterwelt, wäre ihm dann der Platz, worauf er steht, noch zu etwas nütze? 'Hui Dsï sprach: 'Er wäre ihm nichts mehr nütze.' Dschuang Dsï sprach: 'Daraus ergibt sich klar die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen.'[48]

Wilhelm's "die Notwendigkeit des Unnötigen" is a rendition of one possible meaning (necessary and unnecessary) in contrast to using the more typical terms usefulness and uselessness. This dialogue in Wilhelm's rendition is cited in Heidegger's "Evening Conversation" without naming the two philosophers. Bret Davis's translation into English reads:

> The one said: "You are talking about the unnecessary."
>
> The other said: "A person must first have recognized the unnecessary before one can talk with him about the necessary. The earth is wide and large, and yet, in order to stand, the human needs only enough space to be able to put his foot down. But if directly next to his foot a crevice were to open up that dropped down into the underworld, then would the space where he stands still be of use to him?"

46 Martin Heidegger, *Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache* (St. Gallen: Erker, 1989).
47 Zhuangzi, 1995.
48 Wilhelm, 1969, 281.

> The one said: "It would be of no more use to him."
>
> The other said: "From this the necessity of the unnecessary is clearly apparent."[49]

Wilhelm's translation of *yong* as necessity appears infelicitous. Even if it is accepted, as it indicates one possible sense of this idea given Wilhelm's hermeneutical situation, one should ask: what is the specific difference between the first expression from chapter 4 (*wuyong zhi yong* 無用之用) and the second from chapter 26 (*wuyong zhi wei yong* 無用之為用) and their contexts that led Wilhelm to translate one as the usefulness of uselessness and the other as the necessity of the unnecessary? Why did Wilhelm mark a difference here when most German and English translations do not? Both expressions are typically interpreted as the usefulness of the useless, while Wilhelm and Heidegger mark a difference and employ both expressions. This situation leaves us with the question of why Heidegger made the second expression the leitmotif of the "Evening Conversation"?

v Waiting, Letting, and an Unnecessary Useless People

The unnecessary is overtly contrasted with the instrumental and technical character of ratio and modern rationality in this text as well as with the occidental essence of thinking that does not allow itself to wait or let. Again, raising an issue that will be taken up in the "Letter on Humanism" that is a reflection on "action" and its adequacy as a measure of the human, this sense of ratio, and of the human being as the rational animal, is inadequate to the human essence as the being that waits and can be attentive and responsive in that which they belong.[50]

In waiting, we (and we should consider who this "we" is) are the inlet or letting in [*Einlaß*] for that which is coming: "We are in such a manner as though we were to first come to ourselves, in letting in [*einlassend*] the coming, as those who are themselves only by abandoning themselves—this, however, by means of waiting toward [*entgegenwarten*] the coming."[51] Playing on the German word for the present, *Gegenwart*, he interprets the word according to its two components: as a "'present' elucidated as 'waiting-toward'"

49 Heidegger, 2010, 156.
50 Ibid., 147.
51 Ibid.

(*gegen-warten*).[52] The genuine present transpires as a pure "waiting" (*warten*) toward (*gegen*, which can mean "in the direction of" or "against") that which is to come. This waiting waits insofar as it is unrestricted by anticipations and expectations such as of what is deemed necessary and useful.

What is waiting? It is delineated as essentially a letting (*lassen*). In waiting, we "let ourselves into, namely into that in which we belong"; namely, "by letting things rest in their own repose," which occurs in an emptiness that cannot be filled.[53] This letting things be themselves in their releasement (*Gelassenheit*) occurs through emptiness and signifies an anarchic freedom: "Freedom rests in being able to let [*Lassenkönnen*], not in ordering and dominating."[54] It could well be argued that this sense of letting has its inspirational sources in Meister Eckhart and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling without any need to speak about Daoism. However, we should recall Wilhelm's identification of Zhuangzi with a sovereign freedom and *Gelassenheit* as functioning in the midst of life. Moreover, it is Heidegger himself in this conversation who evokes and employs Daoist ideas and images throughout this text. Heidegger's direct and indirect references prompts the question of the extent to which he appropriated a range of Daoist concepts from the editions of Buber and Wilhelm such as *wuwei* 無為 (which is associated with letting and waiting), *ziran* 自然 (as a non-instrumentalized naturalness happening in and for itself), and the freedom and releasement of things (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊). Does it justify speaking of a "Daoist turn" in Heidegger (as Xia Kejun has intriguingly contended) or more modestly of transformative Lao-Zhuang Daoist traces and spurs (as I have contended in my recent 2017 book and in this chapter)?[55]

It is striking that Heidegger's two interlocutors intriguingly rejected the idea of nations and nationalisms in the "Evening Conversation," including what he considers its internationalized form. In the context of rejecting nationalism, the concluding pages articulate how the German people, a "useless" "unnecessary" people, must learn the necessity of the unnecessary and become a people of pure waiting, letting, and releasing things precisely in order to release themselves. Heidegger's deployment of *Gelassenheit* reverberates with the word's linguistic heritage in Eckhart and Schelling.[56] Nonetheless, this use of letting releasement is thought here in relation to the *Zhuangzi* and its sense of liberation as nourishing and healing. "Nourishing life" (*yangsheng* 養生) is a concept

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 149.

