

GRAHAM PARKES

## LAO-ZHUANG AND HEIDEGGER ON NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY

### ABSTRACT

Many of our current environmental problems stem from damage to the natural world through excessive use of modern technologies. Since these problems are now global in scope, it is helpful to take a comparative philosophical approach—in this case by way of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's thoughts on these topics are quite consonant with classical Daoist thinking, in part because he was influenced by it. Although Zhuangzi and Heidegger warn against the ways technology can impair rather than promote human flourishing, they are not simply anti-technological in their thinking. Both rather recommend a critical stance that would allow us to shift to a more reflective employment of less disruptive technologies.

The context is a practical one: as the twenty-first century begins we face environmental problems on an unprecedented and global scale, yet neither the politicians nor most of the people in the developed world show the courage or will to change the behavior that is causing the problems. From a Daoist point of view, the government of the People's Republic of China toward the end of the twentieth century had the right idea in resisting the encroachment of the evils of capitalism and consumerism. Now that these evils are being welcomed as agents of China's transformation into a world economic power, and one-and-a-quarter billion Chinese aspire to the high level of consumption of the more developed nations, the prospect of global environmental devastation looms ever larger and more grimly.<sup>1</sup>

But if we reflect on the terms in which environmental problems are currently discussed—terms deriving from the Cartesian-Newtonian underpinnings of “the modern Western scientific worldview” which enabled the development of technology—it is clear that they are extremely parochial, having become current only in Europe and less than four hundred years ago. For if we look beyond the Cartesian

---

GRAHAM PARKES, Professor, Department of Philosophy, University College Cork. Specialties: comparative philosophy (Europe and East Asia), environmental philosophies, aesthetics. E-mail: g.parkes@ucc.ie

understanding of the natural world as inanimate matter to previous eras and other cultures, we find a multitude of quite different ways of understanding the human relation to nature, most of which conduce to less destructive behavior toward the environment. One of the more interesting of these ways comes from philosophical Daoism.

Though many of these salutary understandings of nature stem from non-Western traditions—the Australian aboriginal, Polynesian, Japanese Buddhist, and Native American cultures, to name a few—they are also consonant with some non-mainstream currents of thinking in the West, which have resurfaced recently in the “deep ecology” movement.<sup>2</sup> Since deep ecology invokes both Daoist ideas and Heidegger’s thought, it may be instructive to undertake a comparison. Having already discussed the earlier Heidegger in relation to Lao-Zhuang, I now extend the comparison to themes in some later works.<sup>3</sup> The point is less a philosophical analysis of each side than a bilateral illumination of ideas that might help us in our thinking about environmental issues.

Since environmental problems often derive from social, political, and economic conditions, their solutions depend on an alteration of these conditions along lines suggested by writers in political and social ecology. Nevertheless, as Marx surely realized (and Nietzsche made explicit), one of the most effective ways of changing the world is by interpreting it so compellingly as to alter other people’s interpretations of it, and this often has to be done through transformations of individual awareness, one at a time.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis in what follows is on this second approach.

Let us proceed from the premise that the understanding of the human relation to the cosmos that we find in the classics of philosophical Daoism, the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, naturally conduces to a respectful attitude and behavior toward the natural world. Although the occasional dissenting voice has been raised (from positions of flawed understanding), Daoist ideas have been justifiably invoked as being helpful in thinking about the environment. Although the *Laozi* is primarily a text of political philosophy addressed to the ruler of a state, it can also be taken as being directed toward the individual as the ruler of the smaller body politic of the human being—and on this level the Daoist sage as depicted in the *Laozi* can be taken as a model for living life in general.<sup>5</sup> Rather than being an exercise in the history of philosophy, the present essay understands philosophy as “a way of life” and so approaches the Lao-Zhuang texts as sources of ideas about how to live.<sup>6</sup>

One might nonetheless question the practical helpfulness of Daoist ideas by pointing to the gap between theory, or belief, and practice, thanks to which the right ideas and good intentions fail to be trans-

lated into appropriate behavior. For instance, the C.E.O. of a large manufacturing company may be a professed believer who subscribes to the Christian conception of the natural world as God's creation (and so worthy of respect and veneration), as well as to the Biblical notion of the impossibility of a rich man's entering the kingdom of heaven. Yet at the same time he may dedicate his energies to maximizing profits for the shareholders and himself, while regarding the pollution of the environment as one of the "costs of doing business" rather than a desecration of God's handiwork. The same might be true, *mutatis mutandis*, of a good Muslim or a good Hindu—though not of a good philosophical Daoist.

The reason for this is that Daoism is one of those practice-based philosophies of self-transformation in which new understanding goes hand in hand with a change not only in attitude but also in behavior.<sup>7</sup> Because somatic practice (whether in breathing techniques or more active physical skills) is an integral part of the philosophical discipline, getting onto or staying on the Way necessarily involves a transformation in one's activity (though perhaps less in what one does than in how one does it).<sup>8</sup> This will be true of any philosophy and/or religion based in somatic practice, two salient examples being Kūkai's Shingon Buddhism and Dōgen's Sōtō Zen.<sup>9</sup> Thus any belief-system that emphasizes somatic practice for the purpose of an experiential realization (of in this case the intrinsic worth of nature) will ensure a similarly tight connection between attitude and activity on the part of the practicing believer. If Heidegger rarely emphasizes *somatic* practice as such, it is because he regards genuine thinking not as a theoretical but a manual activity:

Meditative thinking now and then demands greater exertion [than calculative thinking]. It demands a longer period of practice. It requires even more subtle care than every other genuine hand-work. But it must also know how to wait, as the farmer waits to see whether the seed will sprout and come to fruition.<sup>10</sup>

This essay will show that the affinities between Heidegger's and Daoist ideas are sufficiently deep—in part because he was influenced by his reading of the Daoist classics—for his thinking to harmonize with and complement Daoist understandings of the human-nature relationship.<sup>11</sup> Naturally Heidegger is in a better position than the Daoists (through having a larger stretch of history to survey) to appreciate the extent to which "nature" is a historical and cultural construct, and he is especially illuminating on what he calls "the mathematical projection of nature" that arose in the seventeenth century and enabled the development of modern technology.<sup>12</sup> But there are also grounds on both sides for supposing that it may be

possible to get around such constructions and projections to some unmediated experience of the natural world (even if for such an experience to be communicated it has to be mediated by language). Consider the Daoist sage who has transcended all partial perspectives so as to be able to “open things up to the light of heaven,” since “once the axis is found at the center of the circle there is no limit to responding with either [It or Other],” and so the sage “stays at the point of rest on the potter’s wheel of Heaven . . . letting both alternatives proceed.”<sup>13</sup> Or the Heideggerian thinker who is able to contemplate things as “they rest in the returning to the whiling of the farness of their self-belonging . . . as long as resting is the hearth and sway of all movement.”<sup>14</sup>

The themes to be compared can be specified with respect to the following features of the Daoist attitude toward nature:

1. It is realistic, rather than sentimental or romanticizing. “Nature is not humane: it regards the ten thousand things as straw dogs”;<sup>15</sup> “Heaven is impartial to everything it covers, earth to everything it carries.”<sup>16</sup>
2. It is non-anthropocentric. The *Laozi* names four “great processes” in the world: *dao* 道, heaven and earth (nature), and the king.<sup>17</sup> The king, as greatest among human beings, is only one of four and is named last, and the last sentence of *Laozi*, 25 encourages the human being to emulate the three prior processes.
3. One respect in which the human being is to emulate nature is by being self-effacing—“To retire when the task is accomplished is the way of nature”<sup>18</sup>—and knowing when to stop—“even heaven and earth cannot go on for ever.”<sup>19</sup> Numerous passages in the *Laozi* advocate living modestly and without extravagance, reducing one’s desires, taking the middle way and avoiding extremes—“It is the way of nature to take from what has excess in order to make good what is deficient.”<sup>20</sup>
4. In emulating the three greater processes (earth, heaven, *dao*) the human being will attain *ziran* 自然, “spontaneous self-unfolding,” and thereby flourish along with the other myriad processes.
5. Humans thrive when they practice *wuwei* 無為, activity that doesn’t disrupt the spontaneous unfolding of natural forces and phenomena.
6. Technology is OK when *wuwei*, suspect when *youwei* 有為 (*youwei* being activity disruptive of, or not in harmony with, the forces of heaven and earth).
7. To let the human (*ren* 人) overwhelm the natural (*tian* 天) brings trouble.<sup>21</sup>

## I

Our talk of “nature” and what is “natural” is prefigured in two distinct terms in Daoist discourse: *tian* and *ziran*. The Daoists understand *tian*, which is often used for the compound *tiandi* 天地 (heaven-earth), as the natural world, including the forces of nature that both surround us and work through us as natural impulses and autonomous functions of the body. Human beings are a part of nature and dependent upon it for their survival—the “way of heaven” is said to “benefit without harming”<sup>22</sup>—even though nature exhibits no special interest in the human species—it is “not humane” and “impartial.”

*Ziran* means something like “spontaneous self-unfolding,” and although the *zi* component means “self,” the Daoists always understand the self-unfolding of any particular process as occurring in the context of the myriad things in general.<sup>23</sup> Thus although the *ziran* of each particular in a sense curtails the *ziran* of others lower on the food chain, it does so only within limits. If a herbivore begins to overconsume the plants on which it lives, its numbers will correspondingly diminish and its self-unfolding come to an end. The notion of *ziran* is thus connected with an idea of “natural limits.”

Taken together, these two aspects of the natural according to Daoism are consonant with Heidegger’s understanding of the ancient Greek notion of *phusis*, which he understands as “what emerges from out of itself (e.g., the emergence of a rose), self-opening unfolding.”<sup>24</sup> Just as *ziran* takes place within the larger patterning of *dao*, so *phusis* for Heidegger refers not only to all particular beings, “heaven as well as earth, the stone as well as the plant, the animal as well as the human and human history as the work of humans and gods, and finally and primarily the gods themselves under fate,” but also to “Being itself, thanks to which beings can be observable and remain.” Something corresponding to *fate* is also included, as we shall see, in the Daoist understanding of *tian*.

Heidegger’s conception of natural unfolding also includes an idea of natural limits, as evidenced in this passage, which is strikingly reminiscent of the *Laozi*:

The imperceptible law of the earth preserves it in the sufficiency of the arising and perishing of all things within the allotted circle of the possible, a law that each thing follows yet none is aware of. The beech tree never oversteps what is possible for it. The bee colony dwells in what for it is possible. Only the will that sets itself up ubiquitously in technology devours the earth in the exhaustion and consumption and alteration of what is artificial.<sup>25</sup>

## II

Daoism is one of the world's least anthropocentric philosophies, as evidenced in the *Zhuangzi* as well as *Laozi*. Numerous passages in the *Zhuangzi* aim to relativize the human perspective on the world by showing the validity of the perspectives of other beings (from animals and insects to birds, fish, and trees). Daoists acknowledge that a certain amount of "centrism" characterizes all species, and that the human perspective of utility is necessary for survival. But this does not mean that the perspective of utility is alone valid, or that it alone conduces to human *flourishing*—not to mention to the flourishing of the entire cosmos. All the authors of the *Zhuangzi* regard more and broader perspectives as better than fewer and narrower.<sup>26</sup>

Heidegger's explicit opposition to humanism, as well as his constant calls for a reopening of "the question of Being" as the major task confronting philosophy, likewise take him far from anthropocentrism.<sup>27</sup> Although some commentators, among them the perceptive Michael Zimmerman, worry about "Heidegger's perceived anthropocentrism," such concerns are surely unfounded.<sup>28</sup> From the time of *Being and Time* Heidegger's thinking has been explicitly non-anthropocentric, and there is no reason to question his explicitness on this topic. Near the beginning of that text he distinguishes his analysis of Dasein from anthropology, psychology, and biology; and if that distinction has been obscured by glossing the term *Dasein* as "human being," the consequence is to be ascribed to careless commentators rather than the author of the original text.<sup>29</sup> There the term *Mensch*, "human being," is conspicuous by its (almost total) absence.

Some critics seem to be put off by the emphasis in *Being and Time* on the instrumental attitude toward the world, but this derives simply from Heidegger's desire to consider Dasein in its "everydayness." As a being whose being is an issue for it at the practical level as well as existentially, Dasein *has* to adopt an instrumentalist attitude toward nature to some extent, being dependent on the natural world for its survival. What is significant from the Daoist viewpoint about Heidegger's analysis of instrumentality is that it exemplifies a thoroughly *relational* understanding of the self: Dasein "*is* its world" and its world is a matrix of dynamic relationships. Moreover, Heidegger does allow at several points for an attitude toward nature that is neither instrumentalist nor abstractly objective, even though he declines to elaborate this theme.<sup>30</sup>

What *is* problematic in the early Heidegger, as Zimmerman and others have remarked, is his insistence on an abyssal difference between human beings and animals—and, by extension, plants and the inorganic realm.<sup>31</sup> This insistence distances him from Daoism,

which grants that humans are distinct from other beings but affirms our continuity with them as well. As Hans Jonas has pointed out, there is an undeniable Gnostic strain in Heidegger's early thinking, as evidenced in his claim that through its Angst-mediated relationship with nothingness and death Dasein is fundamentally "not at home" in the world.<sup>31</sup> Despite all the "body" language in *Being and Time*—metaphors of standing, stepping, running, jumping, falling, grasping, holding, throwing, and so forth abound—which points up Dasein's existence as physical, it is hard not to take the "not at home" as an echo of the Orphic idea of the soul's not being at home in the body or physical world. But since the Gnostic resonances diminish as Heidegger's thinking becomes more rooted in the earth, one can perhaps take the "not at home" as pointing up the radical finitude of our being-here, in harmony with Heidegger's emphasis on the dynamic, "always underway" aspect of our existence.

As Kah Kyung Cho has shown, the gap between human and animal existence, between Dasein (as world) and other beings, becomes ever narrower after Heidegger's celebrated "turning" (*Kehre*).<sup>33</sup> And just as the Daoists are more concerned with *dao* than the human, so Heidegger stays away from anthropocentrism as talk of Being gives way in his later thought to discussions of "Way," "Saying," and "Nearness." As he writes in "The Nature of Language" (1958): "Perhaps there is concealed in the word 'Way,' *dao*, the mystery of all mysteries of thinking Saying [*Sage*]. . . . All is Way" (WL 92/198).<sup>34</sup>

### III

A *locus classicus* for the Daoist ideals of simplicity and awareness of sufficiency is the beginning of the *Laozi*'s third chapter:

Not to honor men of worth will keep the people from contention;  
 Not to value goods that are hard to come by will keep them from theft;  
 Not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind.

This last line exemplifies a basic Daoist attitude toward the major contributor to environmental degradation: rampant consumerism, which depends precisely on displaying unnecessary things as "desirable"—with the explicit aim of unsettling the minds of consumers so much that they'll buy them. In this respect the Daoist emphasis on "reducing desires"<sup>35</sup> anticipates Thoreau and the early Marx on the way false needs and manufactured desires alienate the modern human from genuine life. As the *Laozi* puts it: "When you have little,

you'll attain much. With much, you'll be confused."<sup>36</sup> The author of this translation, Robert Henricks, aptly associates this passage with the Daoist ideal of *zhi-zu* 知足, "knowing what is enough"—which capitalist society makes inordinately difficult.<sup>37</sup>

Heidegger, too, is a great advocate of simplicity and modest living, as evidenced in his own life, especially after the War, and in his increasing fondness for the term *gering* (small, simple). An important way to attain simplicity for the Daoists, which Heidegger seems to follow, is through "emptying" the heart-mind of all clutter (extraneous desires, irrelevant calculations, and so forth).<sup>38</sup>

#### IV

The Daoist idea of *ziran*, "spontaneous self-unfolding," characterizes all of the "ten-thousand things" except the civilized human being. Different kinds of natural phenomena have different ways of coming into being, developing, and declining, though all such phases are in accord with, because generated and patterned by, *dao*.

*Dao* gives them life, *de* 德 rears them;  
 Things give them shape, circumstances bring them to maturity.  
 Therefore the ten-thousand things revere *dao* and honor *de*.  
 Yet *dao* is revered and *de* honored  
 Not because an authority decrees so,  
 but through spontaneous self-unfolding.<sup>39</sup>

Human beings, however, growing up in society, are constrained by the processes of education, socialization, and acculturation to check their natural inclinations, and especially (as Freud saw so perceptively) with respect to aggressive impulses and the so-called "natural functions" of ingesting, excreting, and sex. Insofar as our spontaneous self-unfolding is inhibited or distorted by being directed into socially acceptable channels, as creatures of culture we lose our spontaneity as natural beings. We are thus distinguished by our tendency to miss, lose, or stray from the Way.

Since the dynamics of *dao* are obscure, the *Laozi* recommends emulating natural phenomena, the ways of nature, as a way of getting back to spontaneous self-unfolding. As (an alternative reading of the last sentence in) *Laozi*, 25 puts it:

Human beings emulate earth's earthing,  
 Which emulates heaven's heavening,  
 Which emulates *dao*'s *dao*-ing,  
 Which emulates spontaneous self-unfolding.<sup>40</sup>

What is being recommended here is not simply a reversion to some primitive naturalness, for returning to *dao* after having strayed away affords the accomplished human being, or sage, a broader and deeper perspective than appears to be attainable by other kinds of beings.

## V

When a particular individual has cultivated its powers (*de*) to the highest, it is so harmoniously integrated into the patterning of *dao* that its activity becomes *wuwei*, or “nondisruptive activity.”<sup>41</sup> This activity is so far from being “inaction” (a common, misleading translation) that, in “listening” and responding to *dao* by engaging in *wuwei*, one acts in such a way that “nothing is left undone.”<sup>42</sup> The quietistic reading of Daoism also understands *wuwei* as something easy, a simple “going with the flow,” rather than the result of the prolonged practice required for un-doing the unnaturalness instilled by the socialization process. The good Daoist is often represented as a consummate practitioner of some physical technique or skill. After sufficient practice, one’s activity contributes to and enhances the spontaneous self-unfolding (*ziran*) of other beings and processes, so that the sage is in a position to “help” or “support” the ten thousand things to be natural.<sup>43</sup> There’s a similar idea in the *Zhuangzi*, with its talk of returning to life as “becoming a helper of Heaven [*xiang tian* 相天].”<sup>44</sup>

While *wuwei* does not disrupt *ziran*, it is nevertheless not assimilable to one of the “ultimate norms” of Deep Ecology, which states that “all things in the biosphere have an equal right to live and blossom.”<sup>45</sup> While well-meaning, this tenet is ill-considered or poorly formulated—for if we had granted equal rights to the tubercle bacillus, a perfectly natural being, we would be continuing to sicken and die of tuberculosis. Although the deep ecologists draw on Daoist ideas, the one who drew up that particular norm clearly didn’t acquire the Daoist distaste for universal rules or principles. In considering the present danger of the Ebola virus, for example, the Daoist would look at the larger context, foresee the decimation of the human race, and suggest that we risk a little disruption of the natural by containing the spread of something so lethal, from a sense that the flourishing of the whole might well require some human beings. The rule of thumb that says: “Be fully aware of the relevant context, and if the species is mortally threatened, do something!” is not perniciously anthropocentric, just rather sensible.

Corresponding to the distinction between *wuwei* and *youwei* activity is the distinction Heidegger makes between attitudes and behavior

based in *Stellen* as opposed to *Lassen*. *Stellen* is the assertive activity of “setting, putting, placing,” while *Lassen* is rather “letting” and “allowing”—and is even “the relation to Being.”<sup>46</sup> He characterizes the Western metaphysical tradition as being based on *Stellen*, and especially on the “representing thinking” (*vorstellendes Denken*) of the subject of consciousness, by contrast with his own, open-to-the-call-of-Being thinking, as exemplified in his Meister Eckhart-inspired notion of *Gelassenheit* (releasement). Heidegger often emphasizes the limitations of representational thinking through word-plays between *Vorstellen* (representing) and *Verstellen* (disguising).<sup>47</sup>

In *Toward an Explanation of Releasement: Conversation on a Country Path* from 1944, Heidegger’s interlocutors explicate the *lassen* in *Gelassenheit* along the lines of *wuwei*:

Researcher: You speak unrelentingly of a letting, so that the impression arises of some kind of passivity. Yet I think I’m right in saying that it’s by no means a matter of an impotent letting things glide and flow.

Scholar: Perhaps concealed in releasement is a higher doing [*Tun*] than in all deeds in the world and in the machinations of humans

...

Teacher: . . . which higher doing is nevertheless no activity.

Researcher: Releasement therefore lies . . . outside the distinction between activity and passivity . . .<sup>48</sup>

Heidegger may have been influenced here by Buber’s edition of the *Zhuangzi*, who writes in his Afterword of “true doing” (*das wahre Tun*) as a “not-doing.”<sup>49</sup>

In the 1955 speech “*Gelassenheit*,” Heidegger distinguishes “calculative” (*rechnendes*) from “meditative” (*besinnliches*) thinking in terms reminiscent of Wilhelm’s translation of the *Laozi* (where *dao* is translated as *Sinn*): “Calculative thinking is not any kind of meditative thinking, not a thinking that thinks on the sense [*Sinn*] that holds sway in all that is.”<sup>50</sup> There is a parallel here with Zhuangzi’s distinction between *bian* 辯 the kind of analytical thinking that discriminates between alternatives, and *lun* 論, “the sorting which evens things out.”<sup>51</sup> When the Daoist sage is said to sort out “everything within the cosmos” he is engaging in an “ordering of things in their proper relations,”<sup>52</sup> by refraining from imposing value-judgments on them from partial perspectives. Zhuangzi would agree with Heidegger that both kinds of thinking are “in their own way justified and necessary”<sup>53</sup>—but they would further agree on the desirability of encouraging the ordering while keeping the calculative kind to a minimum, practicing it only when the circumstances necessitate.

## VI

Let us now consider *wuwei* in relation to the employment of the fruits of technology, which might at first seem incompatible with *wuwei*. The Daoist attitude to technology is rather complex. There is certainly a nostalgic strain of thinking back to the good old days when things and people were fewer and simpler, as evidenced especially in *Laozi*, 80, which begins: “Let the country be small and the people few.”<sup>54</sup> In this primitivist utopia, “though [the people] might have boats and carriages, no one will use them.” Similar ideas are to be found in certain chapters of the *Zhuangzi* authored by someone whom A. C. Graham has aptly labeled the “Primitivist.”<sup>55</sup>

But when we look at the most famous story in the *Zhuangzi* concerning the products of technology, about the gardener who dismisses the innovation of the well-sweep,<sup>56</sup> it is clear that the objection is less to the tool as such than to the calculative “mind-set” that is needed in order to invent such contraptions, and the effect on the soul of the one who relies on them. The Wilhelm translation puts the point in a vivid image that may have influenced Heidegger’s ideas about the limitations and dangers of “calculative thinking” (*rechnendes Denken*): “If one has a machine-heart [*Maschinenherz*] in one’s breast, one loses pure simplicity.”<sup>57</sup>

The idea of *wuwei* can help us evaluate the effects of different kinds of technology, not by providing a universal rule concerning what should or should not be deployed, nor by providing a criterion for distinguishing “good” from “bad” technologies (universal rules and strict criteria being alien to the spirit of Daoism), but rather by offering a rough “rule of thumb.” Imagine arranging various kinds of technologies along a continuum with *wuwei* at one end and *youwei* at the other. At the *wuwei* pole would be windmills, sailboats, watermills, and the like: implements that make use of the natural forces of wind, water, and gravity without abusing or using them up. (When I position my sailboat, for example, in such a way that the wind fills its sails, this in no way reduces the amount of wind available for yours.) Toward the *youwei* end we would have set-ups like the nuclear power plant, which disrupts natural processes monstrously. Although uranium occurs and degrades naturally, the reaction that powers nuclear plants can only be achieved through highly complex technical procedures, and the plutonium waste generated thereby is toxic on a whole different scale—and time-scale—from those of naturally occurring lethal poisons.

The Daoist rule of thumb would suggest that the closer to the *wuwei* pole the technology, the greater the chances of its being favorable to human flourishing and the flourishing of the whole in the

long run—and vice versa. But under what circumstances does the whole flourish? Since nature is not humane, we need to protect ourselves against its lethal tendencies—but to what extent? A species' flourishing depends on its population relative to its environment and other species in it. Natural processes prevent predators from eliminating their prey completely, and parasites from killing off their hosts. Since human technology has enabled the species to eliminate an amazing number of predators (in the wide sense that includes the tubercle bacillus and Ebola virus), our population now threatens to become too large in relation to the available natural resources. If, rather than accepting these limitations of *tian*, we respond by resorting to technology that increases crop yields through genetic engineering, the Daoist would warn against such a *youwei* course of action.

Nor would *ziran* and *wuwei* mean in this context just letting things take their natural course and allowing population to burgeon. (There is no good argument for having more people on the earth—only bad arguments for the need to have more of “us” in relation to “them.”) For a species to allow itself to perish from preventable overconsumption of resources is not *wuwei* but plain stupidity. If population control uses moral suasion and/or minimal technology to set limits to human reproduction, this alteration of the “natural” course of things may at first look like *youwei* behavior; but if the limits are in the service of assuring the survival (if not flourishing) of other species, it is hardly disrupting the *ziran* of the natural world as a whole.

One could entertain a contemporary version of the *Laozi* primitivist fantasy along these lines: with greatly reduced numbers, we human beings could, by means of *wuwei* technology, pursue and satisfy our genuine needs, and enjoy a respectable level of culture, while letting most—if not all—plant and animal species flourish. The natural sciences would learn much from being able to study how other species interact in the absence of undue human pressure. They would also investigate without exploiting them: causing animals suffering for the sake of cosmetics testing would be grossly *youwei*. But what about medical research that stands to save alleviate human suffering and save lives? Rather than trying to answer such a difficult question by appealing to some universal principle, the Daoist would recommend a consideration of each individual case in the widest appropriate context—while as a rule regarding with great suspicion any technology that disrupts the course of nature in major ways (cloning and genetic engineering, for example), surmising undesirable consequences in the long run.

## VII

A relevant distinction here that is helpfully problematized by the *Zhuangzi* is between *tian* and *ren*, between what comes from nature and what comes from the human: “To know what is Heaven’s doing and what is man’s is the utmost in knowledge.”<sup>58</sup> Likes and dislikes—and all such value judgments—imposed upon us by socialization, and then self-imposed thanks to our desire to conform, overlay our natural dispositions and curb our spontaneity: “Wherever desires and cravings are deep, the impulse which is from Heaven is shallow.” Only by ignoring, seeing through, or getting rid of these superimposed desires can we find out what our natural impulses might be.

*Tian* as nature allots each individual a particular physical frame and a certain configuration of life-energies that condition and set limits to the particular abilities that we develop, and which is limited by a definite finitude we call “mortality”:

Death and life are destined; that they have the constancy of morning and evening is of Heaven. . . . That hugest of clumps of soil [*dao*] loads me with a body, has me toiling through a life, eases me with old age, and rests me with death; therefore that I find it good to live is the very reason why I find it good to die.<sup>59</sup>

Through taking up the task of living with these limitations,

The True Men of old did not know how to be pleased that they were alive, did not know how to hate death. . . . They were pleased with the gift that they received, but forgot it as they gave it back. It is this that is called “not allowing the thinking of the heart to damage the Way, not using what is of man to do the work of Heaven.”<sup>60</sup>

This last sentence reminds us that one of the great dangers of civilization comes from its overvaluation of discriminating consciousness, “the thinking of the heart[-mind]” (*xin* 心), which, when it holds too great sway, stultifies our deeper intuition and overrides the nobler impulses from nature.

Obviously we want to survive, and we believe that to thrive we must make use of other species: “That oxen and horses have four feet, this we ascribe to Heaven; haltering horses’ heads and piercing oxen’s noses, this we ascribe to man. Hence it is said: / ‘Don’t let man extinguish Heaven, / Don’t let deliberation extinguish destiny.’ ”<sup>61</sup> For the Daoists, failing to keep in check the drive to dominate is distinctly dangerous, and so they advocate a balance between the natural and the human: “Someone in whom neither Heaven nor man is victor over the other, this is what is meant by the True Man.”<sup>62</sup> The Zen master, who like the Daoist sage is a highly refined individual who nevertheless lives simply, would in such a balance between nature and culture

be a paradigm case of the True Man. (As would someone in the Western traditions like Thoreau or Nietzsche, both of whom were influenced by Asian thought.<sup>63</sup>)

It all depends, as always, on the particular context; but if I am unable, for example, to procreate as I would like to, or live as long as I want, owing to some lack in my natural constitution, the Daoists would encourage an acceptance of such fated limitations and be wary of going to great lengths, through the use of expensive and sophisticated technology, to have oneself create more life or postpone one's death. Of course my initial reaction is going to be, "Yes, I want that biotechnological procedure done," or "Give me that artificial/transplanted heart"; but since these procedures are so expensive and disruptive of the natural course of things, we might do well, with an eye to the flourishing of the whole, to question their desirability or necessity.

Heidegger describes how nihilism arises from the obsession with beings that is trying to compensate for the emptiness deriving from obliviousness to the broader context of Being (*dao*). As technology manufactures more and more to fill the void, its drive for control and its understanding of the natural world as mere raw material eventually extend to encompass human beings. Writing in the mid-thirties to -forties, Heidegger is prescient in envisaging how this dismal process may issue in "factories for the artificial generation of human material" and "the possibility of directing the generation of male and female organisms according to plan and need." In this light, "technology, based without knowing it on the void of Being, is mere organization of lack."<sup>64</sup> And when later he reads the pronouncement by a Nobel prize-winning chemist to the effect that scientists will soon be able to "synthesize, split and change living substance at will," Heidegger writes: "We are not aware that technology is here preparing an attack on the life and nature of the human being, by comparison with which the explosion of the hydrogen bomb is of little significance."<sup>65</sup> A salutary word for enthusiasts of bio-engineering.

## VIII

In a series of essays from the early 1950s Heidegger elaborates an understanding of things that has significant implications for our relations to the environment as well as continuing resonances with Daoism. The essay "The Thing" begins with a consideration of how the fruits of modern transportation- and communications-technology are abolishing distance at an unprecedented rate—but without bringing about any genuine nearness. Heidegger is prescient (writing in

1950) concerning the power of television: “The peak of this abolition of every possibility of farness is attained by television, which will soon pervade and dominate the entire apparatus and machinery of communication.”<sup>66</sup> The internet has carried the abolition of distance even further along such Heideggerian lines, still without creating the wished-for closeness.<sup>67</sup> This lack of nearness constitutes for Heidegger a fundamental and horrifying (*entsetzend*) perturbation of the human condition, in which “everything is displaced [*herausgesetzt*] from its former being.”<sup>68</sup> On grounds like these we may find that environmental problems derive from a disturbance in our relations with things in general and not just with natural phenomena.

According to Heidegger several historical circumstances have prevented us from experiencing things as things. The ancient Greek thinkers, Plato and Aristotle in particular, advocated an understanding of everything present as an “object of production.”<sup>69</sup> Thanks to its consonance with the creation stories in *Genesis*, this kind of “productionist metaphysics” has dominated Western thinking.<sup>70</sup> In those stories God creates the world from nothing; according to the myth in Plato’s *Timaeus*, the Divine Craftsman makes the soul and body of the universe from materials already to-hand; on Aristotle’s account things are “formed matter.” The combined power of these stories tends to prevent us from seeing how culturally conditioned the question is, when faced with things we want to understand: “How (or by whom) were they made?” Such a question would never occur to a classical Chinese thinker, for whom the question would be: “How (or from what) did they grow?” The mindset implied by the former encourages manipulation of the world and eventually leads to a Newtonian “dead matter in motion” conception of the universe and modern technology; whereas the latter understanding, which finds the power of transformation inhering in the processes themselves rather than an external manipulator, is more conducive to respect and reverence for those processes and powers.

But to return to Heidegger’s text: in response to “the annihilation of things as things” that scientific knowledge has promoted, he undertakes an extended consideration of what a particular thing, a jug, *is* in its thingness, *as* a thing.<sup>71</sup> The jug comes from the eleventh chapter of the *Laozi*, where together with two other things that require emptiness in order to function (a cartwheel and a room) it works as an image of *dao* as well as of the human being.<sup>72</sup> What is for Heidegger essential to the jug, the emptiness it encloses, is a phenomenon that science, which always focuses on something rather than nothing, is unable to explain. Science only tells us, unhelpfully, that the apparent emptiness is actually full of air. But Heidegger pursues his discussion of the jug’s emptiness further, delineating its relations to its

context, to the point where the thing is seen to “gather the fourfold” of heaven and earth, gods and mortals. In bringing about the fourfold, moreover, “the thing things world.”<sup>73</sup> Here we arrive at a perfectly Daoist understanding of the thing in the world as *de* in the context of *dao*, a particular focus of energies in the larger force-field of the universe, in and through which the whole can be discerned.<sup>74</sup>

An essay of Heidegger’s from the following year, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” treats similar themes, though with more emphasis on the role of human beings dwelling on the earth as mortals, through “caring for the fourfold” in the sense of “sheltering it back into its being,” and “saving the earth” in the sense of “letting it free into its own being.”<sup>75</sup> The refusal to confront our mortality that is evidenced in the modern mania for prolonging life through such high-tech means as cryonic suspension, organ transplants, cloning, etc., has its counterpart in a resentment against the natural world for bearing with it such mortality. Instead of celebrating the creative possibilities of our impermanence by affirming the Dionysian cycles of death and rebirth with all our powers (to put it in Nietzschean language consonant with Zhuangzian practice), we attempt to negate the eternally self-renewing life of the natural world by destroying it.

A second death-defiant strategy, also recognized as such by Heidegger, is to attempt to shore up our impermanence by surrounding ourselves with more and more consumer goods, in the vain hope that our existence might become less frail if only we can possess more things. In the language of *Being and Time*: made anxious by the nothingness at the core of our being, we flee and throw ourselves into beings. Existential *Angst* intensifies the desire to consume, with the result that the population of post-industrial societies lives surrounded by a multitude of things—most of them in attics, basements, and garages, and thus rarely even seen, let alone used, and almost never befriended as companions on the way. If things are to gather the fourfold of heaven and earth, gods and mortals, they will require some room, and so they had better not be too many, since each thing “shows itself in the illumination it brings with it” and conditions (*bedingt*) and “things” (*dingt*) the worlding of the world.<sup>76</sup> And according to the *Laozi*, “The world is a sacred vessel.”<sup>77</sup>

## IX

Let us finish by considering a few sentences from a speech Heidegger gave in 1955 that was published under the title *Gelassenheit* (release-ment). He says that in spite of the exertion that the practice of meditative thinking demands, it is still accessible to anyone: “It is sufficient

if we stay with what lies near and contemplate what lies nearest: that which concerns each one of us here and now; here: on this spot of home-earth, now: in the present world-hour.”<sup>78</sup> But thanks to modern communications-technology, many of us spend many of our hours—watching television, surfing the internet, phoning and texting—in “pseudo-worlds” far from the spot of home-earth on which we (mediately) sit.

Though some of Heidegger’s lamentations over our alienation from “the field around the farm . . . the customs of the village” have an overly primitivist tone, his point is well taken that we are generally oblivious to the effects of the “displacement” that modern media exert on our existence. With this he stands in a minority tradition of philosophers (such as Rousseau, Thoreau, and Nietzsche) who have affirmed the importance of *place* in our lives, in the belief that the physical environment in which our bodies live and move conditions our existence in the profoundest ways. By comparison with Nietzsche, who remained “loyal to the earth” while wandering like a nomad, Heidegger’s emphasis on *Bodenständigkeit* (ground-standingness) sometimes smacks of what the Germans so graphically call *Schollenkleberei*, the condition in which clods of earth stick to one’s peasant boots. It is hard to shake the impression that true earth is to be found only around the cabin in Todtnauberg, and the best clods solely in the soil from which one sprang.

Heidegger characterizes the consequences of the hegemony of calculative thinking famously as follows: “Nature is becoming a single gigantic gas-station, a mere source of energy for modern technology and industry.”<sup>79</sup> As he contemplates the advent of nuclear power, what disturbs him, apart from the dangers, is the unnatural independence from place: “The direct production of new energies will soon be no longer connected to particular countries and parts of the earth, as with the occurrence of coal and oil and wood from forests.” But when he goes on to consider the possibility of finding “a new ground and soil” in the nuclear age, and getting once again on “the way to what is near,” Heidegger dispels suspicions of being a Luddite by affirming the necessity of the technological world and saying it would be “short-sighted to want to condemn it as the work of the Devil.”<sup>80</sup>

As the talk of “the way” suggests, the solution is Daoist in the way it “lets both alternatives proceed.” The idea is to use technology but not let it “claim us exclusively and thus distort, confuse, and ultimately devastate our nature [as thinking beings].” This “simultaneous Yes and No to the world of technology” Heidegger calls “releasement toward things”—where the thing is a gathering of the fourfold. Along with this goes “openness to the mystery,” where the mystery refers to the uncanny way in which the meaning of the world of technology

both announces itself and withdraws into concealment at the same time.<sup>81</sup> These attitudes will both flourish to the extent that we engage in thinking, thereby standing us in good stead to employ the fruits of technology without being dominated by or obsessed with them.

Now that anyone without a personal stake in producing polluting, non-renewable sources of energy that aggravate global warming (oil, coal, and gas) can see the necessity of replacing them with clean, renewable sources that alleviate dangerous climate change (solar, wind, photovoltaic—all quite *wuwei*), it becomes ever more clear that new technologies, sensibly and sensitively employed in the context of scaled-back consumption, open a way to the solution of environmental problems. The words of Hölderlin that Heidegger quotes in discussing the question of technology are apposite: “Where, however, danger is, grows / The saving power too.”<sup>82</sup> And also the Daoist injunction, *zhi-zu*: “Know when you have enough.”

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK  
Cork, Ireland

#### ENDNOTES

This essay is a revised version of an article published in 2003 (*Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29, no. 3 [2003]: 19–38) and, is an extension of ideas concerning nature, technology, and ecology that were presented in my essay “Thoughts on the Way: *Being and Time* through Lao-Chuang,” in *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), with a new focus on some of Heidegger’s later writings. A more recent treatment can be found in “Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on the Human and Nature,” in *Environmental Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1–24.

1. For a devastating account of the assault on the natural environment during the Mao era, see Judith Shapiro, *Mao’s War against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
2. The most important of these currents has its source in thinkers like Giordano Bruno and Jakob Boehme and flows through Spinoza and Goethe, then through Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche in Europe, and Emerson and Thoreau in America.
3. In my “Thoughts on the Way: *Being and Time* through Lao-Chuang,” in Graham Parkes, ed., *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, see especially the sections “The Nature of Nature,” “Back to Nature,” “Authentic Use,” and “Technology versus Ecology.” What follows is only an introductory overview and not the close reading of individual texts that an in-depth comparison would require. Indeed limitations of space preclude consideration of the following relevant essays of Heidegger’s: “The Question concerning Technology” (*Die Frage nach der Technik*), “The Set-up” (*Das Gestell*), “The Danger” (*Die Gefahr*), “The Turning” (*Die Kehre*), and “Science and Reflection” (*Wissenschaft und Besinnung*).
4. “Philosophers have merely *interpreted* the world in various ways, whereas the point is to change it.” Karl Marz, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 11.
5. Correlations between the macrocosm of the state and the microcosm of the body are central to Daoist thinking: see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) especially the chapters “The Inner Landscape” (100–12) and “Keeping the One” (130–59).
6. Although Western philosophies have tended to be far more theoretically oriented than East-Asian ways of thinking, Pierre Hadot has shown that, even after the “ascent

to theory” advocated by Platonism and Christian philosophy, a minority tradition of “philosophy as a way of life” has persisted in the West as well. See his *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

7. On this topic, see my essay “Awe and Humility in the Face of Things: Somatic Practice in East-Asian Philosophies,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4, no. 3 (2012): 69–88.
8. For references to breathing, see *Laozi*, 10 (“concentrating the breath”), 16 (“maintain tranquility in the center”), 55 (“for the mind to egg on the breath is called violent”), 56 (“mysterious sameness/profound union”); and *Zhuangzi*, 2 (Ziqi’s breathing-induced trance), 6 (“the breathing of the True Man is from down in his heels”), and 7 (where Huzi speaks of “impulses coming up from my heels”). For practice in physical skills *Laozi*, 54 (“cultivating the body leads to genuine power [de]”), and *Zhuangzi*, 12 (“By the training of our nature we recover the Power”), as well as the stories concerning consummate practitioners of physical skills in Chapters 3, 13, 19, 22.
- For the *Laozi* I follow for the most part the translation of D. C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982), modifying it on occasion in the light of other translations, and abbreviating references as “L” followed by the chapter number (Wang Bi text rather than Ma Wang Dui). The other translations I find most useful are Robert G. Henricks, *Lao-tzu: Te-Tao Ching* (New York: Random House, 1993) and Hans-Georg Möller, *Laotse: Tao Te King* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1995). The Möller translation is now available in English, as *Daodejing: The New, Highly Readable Translation of the Life-Changing Ancient Scripture Formerly Known as the Tao Te Ching* (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), as is Roger Ames and David Hall, *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003). For *Zhuangzi* I used the rendering by A. C. Graham in *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981). Now that Brook Ziporyn’s excellent translation has appeared, *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings, with selections from traditional commentaries* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2009), I would recommend referring to that along with Graham’s.
9. For some of the ecological implications of the philosophies of these thinkers, see my essay “Kūkai and Dōgen as Exemplars of Ecological Engagement,” *The Journal of Japanese Philosophy* 1 (2013): 85–110.
10. Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 47/*Gelassenheit* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 13. Though translations from Heidegger are my own, references will be to extant English translations and then the original German texts.
11. For evidence of the influence of Daoism on Heidegger’s work, see Reinhard May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources: East-Asian Influences on His Work*, trans. Graham Parkes (London: Routledge, 1996).
12. See, especially, Heidegger’s second book on Kant, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962); *What Is a Thing?*, trans. W. B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Regnery, 1967).
13. *Zhuangzi*, 2, *IC*, 52–53.
14. *Discourse on Thinking*, 69/*Gelassenheit*, 41. Heidegger may have been aware that Nietzsche went beyond his customary perspectivism to a view similar to that of the Daoists in the chapter “Before Sunrise” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: see my essay, “Nature and the Human ‘Redivivized’: Mahāyāna Buddhist Themes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,” in John Lippitt and James Urpeth, eds., *Nietzsche and the Divine* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 181–99.
15. *Laozi*, 5.
16. *Zhuangzi*, 6. I follow the customary translation of *wan-wu* as “ten thousand things,” with the reminder that the process worldview of the Daoists and their frequent use of *wu* as a verb should encourage us to read “thing” in a verbal or processual sense.
17. *Laozi*, 25.
18. *Ibid.*, 9.
19. *Ibid.*, 23.
20. *Ibid.*, 77. See also *Laozi*, 3, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 22, 24, 29, 32, 36, 41, 46, 60, 63.

21. *Zhuangzi*, 6, 17.
22. *Laozi*, 81.
23. As Roger Ames puts it: “The notion of ‘self’ in the locution [*ziran*] has a polar relationship with ‘other.’” “Putting the *Te* back into Taoism,” in J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 120.
24. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 14/*Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966), 11.
25. Martin Heidegger, “Overcoming Metaphysics,” in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 109/ “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 1:62–91.
26. The story of the huge gourd at the end of the *Zhuangzi*’s first chapter illustrates the restricted nature of the perspective of utility and the dangers of getting stuck in any one perspective.
27. Heidegger’s opposition to humanism, owing to its neglect of Being, is most explicit in the well known “Letter on Humanism” in response to Sartre’s championing of humanism.
28. Michael E. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth’s Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 121. The third chapter of this excellent study includes a comprehensive discussion of Heidegger in relation to deep ecology.
29. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 11th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1963), § 10. Where subsequent references give pagination rather than a section number, it is of the German edition, since this is given in the margins of both English translations.
30. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 70. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see my “Thoughts on the Way,” 110–20, and the “Epilogue” to that essay.
31. Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth’s Future*, 115–17, and David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), part 1, “Advanced Za-ology,” 33–134.
32. “Existential-ontologically the not-at-home must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon [than feeling at home in the world]” (*Sein und Zeit*, 189). See also Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 232.
33. Kah Kyung Cho, *Bewusstsein und Natursein: Phänomenologische West-Ost-Diwan* (Freiburg: Alber, 1987), chapter 2, “Ökologische Suggestibilität in der Spätphilosophie Heideggers,” which is a fine treatment of ecological themes in late Heidegger from a perspective aligned with Daoism.
34. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 92 / *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Niemeyer, 1965), 198. For a discussion of Heidegger’s use of these terms, see Reinhard May, *Heidegger’s Hidden Sources*, Chapter 4, “*Dao*: way and saying.”
35. *Laozi*, 1, 37, 64.
36. *Ibid.*, 22.
37. Robert G. Henricks, “Introduction” to *Lao-tzu: Te-Tao Ching*, xvii.
38. The sage is said to “empty the minds of the people” in the interests of better government (*Laozi*, 3), and the exhortation to emptiness at the beginning of ch. 16 seems to be associated with meditative techniques.
39. *Laozi*, 51.
40. This reading, suggested by Wang Qingjie, puts the comma after the second occurrences of *di*, *tian*, and *dao* rather than the first (*Ren fa di di, fa tian tian, fa dao dao, fa ziran*), and takes the second occurrence of each term as a verb rather than a noun. See Wang Qingjie, “On Laozi’s Concept of *Ziran*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (1997): 291–321, 297.
41. *Laozi*, 38.
42. *Ibid.*, 48.
43. *Ibid.*, 64.
44. *Zhuangzi*, 19, Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 182.

45. Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985), 66–67. For some reservations about the way deep ecology has taken over Dōgen’s ideas, see my “Voices of Mountains, Trees, and Rivers.”
46. An Introduction to Metaphysics, 21/16.
47. See, for example, Heidegger, *What Is a Thing?*, 73/69 (1951–52). It is not generally appreciated that Heidegger was an advocate of “letting,” and especially of *sein-lassen* (letting-be) from the time of *Being and Time*: see especially section 18, and the discussion in “Thoughts on the Way,” 119, 127.
48. Discourse on Thinking, 61/33.
49. Martin Buber, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-Tse* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1921), 133. A great deal of what is said in the *Conversation* about the *Gegnet* (“region”—equivalent to “Being”) and things resonates with Buber’s *Zhuangzi*, and especially with his “Afterword.”
50. Discourse on Thinking, 46/13.
51. *Zhuangzi*, 2.
52. Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 12.
53. Discourse on Thinking, 46/13.
54. Henricks, *Lao-tzu: Te-Tao Ching*.
55. Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 195–217.
56. *Zhuangzi*, Ch. 12.
57. *Dschuang Dsi: das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland*, trans. Richard Wilhelm (Munich: Diederichs, 1969 [first published 1912]), 136.
58. *Zhuangzi*, 6, Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 84.
59. Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 86.
60. *Ibid.*, 85.
61. *Zhuangzi*, 17, Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters, 149.
62. *Ibid.*, 6, *Ibid.*, 85.
63. On Nietzsche’s credentials as an environmental philosopher, see my essays “Floods of Life around Granite of Fate: Nietzsche and Emerson as Thinkers of Nature,” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 43 (1997): 207–40; “Staying Loyal to the Earth: Nietzsche as an Ecological Thinker,” in John Lippitt, ed., *Nietzsche’s Futures* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 167–88; “Nietzsche’s Environmental Philosophy: A Trans-European Perspective,” *Environmental Ethics* 27, no.1 (2005): 77–91.
64. Overcoming Metaphysics, 106–7/87.
65. Discourse on Thinking, 52/20.
66. Martin Heidegger, “The Thing,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albbert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 165/ “Das Ding,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1967), 2:37.
67. For an insightful treatment of this issue, from a perspective consonant with Daoism, see Peter D. Hershock, *Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).
68. “The Thing”, 166/38.
69. *Ibid.*, 168/40.
70. For an excellent account of this phenomenon, see “Division Two” of Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): “Heidegger’s Critique of Productionist Metaphysics,” 137–274.
71. T, 170/42.
72. As suggested by Hans-Georg Möller in his commentary to Laotse, 11 (170). These three things are also images of the human being, which just as much needs emptiness in order to function.
73. “The Thing”, 172–9/46–51.
74. For the “focus-field” understanding of *de* and *dao*, see Ames and Hall, *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation*.
75. Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 145–61 / “Bauen, Wohnen, Denken,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 2:19–36.
76. “The Thing”, 171, 181/43, 53.

77. *Laozi*, 29.
78. Discourse on Thinking, 47/14.
79. *Ibid.*, 50/18.
80. *Ibid.*, 53/21–22.
81. *Ibid.*, 54–56/23–25.
82. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) / “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 1:5–36.