

Laozi on the Arising of Good and Evil (#1)

It is always tempting to interpret the words of those we respect as if they express our truths. Sometimes these readings are wishful projections, but sometimes, we must hope, they are manifestations of a shared insight. I want to argue that the *Dao De Jing* can be read as rejecting not only the conventional Confucian morality of li and ren, but also the idea that the dao, nature, heaven, being, or non-being, provides us with anything like a set of objectively binding moral imperatives or demands. I believe that this position, which is often characterized as moral anti-realism," and which I shall refer to as "amoralism," is also expressed in some of the chapters of Zhuangzi, some of the utterances of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and some of the teachings of Chan Buddhism; but here I shall only allude to these connections as I attempt to explain how two well-known passages from the *Dao De Jing* about good and evil can be given plausible amoralist interpretations.

1. Amoralism. I have explained and defended amoralism elsewhere, so I will be brief here.¹ The moralist believes that moral rules, principles, prohibitions, and requirements have an objective source, one that is independent of human conventions, preferences, or agreements. The moralist believes that moral rules are not merely conventional, that intrinsic value is independent of human desire, that duties and obligations are binding and inescapable. According to the moralist there is a certain "ought to be-ness" about some states, and an ought (or ought not) to be done-ness about certain actions.² Jeffrey Stout speaks as a moralist when he claims

that it is a knowable truth, independent of human contrivance or agreement, that "slavery is evil" and that "knowingly and willingly torturing innocents is wrong, impermissible, unjust."³ Chad Hansen characterizes Mencius as a moralist when he describes him as presenting "as his standard of guidance an absolute, instinctive, morally obligatory *dao* which language cannot capture."⁴

There are alternatives to a belief in objective morality. **Moral relativists** say "there is no single true morality," but seem to think that this is because there is more than one. **Moral skeptics** refuse to affirm objective morality, but also refuse to deny it. **Noncognitivists** say that moral claims and judgments are disguised imperatives or expressions of attitudes, but we now realize that even if this is so there still might be objective moral facts. Only the **amoralist** advances to the positive and not at all skeptical view that nothing is valuable in itself, and nothing is required of us other than what those with merely conventional authority require of us, and what we require of ourselves.

It is an error to suppose that relativism and skepticism (or those two and non-cognitivism) are the only alternatives to believing in moral objectivity. It makes strategic sense to assume this, because it enables one to defend moral objectivity by attacking a series of easy targets. But this strategy leaves the most serious challenge to moral objectivity, amoralism, out of the game. Bryan Van Norden makes this mistake in a recent article in this journal. He proposes to use "the term objectivism to refer to the joint denial of ethical skepticism and ethical relativism."⁵ This would mean that

the amoralist, who denies both ethical skepticism and ethical relativism, but who also denies that there are any objective moral facts, must be called a moral objectivist. Van Norden needs to add to his definition of 'objectivism' some positive claim, such as the claim that there are moral facts, or the claim that some moral judgments are true no matter what humans think or want.

Wittgenstein sometimes sounds like an amoralist in the Tractatus, where he says that "in the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists--and if it did, it would have no value;"⁶ and in his Notebooks, where he writes "I am either happy or unhappy, that is all: It can be said: good or evil do not exist."⁷ But in other passages he backs away from this insight. After stating that "the world in itself is neither good nor evil" he adds that "good and evil only enter through the subject."⁸ Though he was far from clear about how good and evil enter "through the subject," he appears to have thought that it had something to do with the will. Other philosophers have been more explicit, arguing that while there is no objective value, humans have desires, and something is good if it satisfies those desires, and bad if it frustrates them. According to this form of **moral subjectivism**, good and evil do exist, but they are not the abstract, objective qualities we naïvely presuppose them to be.