54 Ibid.

55 Xia, 2017.

56 On the development of *Gelassenheit* in Heidegger, see Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the will: On the way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

from the *Zhuangzi* that can be interpreted in relation to cultivating and healing life from what afflicts it.[57] Letting releases both things and humans, and it is that which heals (*das Heilsame*). In this passage, healing is called for in response to an affliction: it is a way for a people that had been misled by "false leaders" and their "necessary" goals and is now confronted by its own uselessness and unnecessariness.

Heidegger accordingly has reasons for speaking of the necessity of the unnecessary. First, it appears that for Heidegger, the useful is identifiable with the necessary according to the instrumental paradigm that equates the two, and which is challenged by the unnecessary that promises a different way of dwelling and modality of being. Secondly, German expressions such as *das Notwendige* and *die Notwendigkeit* do not only signify the necessary as what must be the case or the compulsion of logical implication. The necessary is in Heidegger's reflections rather what is urgent and needful (*nötig*) to respond to distress in a situation of need and emergency (*Not*)." It is the unnecessary that responds to this situation of needfulness, in which "learning to know the need [*Not*] in which everywhere the unnecessary [*das Unnötige*] must still persevere."[58] It would be questionable to project Heidegger's elucidation of necessity onto Wilhelm's initial translation, though it appears that his translation also presupposes a wider field of meanings for "necessity" (that is, the Chinese word *yong* and the German word *Notwendigkeit*) than logical compulsion.

The "Evening Conversation" concludes by confirming its Zhuangzian situation by explicitly quoting chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi* in which Huizi and Zhuangzi debate the meanings of the necessary and unnecessary (useful and useless), a conversation that has echoed throughout the conversation of the old and young Germans imprisoned in a Soviet prisoner of war camp. It is clear in this conversation that Heidegger did not appropriate Daoism to justify or excuse National Socialism, but rather—on the contrary—to confront its destructive malice that has left devastation and ruins in its wake.

VI Uselessness and the Very Sense of Things

Heidegger's continuing attention to Zhuangzi is illustrated in another lecture that addresses issues at the core of his later thinking. Heidegger returned to the *Zhuangzi* and the problematic of usefulness and uselessness in a lecture

57 On the importance of "nourishing life" in Zhuangzi, see Nelson, 2014, 723–739, and chapter four of Nelson, 2017.

58 Heidegger, 2010, 155.

given on July 18, 1962 on "Transmitted Language and Technological Language" (*Überlieferte Sprache und technische Sprache*). In this discussion of learning, the limits of language, and the appropriate words for things, Heidegger quotes at length in this lecture Wilhelm's translation of "The Useless Tree" (*Der unnütze Baum*) containing the conversation between Zhuangzi and Huizi that concludes chapter one of the *Zhuangzi*. Heidegger cited the entirety of Wilhelm's translation of the passage:

> 惠子謂莊子曰:「吾有大樹，人謂之樗。其大本擁腫而不中繩墨，其小枝卷曲而不中規矩，立之塗，匠者不顧。今子之言，大而無用，眾所同去也。」莊子曰:「子獨不見狸狌乎？卑身而伏，以候敖者；東西跳梁，不避高下；中於機辟，死於罔罟。今夫斄牛，其大若垂天之雲。此能為大矣，而不能執鼠。今子有大樹，患其無用，何不樹之於無何有之鄉，廣莫之野，彷徨乎無為其側，逍遙乎寢臥其下？不夭斤斧，物無害者，無所可用，安所困苦哉！」
>
> Hui Dsï redete zu Dschuang Dsï und sprach: "Ich habe einen großen Baum. Die Leute nennen ihn Götterbaum. Der hat einen Stamm so knorrig und verwachsen, daß man ihn nicht nach der Richtschnur zersägen kann. Seine Zweige sind so krumm und gewunden, daß man sie nicht nach Zirkel und Winkelmaß verarbeiten kann. Da steht er am Weg, aber kein Zimmermann sieht ihn an. So sind Eure Worte, o Herr, groß und unbrauchbar, und alle wenden sich einmütig von ihnen ab." Dschuang Dsï sprach: "Habt Ihr noch nie einen Marder gesehen, der geduckten Leibes lauert und wartet, ob etwas vorüber kommt? Hin und her springt er über die Balken und scheut sich nicht vor hohem Sprunge, bis er einmal in eine Falle gerät oder in einer Schlinge zugrunde geht. Nun gibt es aber auch den Grunzochsen. Der ist groß wie eine Gewitterwolke; mächtig steht er da. Aber Mäuse fangen kann er freilich nicht. Nun habt Ihr so einen großen Baum und bedauert, daß er zu nichts nütze ist. Warum pflanzt Ihr ihn nicht auf eine öde Heide oder auf ein weites leeres Feld? Da könntet Ihr untätig in seiner Nähe umherstreifen und in Muße unter seinen Zweigen schlafen. Nicht Beil noch Axt bereitet ihm ein vorzeitiges Ende, und niemand kann ihm schaden. Daß etwas keinen Nutzen hat: was braucht man sich darüber zu bekümmern!"[59]