Is this moralism or amoralism? My temptation is to say it is amoralism (the rejection of objective values) disguised as moralism--subjectivity disguised as objectivity. We disguise our disbelief as belief when we want to believe, and most people do want to believe in moral objectivity. John

Mackie claims, I believe correctly, that "ordinary moral judgments include a claim to objectivity, an assumption that there are objective values."⁹

Someone who says, for example, that pleasure is good (or pain bad) does use 'good' (or 'bad') with the standard objectivist implications. We do not have the power to reach out with our intentions and shift the meanings of words to suit our purposes. We can no more use "This is good" with the same meaning as "I like this" than we can say "It is hot" and mean "It is cold."

From his claim that moral language introduces elements of objectivity and prescriptivity, Mackie concludes that moral claims and beliefs are false. When we embrace objective values and obligations we are buying into a distorting network of positive and negative evaluations, and we are treating human constructions as if they were aspects of nature itself. By exploiting a respect for objective morality we can use the concepts of morality to control the attitudes and actions of others. But with that power comes the danger of being befuddled and betrayed by those very concepts, and this is what, according to the amoralist and, I believe, according to Laozi, has happened to the moralist.

2. Knowing the good as good. The second chapter of the Dao De Jing contains a statement about the contrast between beauty and ugliness, and between the good and the not good.

everyone (tian xia jie) knows (zhi) beauty (mei) to be (zhi wei) beauty (mei)

then (si) ugly (e) already (yi)

everyone (jie) knows (zhi) good (shan) to be (zhi wei) good (shan)

then (si) not good (bu shan) already (yi)

Let us begin our consideration of this passage by looking at a translation by Ellen M. Chen:

When all under heaven know beauty (mei) as beauty, there is then ugliness (o).

When all know the good (shan) good, there is then the not good (pu shan).¹⁰

The unavoidable use of the "success" verb 'know' to translate zhi, invites us to make, or to project onto the text, the objectivist assumption that some things are good before they come to be "known" to be so. You can't know X to be X unless X is X.

Many translations of the second line of the passage say or suggest that the "not good" somehow depends on the prior existence of the good, or, as in this case, on the fact that the good is known by all as good. But how seriously can this be taken? We can't really think that the passage means that there was a time when the good "existed" but there was no "not-good" because not everyone knew the good to be good. A translation by Lin Yutang shows us one way to escape this conclusion:

When the people of the Earth all know beauty as beauty

There arises (the recognition of) ugliness.

When the people of the Earth all know the good as good,

There arises (the recognition of) evil.¹¹

The parenthetical addendum indicates that it is not ugliness and evil, but their recognition that arises when we know beauty as beauty and good as good, and this implies that ugliness and evil are as independently real as beauty and goodness, and not created by any epistemic accomplishment.

Chen's use of 'know' in these translations may imply that beauty, the good, and even the "not good" are objective and knowable qualities, but when she comments on this passage, she interprets Laozi as saying that both good and beauty have a "psychological origin, being products of human consciousness and valuation."¹² If that is so, it may make more sense to interpret the passage as talking about concepts like beauty and ugliness, good and not-good. Perhaps the point is only that the words we use to express these concepts, and many other concepts, not all of which involve value, come in pairs. The inevitable result of calling things beautiful and good is that other things (perhaps many other things) will now be classified as ugly and bad. This leads us to be unduly attracted by some things and repelled by others, as if things were attractive and repellent in themselves. Chen observes that while many consider this acquisition of value-terms an advance, the Daoists saw it as a loss of the harmony and oneness of nature.

A translation by Thomas Cleary is even more favorable to objective values, but is difficult to accept for other reasons:

When everyone knows beauty is beauty, this is bad.

When everyone knows good is good, this is not good.¹³

This translation makes the second part of each line a moral judgment of the situation described in the first, rather than a statement of causal or linguistic relationship. It also presupposes that there exists an objective beauty, an objective goodness, and an objective badness. But even if we believe that Laozi wanted to discourage the use of evaluative concepts, it is difficult to accept a translation that makes him into such a moralizer as to say that it is bad to know that beauty is beauty, and that good is good. Whether one prefers this translation will depend on one's view about Laozi's view about morality, because Cleary's alternative does not seem to be ruled out by the Chinese. The last characters of the two lines (si e i and si bu shan i) can both mean "then, bad, end of story!" if the i is treated as a concluding particle; and that can be interpreted either as "then badness arises" or as "then that is bad."¹⁴

Our final translation of these lines from the second chapter of the Dao De Jing is by Michael LaFargue:

When everyone in the world recognizes the elegant as the elegant . . .

then ugliness has just appeared.

When all recognize goodness as good . . .

then the not-good has just appeared.¹⁵

Once again, the translation suggests that "the elegant" and "goodness" are there, elegant and good in themselves, waiting to be recognized, and that as a result of that recognition, ugliness and the not-good "appear." And the

word 'appear' is an interesting choice (though no more warranted by the text than Lin Yu-tang's parenthetical addition of 'the recognition of'), because it may mean that these things come into being, or that, already existing, they become knowable, or that while they did not and do not exist, appearances of them are generated.

Whether or not his translation attributes a belief in objective goodness to Laozi, LaFargue makes the conventionality of the good perfectly clear in his comments on the passage, which he reads as a warning about the dangers of projecting value onto a value-neutral reality. This value-free reality is not some transcendental world, but just our world as seen by the sage who is beyond applying terms like goodness and badness--beyond evaluating. LaFargue says that for the Laoist¹⁶, "the ideal state of mind is a state in which one experiences reality directly--not overlain with conscious conventional judgmental concepts" ¹⁷

Given all that has been said, I think we can paraphrase, not translate, these first two lines of the second chapter of the Dao De Jing in the following way: When we develop positive evaluative concepts like beauty and goodness, and the language to express them, we simultaneously develop their negative opposites. That is what is said, and as to what to think about that development, one can be for it, opposed to it, or unconcerned. The Confucians were for it, but the Daoists were either opposed to it or beyond concern. In the remainder of this chapter of the Dao De Jing, we are shown how a selection of other opposites support and enable each other, but we are also warned not to be captivated by the merely conventional labels. The

wise person is said to carry on his teaching without talking, which LaFargue interprets as saying that he will teach “without using names like elegant and noble.”¹⁸ The chapter also goes on to say that when the “ten thousand things” arise, the wise person rejects none of them, which suggests that the wise person is not under the influence of the negative concepts that arise with the positive ones. So Chapter Two is certainly consistent with amoralism, and it may convey a definite preference for refraining from thinking that, or speaking as if, things are good and beautiful in themselves.¹⁹

3. Connections. Here is one point at which Daoism makes contact with Zen Buddhism, and Laozi with Zhuangzi. The Chinese Zen Master Hui Hai recommends that we learn “to behold men, women and all the various sorts of appearances while remaining as free from love or aversion as if they were actually not seen at all.”²⁰ He urges his students not to think in terms of good and evil,²¹ and denies that “our own nature” contains either good or evil.²² When he is asked “what should we do to be right?” he answers, “there is nothing to do and nothing which can be called right.”²³ The “nothing to do” can be seen in the light of wu wei, and the claim that there is no good or evil and nothing which can be called right sounds like amoralism. Zen Buddhists and Daoists would agree that it is only by clearing the mind of moralistic concepts (among others) that we can attain the emptiness necessary for spontaneous, appropriate, and skillful action.

It is notoriously difficult to figure out what Zhuangzi thinks. He has been called, among other things, a skeptic, a relativist, and an amoralist.