Why might have Heidegger focused attention on this passage? Given the criticisms his philosophy received, Heidegger might well have identified with Huizi's accusation against Zhuangzi of using big, fantastic, and useless words, and responding with indications transgressing the limits of the useful.

59 Wilhelm, 1969, 34; Heidegger, 1989, 8.

Heidegger appeals to the *Zhuangzi*, as mediated by Wilhelm's translation, to diagnose the modern technological epoch and ponder possibilities of reawakening a sense of speaking with and encountering things through a form of meditative reflection or thinking (*Besinnung*) that involves awakening a sense for the useless ("den Sinn wecken für das Nutzlose").[60] Heidegger describes this sense of the useless as the most necessary and needful (*das Nötigste*) for encountering the sense of things (*der Sinn der Dinge*) and as constituting the very sense and usefulness of the useful (*das Nützliche*).[61]

In Heidegger's depiction, Huizi and Zhuangzi's dialogues about uselessness reveal the precariousness of the inversion that makes the useful the measure of usefulness, as it is under the regime of modern technology. This imposition of the measure of the useful misses the determining power of the useless, which is not made and out of which nothing can be made, as it is "the sense of things" disclosing themselves.[62] Heidegger deploys this Zhuangzian inspired conception of the useless sense of things, correlating uselessness (*wuyong*) with selfsoness (*ziran*, inadequately translated into English as "nature"), to counter the instrumentalist interpretation of things and a pedagogy only concerned with the technological reduction of language to information, the mastery and calculation of things as useful, and the compulsion of achieving practical results. Learning is, however, not imposing a measure on those who learn and their objects of study. It is attending to the unspoken measure in things themselves.

Learning is thought by Heidegger along the lines of *wuwei* as a non-coercive "letting be learned" (*lernenlassen*). This letting be learned occurs through "transmitted language" that is too often dismissed as merely natural prescientific language. However, transmitted language is the language of everyday life and encountering and dwelling with others and things. To lose this contact and relationship with things is to lose what it is to be essentially human. The "essentially human" does not signify for Heidegger the anthropocentric and humanistic separation of the human from the world, which he critiqued in the Daoistic inflected "Letter on Humanism."[63] It is a dwelling with and in the midst of things.

A non-technically reduced language—as illustrated in poetic saying and thinking, which Laozi and Zhuangzi express—happens as spoken and unspoken saying. Saying is a showing and letting-appear of what is present and absent, of reality in the widest sense ("das Sagen als das Zeigen und Erscheinenlassen

60 Heidegger, 1989, 6.
61 Ibid., 7.
62 Ibid., 7.
63 See note 28 above. The *Zhuangzi* indicates the questionability of the contemporary opposition of the human and inhuman, see Nelson, 2014, 723–739.

des Anwesenden und Abwesenden, der Wirklichkeit im weitesten Sinne").[64] Such saying does not obscure things and the world, as technical language does in its pursuit of the domination of nature and the mastery of things as "useful." It remains open to what is unsaid and unsayable: "the nearness of the unspoken and unspeakable" ("die Nähe des Ungesprochenen und des Unaussprechlichen bringt").[65] This remark reformulates Heidegger's comment on *xuan* in Laozi in *On the Way to Language*: "the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful saying conceals itself in the word "way," *dao*, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so."[66]

Heidegger's refusal of pragmatist, technical, and technocratic forms of reductive and impoverishing ways of speaking and thinking in this short essay draws on the Zhuangzi, as we have seen, and remains all too relevant in our contemporary situation.

VII Conclusion: the Historical Situation of Heidegger's Daoism

The *Zhuangzi* plays an intriguing role in Heidegger's thinking in "Transmitted Language and Technological Language," even if it is insufficient to exaggerate the Daoist turn in Heidegger's later thought, as it introduces the thematic of uselessness and the sense of things that steps beyond Heidegger's Western sources such as Eckhart, Schelling, and Friedrich Hölderlin.[67] The intrinsic "self-soing" (*ziran*) sense of things showing themselves from themselves is a phenomenological and Zhuangzian insight. Further, for comparative and intercultural philosophers of contemporary thought, there are partial family resemblances between tendencies in both discourses, and Heidegger has a significant role both in the contemporary Western and East Asian philosophical reception of Daoist discourses.