Van Norden says that he is a therapeutic skeptic who makes us doubt our commonsense beliefs in order to help us “make our heart empty so that we may listen with the qi,” and arrive at illumination, and that “part of achieving illumination is coming to see that conventional ethical judgments are not an expression of ‘Heaven’s intent’ (tian zhi) or ‘Heaven’s decree’ (tian ming), but are merely a kind of self-assertion.” They are “mere expressions of preference.”²⁴ Zhuangzi’s highest sage, Van Norden suggests, “does not make evaluative judgments at all,” but transcends preferences and “is guided by the impersonal qi, which flows through all things.”²⁵

Van Norden says that the life of Zhuangzi’s sage is thought to have two special features to recommend it. The sage “manifests almost miraculous skillfulness” and is, “in a sense, impervious to injury.”²⁶ The skill, which arises from emptiness, is related to wu wei, and is often appreciated in the West when some athlete is said to be “unconscious” or “in the zone.” Van Norden acknowledges that this high-performance state is impressive, but then expresses doubt that “such activity can really be the paradigm for one’s life as a whole.” Striking a Confucian note, he claims that you wei, acting or striving, the opposite of wu wei, must predominate in our present society.²⁷

The second characteristic that may seem to recommend the life of Zhuangzi’s sage, and that is attained by giving up evaluations and preferences, is a kind of imperviousness to injury. This doesn’t mean that one can escape physical pain or death (though some might have thought so), but it does mean that the things that happen to us need not cause

mental suffering or feelings of loss and regret. We can become impervious to fortune, tranquil in disaster, and content with our lot in life. But when Van Norden explains how this is achieved, he focuses on a most extreme form of remedy--one must eliminate one's self. "If one lacks a self, and lacks the preferences and commitments that are definitive of a self, then there is no self to be injured, or to suffer loss."²⁸ Supplementing his Confucian objection to the first purported advantage of the life of the Daoist sage, the skillfulness, Van Norden also questions the cost of this second purported advantage. "What good, after all, is it if 'I' achieve invulnerability, at the cost of eliminating all the commitments that made this 'I' what it was?"

So ultimate sagehood turns out not to be very attractive, at least to us. Zhuangzi's sage loses the commitments that make him what he is. If he does not forsake social life altogether, he lives and acts in human society without the beliefs and commitments "of ordinary humans." Van Norden, who brings in Mencius for support here, urges us to keep our commitments and to cultivate our values and obligations. He says that "if everyone would treat their kin as kin should be treated, and treat their elders as elders should be treated, the world would be at peace."²⁹ It appears, then, that Van Norden eventually succumbs to a Mencian moralism. The skillfulness gained by a good Daoist isn't what we need today--what we need are evaluations and moral judgments. The imperviousness to harm we might hope to gain by throwing off conventional beliefs and commitments will cost us our humanity and our happiness.

It is time, perhaps past time, to make a distinction. We began this section of the paper by noting a similarity between Zen Buddhism and Daoism. Hui Hai mentioned both “not thinking in terms of good and evil” and also “remaining free from love or aversion.” These are different achievements because abandoning any notion of an objective good or evil is a much easier thing than to do than is eliminating our capacity to love or feel aversion for things. Hui Hai was clearly pushing for more than just amoralism, but whatever else he might have believed, he certainly rejected the idea of an objective set of moral principles and values.

I brought in Zhuangzi because it seemed we might be able to include him with the amoralists because he does appear to reject the objectivity of morality. I appealed to Van Norden because he said that Zhuangzi thought that “true ‘illumination’ consisted in not making evaluative judgments at all.”³⁰ If that is right, then that does it--I can enroll another of my heroes as an amoralist. But there is more to be said.

After granting that the “highest sage” does not make “ethical judgments”, Van Norden, speaking of Zhuangzi, adds: “Recognizing that few could achieve and consistently maintain the emptiness of heart he thought ideal, he held out the lesser ideal of the sage who lives within the restrictions of conventional moral judgments, while recognizing that these judgments are not expressions of the will of Heaven.”³¹ This sage will indeed be a lesser sage if he truly understands the conventional nature of morality and lives a thoroughly conventionally moral life just because he finds himself in the culture in which he was born. Sages are usually known and honored for

their tendencies to go against the conventional moral order, not for mindlessly respecting the conventional ways of doing things.

When he refers to “ethical judgments,” “conventional moral judgments,” and perhaps even “evaluative judgments,” Van Norden seems to be focusing on the idea that what the sage abandons is a belief in objective morality. This sage sees these judgments as conventional, relative, and optional, and so is not influenced by them. But since we have now distinguished between amoralism, which gives up moral objectivity, and something much greater (call it “enlightenment”), which gives up a great deal more, we can observe that giving up morality seems like an early step, perhaps the first, of a very long journey to a kind of sagehood we can barely imagine. One heading for enlightenment will move on to giving up other things that cause suffering and confusion--desires, emotions, fear, hate, love, anger, concern, planing, concepts, rationality--the list is very long.

Van Norden characterizes Zhuangzi’s ultimate sage as giving up not only moral evaluations but also these other things. This can be seen in the two passages he cites to support his claim that Zhuangzi’s highest sage makes no evaluative judgments. The first says that “The true persons of old did not know to delight in life. They did not know to hate death.” The second recounts how when Yan Hui tells Confucius that he has become “identical with the great universal,” Confucius replies that if that is so, he will then be “without fondness.”³² But it is one thing to delight in life, or in anything else, and something else to make an evaluative judgment about it. An amoralist rejects the idea of objectivity, but may or may not delight in life

and hate death. Amoralists may be fond of things without judging them to be good.

Now we can see that when Van Norden offered his Confucian alternative to Zhuangzi's sage, he was attacking the ideal of sagely enlightenment rather than that of sagely amoralism. The target of his criticism was someone who gives up not only the belief in moral objectivity, but also all or too many of the desires, affections, and commitments of everyday life. So when Van Norden complains that we can not live by wu wei alone, he is not criticizing the amoralist, who never suggested such a thing; and when he says that the sage loses his humanity, he is speaking of the enlightened sage, not the amoralist, who only loses the illusion of objectivity. It is not morality that makes us human, unless 'morality' is taken to include both the idea of moral objectivity and the complete set of volitional factors that makes us act. Without the latter we would be like a stone. Without the former, the idea of moral objectivity, we might be a bit more sagely. Without some of the volitional factors that make us human, we might be even more sagely, but it is not my aim here to say which ones should stay and which ones should go, but only to point out that this question remains long after the sage progresses to amoralism.

4. The difference between good and evil. In chapter 20 of the Dao De Jing, we are told that if we will eliminate learning we will have no problems, and then we are asked what appear to be two rhetorical questions.

yes (wei) from (zhi yu) no/yes sir (a) mutually separate (xiang qu) how much (ji he)

good (shan) from (zhi yu) bad (e) mutually separate (xiang qu) how much (ruo he)

Here is Chen's translation:

Yes [wei] and no [a], how far apart are they?

Good and evil, how far apart are they?

And here is an alternative translation by LaFargue:

'Yeah' and 'Yes sir'-- is there a big difference between them?

'Excellent' and 'despicable'--what's the real difference between them?

We must first decide whether to accept Chen's interpretation of the first line or the very different rendering of LaFargue. Chen translates wei as "yes" and a as "no," but LaFargue takes a as a conventionally polite affirmative, and wei as a less respectful alternative. This is supported by Waley, who says that "wei and a were the formal and informal words for 'yes', each appropriate to certain occasions."³³ Henry Wei also adopts this alternative and renders the second line: "Between an abrupt 'Yes' and a gentle 'Yea', how much is the difference?"³⁴ Legge concurs, though he confesses that he "cannot throw any light on the four lines about the 'yes' and the 'yea'."³⁵ I think that we can come to terms with the 'yes' and the 'yea' if we treat the questions at the end of the two lines as both inviting the answer "None," or "Not much." The difference in both cases, it might be said, is merely conventional.

But even if it is allowed that wei and a are both affirmatives, there are still unsolved problems. There is no consistency about which is the polite one, or about whether the real contrast is between a polite yes and a rude one. The entries in Matthews' Chinese English Dictionary enable us to say that wei is a prompt and respectful affirmative, and a is a toadying one. That is decidedly not the same distinction as that between a polite and a rude one, but it is still a conventional distinction, which is the important point. If we agree that the difference between the two ways of saying yes is merely conventional, and if we take the parallel seriously, we will say that the difference between good and evil is also a matter of convention, and for that reason, not something with a foundation in nature. This way of looking at things has the additional advantage of saving us from the nearly impossible chore of making sense of the claim that there is not much difference between yes and no.