We have seen previously how Heidegger is concerned in this lecture with a learning that undoes linguistic and conceptual fixations and allows for encountering things themselves in their uselessness and their own significance. Zhuangzi and Heidegger are not merely critics of the reification of language, but of the construction and experience of the world. Zhuangzi and Heidegger both indicate ways of unfixing linguistic reification through a variety of strategies, such as "goblet words" in Zhuangzi and poetic speaking in Heidegger.[68]

64 Heidegger, 1989, 25.

65 Ibid., 28.

66 Ibid., 92.

67 For a stronger version of the argument that Heidegger had a Daoist turn, see Xia, 2017.

68 On strategies of dereification in the Zhuangzi, which also place in question the presuppositions of skepticism, see Eric S. Nelson, "Questioning Dao: Skepticism, Mysticism, and

Heidegger could accordingly uncover in this ancient text teachings that resonated with his own thinking that endeavored to unfix the modern technological framework for the sake of freely dwelling in the thick of things and midst of the world.

Heidegger's appropriative encounter of this Chinese text, relying on the editions of Buber and Wilhelm, occurred in a historical context of a growing attentiveness to the *Zhuangzi* and other East Asian sources. Hermann Hesse praised the *Zhuangzi* translations of both Buber and Wilhelm. He wrote in 1912 concerning Wilhelm's edition: "Zhuangzi is the greatest and most brilliant poet among Chinese thinkers" and "Of all the books of Chinese thinkers that I know, the *Zhuangzi* has the most appeal and melody."[69]

It is noteworthy that this appreciation of the *Zhuangzi* was not universal among Heidegger's generation. Karl Jaspers, in his postwar work on the "great philosophers" that encompasses South and East Asian figures such as Confucius, the Buddha, Laozi, and Nāgārjuna, does not focus on the significance of the *Zhuangzi*'s playful placing into question of fixations, its linguistic strategies of liberating human dispositions that offers a radical example of the existential openness of communication that Jaspers endeavors to articulate, claiming (no doubt because of the apparently disrespectful treatment of Confucius): "The atmosphere in [Laozi] is peaceful; in [Zhuangzi] it is polemical, full of arrogance, mockery, contempt."[70]

Of Heidegger's contemporaries, Martin Buber and Georg Misch have the most extensive and productive philosophical relation with the *Zhuangzi* as I describe in my 2017 book. Buber translated and commented on the work as discussed previously above. Buber also extensively engaged with the *Daodejing*.[71] Misch, who is more than the student, son-in-law, and editor of the collected works of Wilhelm Dilthey, is a neglected yet underappreciated early twentieth-century intercultural philosopher. He showed in his 1926 work *The Way into Philosophy* (*Der Weg in die Philosophie*) how the *Zhuangzi*, in "Autumn Floods" (*Qiushui* 秋水) among other chapters, not only gestures at but radically enacts the interruptive breakdown of one's own limited fixed perspective and "break-through" (*durchbruch*)—from the everyday pre-reflective attitude—that characterizes philosophy and the multiplicity of its origins in diverse

Ethics in the Zhuangzi." *International Journal of the Asian Philosophical Association* 1.1, 2008: 5–19.

69 Hermann Hesse, *Die Welt im Buch: Leseerfahrungen*, volume 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 158.

70 Karl Jaspers, *Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Lao-Tzu, Nagarjuna*, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), 112.

71 See Eric S. Nelson, "Martin Buber's Phenomenological Interpretation of the *Daodejing*," in David Chai, *Daoist Encounters with Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

cultural milieus.[72] We can articulate accordingly from such works a sense of the rich and complex reception of the *Zhuangzi* in early twentieth-century intercultural discourses in German speaking countries from which Heidegger's Daoist inspired reflections draw.[73]

In conclusion, to summarize, Heidegger's "Daoism," or Daoist informed turning in the mid-1940s, is a response to the crisis conditions of National Socialism and German defeat and the technocratic regime of the necessity of the useful. This Daoist turning in the useless and unnecessary opened up new possibilities and retrievals of his own thinking for Heidegger in the Post-war period.

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72 See Nelson, 2017, 142.

73 The German philosophical reception of Daoism has continued unabated since Buber and Heidegger; e.g., in the reflections of Ernst Bloch in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1959), Peter Sloterdijk's conception of "Eurotaoism," or Ernst Tugendhat's reconceptualization of Daoism and mysticism. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989); and Mario Wenning, "Mysticism and Peace of Mind: Reflections on Tugendhat and Daoism." *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 12.4 (2017): 554–571.

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