There are those who treat wei and a as two kinds of affirmative, and then draw a contrast between the conventional difference between them and a more profound difference between good and evil. This is done by Waley:

Between wei and o what after all is the difference?

Can it be compared to the difference between good and bad?³⁶

and by Suzuki and Carus, who render the two lines in this way:

The "yes" compared with the "yea," how little do they differ!

But the good compared with the bad, how much do they differ!³⁷

I obviously need to reject this alternative, which I suggest results from projecting an un-Daoist respect for morality onto the passage, a projection

made possible by a failure to appreciate the relevant sense in which there really is not much difference between good and evil--they are both conventional. It often happens that the same thing is called good (cf. "this") by one person and bad (cf. "that") by another person. Nothing is inherently good or inherently bad. Things are called good and bad according to the values of the person doing the calling, not according to objective features they possess.³⁸

5. Conclusion. I have tried to show that we are warranted in interpreting the second chapter of the Dao De Jing to be saying that 'good' and 'evil' are conventional evaluative labels that arise together, and I have interpreted the questions in the twentieth chapter as parallel, and as inviting the same answer: "Not much." The difference between the two ways of saying "yes" is conventional, and so is the difference between good and evil.

There are other passages from Laozi that seem to deserve translations that bring out the amorality. The lines from the fifth chapter of the Dao De Jing, saying that the sage is not humane (ren) are clearly an attack on Confucian morality, and when it is added that nature (tian di) is not humane, it is easy to read the passage as a reminder that the Confucian virtues are not to be found in nature any more than in the Daoist sage.

When the Daoist is finally seen as an amoralist, one natural fear and criticism is that this being, now stripped of morality, will overrun others without restraint. Herlee Creel points out that "the enlightened Taoist is beyond good and evil," and then paints him as a monster: "If it suits his whim, he may destroy a city and massacre its inhabitants with the

concentrated fury of a typhoon, and feel no more qualms of conscience than the majestic sun that shines upon the scene of desolation after the storm.”³⁹ Creel here makes the standard mistake of thinking that one who is beyond good and evil is more likely than the moralist to tear things apart. He never explains why an enlightened Daoist would want to destroy a city. One could argue that just the opposite is true and that morality exacerbates anti-social tendencies because it justifies them. Moralize our bad feelings and we will feel justified when we act on them.

Here too the distinction between the amoralist sage and the enlightened sage will help. One who has given up the distinction between good and evil, one who has given up the idea of an independent, objective morality, has so far given up very little of the motivational structure that guides him from day to day. He will have almost as many reasons as before for not tearing things apart or hurting people. The Daoist gives up morality, but he cannot be criticized for losing his humanity, nor can it be said, as Van Norden does, that this will render him unprepared for contemporary society. Rather, giving up morality prepares one for advanced types of sagehood because, as an illusion, morality inevitably stands between us and fuller understanding of the world, an understanding on which further progress in getting rid of the sources of suffering depends.

Our understanding of the Dao De Jing has progressed through historical stages, depending on the interests brought to it. When religious thinkers looked at the Dao they saw God, when less religious scholars, still subject to metaphysics, looked they saw being itself, and when moralists

looked, they saw a moral order, or failing to see a moral order, they saw a threat. But it is none of these, and new naturalistic interpretations of Daoism, from Needham to Hansen, open that book to many Western readers who are either alienated by religious and metaphysical interpretations of the Dao De Jing, or bored by the idea that what Daoism is really saying is that parody of Eastern thought--"All is One."⁴⁰

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Richard Garner, Beyond Morality. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1994.
- ² The phrases are from J. L. Mackie, whose book, Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) is an exposition and defense of a kind of amoralism that philosophers now call "anti-realism" and that Mackie (misleadingly) called "moral skepticism" or "moral subjectivism."
- ³ Jeffrey Stout, Ethics after Babel. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988, p. 245.
- ⁴ Chad Hansen, A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 195.
- ⁵ Bryan W. Van Norden, "Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the Zhuangzi." Philosophy East and West, April 1996, 249.
- ⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, 6.41.

⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, Notebooks: 1914-1916. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961, 74.

⁸ Ibid., 79

⁹ Mackie, p. 35.

¹⁰ Ellen M. Chen, The Tao Te Ching. New York, Paragon House, 1989, p. 55. I follow Chen in translating mei as beauty, e as ugliness, and shan as good, though another meaning of e is badness.

¹¹ Lin Yu-tang, The Sayings of Lao Tzu. Confucius Publishing Company, 1966, p. 168.

¹² Chen, p. 56.

¹³ Thomas Cleary, The Essential Tao. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

¹⁴ If we treat j as a concluding particle, another interpretation is possible. D.C. Lau translates the second sentence of the passage as: "The whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad." Tao Te Ching, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 196. This does not say that it is bad that the world recognizes the good as good, but it does appear to imply that the good and the bad are identical, a proposition I recommend we resist affirming for as long as we can.

¹⁵ Michael LaFargue, The Tao of the Tao Te Ching. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

¹⁶ 'Laoist' is a term used to distinguish the school of thought which shared the ideas expressed in the Dao De Jing. See LaFargue, p. 195.

¹⁷ Lafargue, p. 93.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Here is the rest of the passage as translated by LaFargue:

Yes:

'Being' and 'nothing' give birth one to the other
'the difficult' and 'the easy' give full shape to one another
'what excels' and 'what falls short' form one another
'the noble' and 'the lowly' give content to one another
the music and the voice harmonize with one another
the back and the front follow one another.

Always.

And so the wise person:

Settles into his job of Not Doing
carries on his teaching done without talking.
The thousands of things arise and are active--
and he rejects none of them.

He is a doer but does not rely on this
he achieves successes but does not dwell in them.

He just does not dwell in them,
and so they cannot be taken away. p. 92.

²⁰ Blofeld, The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972, p. 48.

In Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. I, p. 330 (New York: Macmillan, 1988),

Heinrich Dumoulin identifies this master as Pai-chang Huai-hai.

²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

²² Ibid., p. 119.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Van Norden, 260.

²⁵ Ibid., 259-260.

²⁶ Ibid., 260.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 261.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 259.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Arthur Waley, The Way and its Power. New York: Grove Press, 1958, p. 168.

³⁴ Henry Wei, The Guiding Light of Lao Tzu. Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical

Publishing House, 1982, p. 153.

³⁵ James Legge, The Texts of Taoism, Vol. I, New York: Dover, 1962, pp. 62-63.

Cleary translates the line like this: "How far apart are yes and yeah?" (p.

20). In his commentary, he interprets the line as stressing the conventional

difference between the two affirmatives, but he warns us against jumping to the conclusion "that Taoism is saying good and bad are one, or that there is no good or bad." (p. 145.)

³⁶ Arthur Waley, The Way and its Power. New York: Grove Press 1958, p. 168.

³⁷ D. T. Suzuki and Paul Carus, The Canon of Reason and Virtue. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974, pp. 85-86.

³⁸ The distinction emphasized by Waley and by Suzuki and Carus does not seem to reflect anything in the actual language of the original, unless there is some very important difference between ji he and ruo he, that I have missed, a difference like that between 'not much' and 'quite a bit'.

³⁹ Herlee Creel, Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao, p. 112.

⁴⁰ Naturalist interpretations are available in Joseph Needham's vision of the Dao as "the order of nature" (Science and Civilisation in China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) and in Chad Hansen's recent interpretation, according to which the Dao with which the Daoist is concerned is not the eternal, changeless Dao, but precisely the one that can be walked (A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought).