

Günter Wohlfart

# Philosophical Daoism

Zhuangzi-Lectures

2005 – 2012



*Shōkwadō,  
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# Philosophical Daoism

## Zhuangzi-Lectures

### Preface

### Introduction

### Critical Remarks on Western Universalism

### Lectures

<b>1. Ego – The Death of the Ego</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Egocentrism – Egocriticism and Egoforgetting</b>	
Descartes , Kant – Nietzsche and Zhuangzi	
<b>2. The Relevance of a Daoist Ethos in Our Time</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Return from a Western ‘Universal Morality’ to a Daoist Ethos beyond Morality</b>	
Kant – Kongzi – Zhuangzi/Huainanzi	
<b>3. Following in Zhuangzi’s Footsteps</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Notes on Chinese Poetry and Painting</b>	
Zhuangzi – Su Dongpo – Shitao	
<b>4. Eternal Peace – Eternal War</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Reflections on Politics</b>	
Kant – Heraclitus – Sunzi and the Daoists	
<b>5. Beyond Words</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Remarks on a Daoist Philosophy of Language</b>	
Zhuangzi, Chapter 26	
<b>6. On the Way</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Notes of an Old Dao-Fool</b>	
Basho – Li Bo –Laozi - Zhuangzi - Tao Yuanming	
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>7. Qi</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Daoistische Geschichten über den ‘Lebensatem’</b>	
Zhuangzi – Cao Pi – Shitao	
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>69</b>

## Preface

This little book on so called ‚Philosophical Daoism‘ (Daojia) contains seven lectures <sup>1</sup> given in different countries in the last seven years.

The key-figure is Zhuangzi, the old Chinese poet-philosopher (369- 286 BC?).<sup>2</sup>

As a Euro-Dao-Fool I’m limping in his footsteps.

The repetitions in several lectures are unintentional. They are due to the dementia senilis praecox of the author. Old men tend to forget. - Nevertheless I hope you’ll enjoy at least some of the following texts despite my rusty English. Perhaps they will help to ‘nourish life’.

I thank my friends and colleagues Karl-Heinz Pohl from Trier, Holger Koefoed from Oslo and Geir Sigurdsson from Reykjavik for their friendly invitations to Germany, Norway and Iceland.

I had a good time up there.

Günter Wohlfart

Tuchan / France

Spring 2012

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<sup>1</sup> This little book is not a translation of my older book *Der Philosophische Daoismus*, Edition Chora, Köln 2001. The older book in German contains essays on the *Laozi*.

<sup>2</sup> Für deutschsprachige Leser empfehle ich als Einführung: *Zhuangzii*, Auswahl, Einleitung und Anmerkungen von Günter Wohlfart, Reclam, UB Nr. 18256, Stuttgart 2003 und Günter Wohlfart *Zhuangzi*, Herder spektrum, Bd. 5097, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2002 sowie Henrik Jäger, *Mit den passenden Schuhen vergisst man die Füße...* Herder spektrum, Bd. 5037, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2003.

## **Introduction**

### **Critical Remarks on Western Universalism**

Paper presented at the *Forum on China Studies*

*Common Challenges, Common Efforts – Work together for a Better World*

The third general Conference, 8.-9. September 2008, Shanghai

'I'll teach you differences'

Shakespeare

#### **1. Preface:**

Philosophy or Philosophies?

#### **2. Main Part**

##### 2.1 God

Monotheism – Monism – Universalism

Some critical remarks on Pope Benedict XVI.

##### 2.2 Ego

Egotism – Universalism – Neo-Colonialism

Some critical remarks on the philosopher Jürgen Habermas

##### 2.3 Family- resemblances

Wittgenstein's pluralism as a signpost for post-colonial intercultural studies

#### **3. Final Remark:**

Intercultural exchange

## 1. Preface

### Philosophy or Philosophies?

“Was ist das – die Philosophie?”

This is the title of one of Heidegger’s essays. A literal translation into bad English would be: “What is it – the philosophy?”

The article ‘the’ is important because it already insinuates that there is only one field of thinking which really can be called philosophy and the question is: What is the essence of philosophy and the definition of this one intellectual area called ‘philosophy’? For Heidegger as well as for most other Western philosophers it goes without saying, that there is only one true philosophy, namely Western philosophy.-

For me, philosophy is the attempt at questioning the philosophical essentialism and monism in Heidegger’s question. His question is misleading especially because its monism is an undercover euro-centrism. Euro-centrism is an ideology in European philosophy which is still prevalent today at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. century – what a shame!

If we don’t want to be narrow- minded well-frogs, we have to acknowledge that there is not only one (true) philosophy but that there are many philosophies. It is not even necessary to think of inter-cultural studies. Intra-cultural studies prove that Master Kant was wrong when he claimed that there can’t be more than one true philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Even 200 years ago he should have known better.

One would search in vain for one definition of philosophy. There are different definitions. The field of philosophy is not a field with unchangeable boundaries, or rather: the fields of philosophies are not fields with unchanging boundaries. Does that mean that there are no boundaries at all? Following Wittgenstein I would answer: ‘No. Of course there are boundaries, but they are not unchangeable. You can draw new ones, if you are innovative enough.’

This is exactly what happens if we really philosophize, that is, if we leave the beaten tracks and go toward new ways of thinking.

Not only ‘philosophy’ but every philosophical concept is a concept ‘with blurred edges’ – to use Wittgenstein’s words in a different context.<sup>4</sup> And exactly these blurred edges are the most interesting and challenging parts of our philosophical fields of research. It is these border areas, where different currents meet and merge. The history of philosophy, in the East as well as in the West – is a history of merging different Weltanschauungen, different world – views and cultures. To philosophize means, to go to the boundaries of traditional philosophy and, as a border crosser, to give new definitions.

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, Reclams Universal-Bibliothek Nr. 4508, Stuttgart 2007,

<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 71.

The French philosopher Michel Foucault correctly said: 'Philosopher, c'est penser autrement', 'to philosophize means to think differently'. To philosophize means to irritate obsolete habits of thinking, for example euro-centric ones; it means to liquidate fixed ideas and to change aspects.

But how can we change our aspects?

I think it was Leibniz, the great philosopher, who – already 300 years ago – knew more about China than Kant 100 years later and many contemporary philosophers in the West. I think it was Leibniz who said that, in order to see the towers and the skyline of our hometown, we have to leave it. We have to leave it and go abroad. For me as well as for my French Colleague Francois Jullien it was the long roundabout way via China which opened my horizon for different ways of thinking and taught me to look at my own philosophical home-castle with different eyes.

I agree with Foucault who said: 'If there will be a philosophy of the future, it must result from meetings and encounters (French: 'percussions') between Europe and Non-Europe', and when he said 'Non-Europe', he didn't mean America, he meant East-Asia. Only orthodox Euro-centrists and ideological Neo-colonialists refuse to realize the new road-map of philosophies. Earlier or later they will have to learn to overcome their narrow-minded superiority-complex in order to work together for a better world.

## 2. Main Part

### 2.1 God

#### **Monotheism – Monism – Universalism**

Western culture is deeply rooted in Christianity. Christianity is, like Islam and the Jewish religion, a monotheistic religion.

Mono-theism is a form of monism (from Greek : *monos* , *one* ). Monotheism is the faith in one god as the only true one. Monotheism is dangerous; dangerous insofar as it claims to have a monopoly on truth. This involves the danger of dogmatism and fundamentalism.

But in reality there is not only one true religion, una vera religio, as Augustine defined Christianity. There is not only one God, not only one 'chosen people' and not only one 'god's country', as many Americans believe. Nobody has the monopoly on truth. There are many equally 'true' religions. Untrue are only those ones which pretend to be the only true ones.

If two such monotheistic religions with a claim to the sole representation of truth are confronted with each other, then there is the danger of a clash. Think for example of the continuous war between Israel and Palestine. Monotheism is dangerous insofar as it has a missionary impact and may easily lead to fundamentalist messianism.

When I think of Christianity, I think first of the trails of blood which its crusades left behind over the last 2000 years. I think of the crusades at the beginning of the last millennium (1096 – 1291) in which about 5 million people lost their life.

Monism and universalism are two sides of the same coin. (The Latin *unus* is the translation of the Greek *monos*, *one*). The Christian claim for universality is the reverse of Christian monotheism.

“...universalism has its historical and cultural origins in the Christian Religion, i.e.: an exclusivist monotheism(...), an absolutist claim for the truth of its religious message, a missionary zeal with which this message had been spread all over the globe.”<sup>5</sup>

The Christian pretence to universality exists up to now. For the German pope Joseph Ratzinger alias Benedict XVI, the Christian claim for universality is based on the universality of truth. Benedict confirms “the obligation to send all peoples in the whole world into the school of Jesus Christ, because he is truth personified and therefore the way of personhood.”<sup>6</sup>Sic!

(For me Benedict's famous – infamous speech in Regensburg/Germany on September 12, 2006 again proves that his soft words of tolerance are the mono-cultural mono -logue in the disguise of an open dialogue of cultures and religions. No time to go into details.)

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<sup>5</sup> Karl-Heinz Pohl, *Chinese and Western Values : Reflexions on a Cross-Cultural Dialogue on a Universal Ethics*, in: Rolf Elberfeld/Günter Wohlfart (Ed.) :*Komparative Ethik* ,Köln 2002, 225.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz , Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen*, Herder, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2004, 3. Auflage ,. 55 f.

Catholicism is not only etymologically related to Greek *holon, whole*.

Catholicism is holism or universalism. Benedict believes in Jesus Christ as

“the only saviour of all men.”<sup>7</sup> Sic!

I believe that the world would be saved, if it would be saved from saviours, who presume to be the only saviours of all men. Jesus Christ may be the saviour of many people; this is a faith one may have or not have.

By the way: I don't have it – thank God I'm an atheist.

But the faith in Jesus Christ as the only saviour of all men is a dangerous superstition.

Well, 'God is dead', as Nietzsche said. The light of Christianity is waning, at least in Europe, fortunately; but as the sun going down at sunset it throws long and dark shadows. The evil missionary enthusiasm and militant moralism among Christian fundamentalists like the American so called 'born again Christians', the 'evangelicals', is still alive and strong enough for new bloody crusades at the beginning of our millennium.

I think of the American 'crusade' against the 'axis of evil' – for God's sake.

I talk about the unlawful war against Iraq in which about one million civilians were killed during the last five years: 'Collateral damage'.

Three days after the beginning of the American invasion in Iraq in March 2003 I gave a speech at the University of Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates. What I just said is the same as what I said more than five years ago- I only had to add the one million victims.

## 2.2 Ego

### Egotism – Universalism –Neo-Colonialism

God was the highest being, the transcendent apex of dogmatic metaphysics in pre-modern times.

In modern times the Ego replaced God and inherited his diseases.

Since Descartes (Cartesius), the forerunner of enlightenment, the Ego was the credendum, the first article of faith in modernity. *Ego cogito, ergo sum; I think, ergo I am*, this was Descartes' famous fallacy, something like an 'ontological ego-proof'. Nietzsche's diagnosis was: 'God is dead'. Maybe it was a bit overhasty, because God revived. God revived in the shape of our modern Ego with its omnipotence – fantasies. The 'resurrection' of God in form of the erection of our modern Ego. The Ego, the I, the subject became the *ens realissimum* the *most real being* in modernity. The Ego is the executor of the Christian God. The enlightened Ego is the profane, mundane metamorphosis of God. The modern secular Ego as it appears in different forms in Descartes and Kant, to mention only these two protagonists, is a pseudonym of God.

In harsh words: The modern Ego is the run-down, the down-and-out Christian God.

The Cartesian *Ego cogito*, Kant calls it the 'I think' i.e. the 'transcendental apperception', this Ego is for Kant the 'highest point' of his transcendental philosophy as he emphasizes. For Kant the Ego is

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<sup>7</sup> Loc.cit. 44 and 90.

the 'polestar', the fixed point' of his philosophical horizon. The first and presumptuous sentence in Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* reads – I translate - : 'That man in his conception can have the 'I' elevates him endlessly above all other creatures on earth'. The pathos reminds us that this Ego reflects the glory of God.

It shows again: egotism is a secularized theism. The modern man does not believe in God any longer, he believes in himself. God's will is replaced by his own so called 'free will'. Sounds great at first glance. But on closer examination Ego's will hides as dangerous consequences as God's will.

One danger is universalism. God's universality is to be found in a secularized disguise in modern moral philosophy.

Let's have a short look at Kant's moral philosophy of enlightenment as paradigm. According to Kant the only principle of morality is the categorical imperative. It is the one basic moral law of what he calls pure practical reason. According to Kant the categorical imperative is the only true expression of freedom and freedom means for him the autonomy of will. The categorical imperative goes ,– I translate - : "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that your will shall become universal law." In short: beware of the potential universality of the principle of your actions. Only if you do that, can your will be a good will, because 'good' means for Kant universally valid. If you act with a good, i.e. universally applicable will, you are acting 'dutifully' and your action can be called moral.

There is no time today to discuss the severe problems caused by this moral universalism. I did this in Shaoxing in 2005.<sup>8</sup> Let me only remind you of Hegel, who already pointed out correctly that one can justify for example the destruction of mankind with it. I refer to my last little (meta)critical book on Kant and Jürgen Habermas.<sup>9</sup>

The debate on Kant and the Neo-Kantian Habermas is the order of the day.

Kant, the so-called 'King of enlightenment' probably is the most famous and – even in China – influential German philosopher all time.

The Neo-Kantian Jürgen Habermas is the most famous and – even in China – influential German philosopher at the present time.

Therefore let me make some (meta)critical remarks on Habermas' stipulated 'universalistische Aufklärungsmoral', on his 'universal morality of enlightenment'.

Habermas' universal pretence is the secularized heritage of the Christian claim for universalism, which Habermas adopted from Kant. It is one way of thinking which leads from the *una vera religio*, the *one true religion* via Kant's one moral philosophy to Habermas' modern project of moral universalism. Descartes' *cogito, I think* is replaced by Habermas' *colloquio, we have a colloquy*. Kant's mono-logical ethics is replaced by Habermas' discourse – ethics. The universal pretence is the same. And despite the gap between the premodern pope Benedict XVI and the modern philosopher

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. also Günter Wohlfart, *Metacritique of Practical Reason*, Keynote Speech given at the International Conference *Kant in Asia*, Hongkong 2009. Free download: [www.guenter-wohlfart.de](http://www.guenter-wohlfart.de) .

<sup>9</sup> Günter Wohlfart, *Moralphilosophische Splitter – Spitze Bemerkungen zu Kant und dem Käntchen Jürgen Habermas nebst einigen Souvenirs aus dem alten China*, Tüchan 2008. Free download : [www.guenter-wohlfart.de](http://www.guenter-wohlfart.de)

Habermas: the claim for universality shows their spiritual affinity. It shows that Habermas' universalism in truth is a secularized Catholicism.

I hold the view that universalism is dangerous, whichever. We should take care that we don't universalize too quickly the principles of our own action and our own cultural values. Universal pretension and loco-centrism go very well together. We should take good care that we don't universalize our own local morality, the own one as the only true one and as the superior one. In my judgement Habermas' new universalism in truth is bad old Euro centrism in a new packaging. I quote a sentence I already quoted several times at different places because it is very telling. Habermas says: "that our Western European morality of abstract justice is developmentally superior ( sic! G.W.) to the ethics of any culture lacking universal principles."<sup>10</sup> Best Western morality!

The best comes from the West – really ???

To impose the moral maxims of a Kantian duty-ethics or a Neo-Kantian discourse-ethics on other cultures, that is to universalize moral imperatives can be regarded as a new form of moral imperialism. Habermas' Neo-Kantian universal-moral of enlightenment could turn out as the Trojan horse of a new enlightened ideological colonialism. The belief in ethical universals of a global morality may in fact be nothing more than the narrow minded provincial ethnocentrism of a puffed up local morality.

Habermas' 'superior' universalism holds the danger of totalitarianism.

Here is no time and not the right place to tackle the problem of monism/universalism regarding human rights. But I dare to agree with my colleague Roger Ames. "To assume that there is only one model of (universally valid) human rights (...) simply does not take other cultures seriously."<sup>11</sup>

The Gandhi-prize winner Johan Galtung said correctly: "A concept of universal human rights, which essentially stems from one single culture, namely from western culture, only can lead to a disaster. The resemblance to the Christian crusades is all-too obvious."<sup>12</sup>

Anyway: Unlike other big states with democratic rights China succeeded in realizing the basic human right; namely to feed its 1.3 billion citizens.

## Note

Let me close this part of my paper with a little remark concerning the difference between universalization and generalization.

It is the result of a discussion with my colleague Yu Xuanmeng a couple of years ago. I have to thank him for the stimulation.

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<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Habermas in: H.L. Dreyfus/ S.E. Dreyfus *What is Morality? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Experience* In: D.M. Rasmussen ed. *Universalism vs. Communitarianism*, London 1990, 251.

<sup>11</sup> Roger T. Ames in Harro v. Senger *Die Uno-Konzeption der Menschenrechte und die offizielle Menschenrechtsposition der Volksrepublik China* in: *Die Menschenrechtsfrage, Diskussion über China – Dialog mit China*, Nr.6 der Schriften der Deutschen China-Gesellschaft, Göttingen 1998, 102

<sup>12</sup> Johan Galtung, *Menschenrechte – anders gesehen*, Frankfurt 1994, 39

The highest concept in the 'pyramid of concepts', the *conceptus summus*, is the most universal concept, the *conceptus universalis*.

This most universal concept is the most abstract one. It has the greatest extent (outline) but no content. It means everything, that is, it means nothing at all, as Hegel showed with regard to the concept of 'being' at the beginning of his *Logic*.

Ergo: The more universal concepts are, the more meaningless are they.

Nota bene: The most abstract universal human right – in the strict sense of the word 'universal' – would be tautological: All human beings have the right to be treated humane. And here the discussion begins: What does 'humane' *in concreto* mean? , and this discussion usually ends with dissent, as the conferences of the United-Nations-Human-Rights-Council shows.

If there is one 'universal' right, then it is the right to have rights. And these rights may be different in different countries and different cultures.

The lowest concept, the *conceptus infimus* , would be a singular (unique) concept, a *conceptus singularis*, that is *individualis*.

This individual concept would be the most concrete one. In fact it is a perception (Anschauung). But: *individuum est ineffabile*, the individual is ineffable, unspeakable.

In ordinary life man as an *animal orationale*, as a speaking animal moves between these two extremes, between the universal which is 'nichtssagend', which says and means nothing and the individual on the other hand, which is 'unsagbar', ineffable.

In the middle between the universal and the individual is the general.

To speak, means to generalize. But mind you: Generality refers to multiplicity. There is place for diverseness and variety. Universality refers to allness and totality.

Strict universality leaves no place for difference and diversity. It does not tolerate diversification and variety. Universalism which, in the literal sense of the word, turns or reverses all into one (Latin unus ) tends to be totalitarianism.

In short: Generalization is all right and necessary to overcome our particular interests. Universalization is – like globalization – dangerous. I am convinced that it will not work out.

## 2.3 Family resemblances

### Wittgenstein's pluralism as a signpost for postcolonial intercultural studies.

"I'll teach you differences" – these are the words from Shakespeare's *King Lear* which Wittgenstein intended to use as a motto for his *Philosophical Investigations*. I've chosen them as the motto for my paper today because I think that difference is a good signpost for comparative intercultural studies.

To compare, first of all means to work out differences. What matters is that which makes a difference. My own experience showed me that it is true: If you really get to know another culture,

you have to learn how different we are. It is not very fruitful for an intercultural exchange to rashly embrace identity so strongly that you suffocate differences. Precisely because of this difference intercultural intercourse – like sexual intercourse – can be really fruitful.

Bees produce their honey by visiting different flowers. Man may find different *Weltanschauungen* and new ways of ‘world-making’ by different cultures.

Different ways of world-making include: different forms of life of different ethnic groups, different languages, different religions, different philosophies and also different ethoi. There is not only one language, not only one religion and not only one philosophy in the world – fortunately; and there also is not only one universal valid global ethos – fortunately. Pluralism is better than monism.

Let’s try to apply Wittgenstein’s results regarding his late language-studies to intercultural studies. I quote Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*:

“I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all – but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all ‘language’”<sup>13</sup> - or culture respectively.

That means: You can’t reduce all these different phenomena of language or culture etc. to one common denominator. There is not only one ‘overlapping consensus’ between different overlapping cultural areas, there are many points of intersection. There is not only one definition, there are definitions. There is not only one abstract (or absolute) quintessence, there are many relations.

Following Wittgenstein I would prefer to speak of relationalism instead of relativism.<sup>14</sup>

Wittgenstein concludes: “And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.- I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than ‘family resemblances’.”<sup>15</sup>

As language is nothing but a family of more or less different resembling languages and ‘language games’ with their own character, so we could say: Mankind is nothing but a ‘family’ of more or less resembling different races and ethnic groups with their own cultural identity, a ‘family’ with the usual family relations, quarrels and struggles between relatives. There are similarities and dissimilarities. And exactly these family- (dis)similarities and affinities are the points, where a fruitful intercultural dialogue can take place.

Of course there are differences of opinions. But ordinary differences are all right. If we can’t settle them, we just have to accept them as they are – unsettled. Maybe we can take them as a chance to make a difference, to make a change for the better.

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<sup>13</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 65

<sup>14</sup> In his latest book *De l’universel, de l’uniforme, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures*, Fayard, 2008 Francois Jullien tries to find a way between ‘easy universalism’ and ‘lazy relativism’. His way leads to a Neo-Kantian ‘regulative idea’ of a universal intercultural understanding. I am convinced that his way is a blind alley with a dead end. I plead neither for an easy universalism nor for a lazy relativism but for a diligent relationalism.

<sup>15</sup> Loc.cit. §§ 66 and 67.

Meanwhile let's agree to disagree and – above all – let's avoid any superiority complex. Let's try to understand why we do not understand.

Let's try to understand why we misunderstand.

### 3. Final Remark

#### Intercultural exchange ?

The *Analects (Lunyu)* of Confucius begin with the notable words:

“The Master spoke: learning and constant practice: is that not satisfying? Having friends from afar: is that not also pleasing?”

How does our willingness to learn appear?

In the West there still is a definite deficiency in intercultural competence. The exchange of thought with the East is not yet bilateral. As a German I restrict myself to Germany. Most German philosophy professors travel to East Asia – if they go there at all – to export German philosophy. Importation does not take place, mostly because of – let me say – ‘ideological import restrictions’. Until now there has hardly been any real willingness to open the market to Eastern thought, and Eastern thought for me is not synonymous with esoteric thought!

Obsolete cultural imperialism together with narrow-minded missionary enthusiasm has left its traces even today. We can teach, but most of us are not willing to do what is done in the Far East with great success, namely to learn, to learn from other cultures.

Up to now, the wish of the European philosopher Leibniz, who pointed to the superiority of the theoretical sciences in Europe, but also to the inferiority in the area of practical philosophy, has not been fulfilled – the wish “that from our side we learn things from them (sc. the Chinese G.W.) which are especially in our interest, above all, the greatest use of practical philosophy ...”<sup>16</sup>

Let me close with the words of Heisenberg, the German physicist who said:

“it is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times (...) or different religious traditions: Hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow.”<sup>17</sup>

You see: Sometimes physicists are more open-minded than meta-physicians.

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<sup>16</sup> Leibniz in the foreword to his *Novissima Sinica*.

<sup>17</sup> Werner Heisenberg, quoted after F. Capra *The Tao of Physics*, London 1992, 10

## **EGOD**

### **THE DEATH OF THE EGO**

Lecture given at the 18<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Académie du Midi in Alet les Bains/France, 2010

„Das Ich, das Ich ist das tief Geheimnisvolle“

Wittgenstein, Tagebuch 5.8.1916

#### **A. West**

##### **1. Egocentrism**

1.1 Descartes

1.2 Kant

##### **2. Egocriticism**

Nietzsche

#### **B. East**

##### **1. Ego-forgetting**

Zhuangzi

## A. West

### 1. Egocentrism

#### 1.1 Descartes

Once upon a time we believed in God, in the only one God and its uniqueness.

In modern times, since Descartes, we believe in our Ego and its identity and unity.

But isn't our Ego an *asylum ignorantiae*, a black box like God?

In modern times the Ego replaced God and inherited his diseases. Since Cartesius, the forerunner and protagonist of enlightenment, the Ego is the new credo, the first article of faith in modernity.

*Ego cogito, ergo sum*, this was Descartes' famous fallacy; I would call it his 'ontological Ego-proof'.

It is as fallacious as the famous ontological proof of the existence of God, as Kant later on showed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is fallacious to infer existence from a concept: God is defined as the most perfect being, the *ens perfectissimum*. This concept includes that the most perfect being can't lack existence; *ergo: ens perfectissimum est ens realissimum*. God as the most perfect thing must be a real thing. Really? - Of course not. The concept of *Pegasos*, the winged horse in Greek myth, includes that this horse has wings, but of course this is no proof that winged horses exist.-

*Ego cogito, ergo sum, Je pense, donc je suis* is for Cartesius the 'first principle of philosophy' as he says in his *Discours de la Methode*. The fallacy is the *donc*, the *ergo*. He better should have said: *Je pense que je suis*: "I think that I am", instead of "I think, therefore I am". In truth there is nothing like an Ego as a *res cogitans*, as a thinking thing behind my thoughts. I am my thoughts and nothing else. To play with the double sense of the French "*je suis*" ("I am" and "I follow") I would say: *Je suis mes pensées*, I am my thoughts or: I follow my thoughts – not the other way round.

Let's have a closer look at the first part of Descartes' fallacy.

Even this first part is already dubious enough: *Ego cogito, Je pense, I think*. I think, really? Don't I only think that I think? Isn't our subject in truth nothing but a 'subreption' (Kant) underhand? We act as if there would be an actor, called "I". But in fact the I is thinkers fiction, though an inevitable fiction, a perspective illusion, something like a vanishing point of thought-perspectives, in which everything meets as at the horizon. Thought is comparable to an ensemble of thought processes. We trace the more or less "concerted action" of our thoughts back to a concertmaster, a conductor. In truth, however, the situation is that the conductor does not really know the piece being played. He lets the orchestra conduct him and – tricky enough- pretends to be the conductor.

The I does not play thought games – as "language games" (Wittgenstein) -, the I is these games. That means the I is not the one identical game companion or leader. In fact there is no I-game-master. This I-master and commander is only a thought-fiction, though an inevitable fiction.

Indeed "I think" means in truth "it thinks" and this "it" is no thing, no being, no *res cogitans*, but thought itself. If "it" rains, there is also no "rainer" who rains. "It thinks" means nothing else than "thinking thinks". Thoughts go through my mind, thoughts come and go of their own accord, without the I-escort. To think does not mean to have thoughts, they rather have me. I am these thoughts.

The Ego is only the would-be-director of our thoughts, a *homunculus* jumping to and fro between the thoughts, a fantastic "jumping jack". Our 'Oberstübchen', the 'castle of our mind' is haunted by a ghost called "Ego", but we are so familiar with it that we even miss it, if it does not appear.-

To speak figuratively again: The I is not so much like a spider which sits in the web spinning threads of thought. The Is – please mind the plural (here I follow Henry Rosemont)– the Is are more like the many knots in a fisherman’s net, which bind the thought-mesh together. These knots are quasi thought synapsis. Instead of one “synthetic unit of apperception”(Kant), there are many synaptic units of consciousness – so to speak.

Apropos “Is”: the so called I is a family of more or less resembling Is which identify with each other, to use Wittgenstein’s term ‘family-resemblances’. The result of this process of identification is our so called I-identity.

Allow me to use a last picture.

The I is like a wave moving toward the beach from the sea. What one thinks one sees is one and the same identical mass of water. In truth there are ever new and different masses of water which replace each other through rotation and so give the illusion of a single mound of moving water. But you see: the one wave is an inevitable illusion, like my one and only Ego, wavering through my mind.

## 1.2 Kant

Kant, the think-giant of enlightenment, stands on Descartes' shoulders. Despite all of Kant's critique of Cartesius, the Kantian transcendental philosophy remains an ego-oriented philosophy and critical reason a subject-centered reason. The "I think" is for Kant the 'pole star' of his philosophical horizon as he himself says, his fixed point of orientation.

The first and presumptuous sentence in Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* reads – I translate -: "That man in his conception can have the "I", elevates him endlessly above all other creatures on earth." The pathos of this 'ascension' of the Ego reminds us that this Ego still reflects the glory of the former God. After 'God-set' its last light beams in the 'Ego-halo'. The modern Ego is a creation in the image of the Christian God.

By the way: the first signs of his weakness and decline were the futile proofs of his existence. Nietzsche's well known later diagnosis was: "God is dead". Maybe it was a bit overhasty, because God revived. God revived in the shape of our modern Ego. I'm tempted to call it our EGOD, if you permit me this neologism. No doubt: our beloved Ego, the subject, became the *ens realissimum*, the most real substance in modernity. The modern Ego is the executor of the Christian God. Kant's enlightenment of the Ego is the profane, mundane metamorphosis of the 'light' of God. Egocentrism is secularized theocentrism.

I repeat: God was the highest being, the transcendent apex of dogmatic metaphysics. The Ego is the highest being, the transcendental apex of dogmatic criticism. Kant calls the "Ich denke" in his mysterious Latin the "synthetic unity of transcendental apperception". He calls this "I think" his fixed star, the "highest point, on which all use of reason, the whole logic itself and after it, the transcendental philosophy must be fixed, yes, this capacity is reason (Verstand) itself."<sup>18</sup> But what about the supposed 'unity of apperception'? Isn't this synthetic unity of apperception only a *focus imaginarius*, a vanishing point, in which the lines of thinking seem to intersect? Isn't this supposed synthetic unity in truth only something like a logic-synoptic illusion?

Let's have a closer look at this "I think" which, according to Kant, must be able to escort all my *Vorstellungen* (representations, conceptions). This "I think" itself is a conception and consequently it should be able to escort itself. But if this would be possible – I don't think so - we would have two thinking I's. Wouldn't that be something like an Ego-core or Ego-nuclear fission? Wouldn't that mean that our Ego-atom (Lat.: *in-dividuum*) would be divided and become it's own double?

My last question: doesn't the self-implication of Kant's own claim that my Ego must be able to escort all my conceptions and ergo also itself ( I think that I think), lead in the end to a *regressus in infinitum*: I think that I think that I think...?

I think that the "I think" – Kant's transcendental apperception – is a transcendental illusion; and that I say "I think, that..." shows that this "I" is an indispensable illusion. Take a conspicuous example for that, what happens in cognition and what I mean when I repeatedly speak of an indispensable illusion. Every morning you see the sun rising, but it is only a practical, indispensable illusion. We all learned from Copernicus that not the sun moves but the earth. You see: as the sun 'rises' in the morning and ends the night, so does our Ego 'wake up' in the morning and ends our dreams. But as the sun remains in the centre of our solar system up there in the silent night of the universe, Ego's waking is also only a dream, a 'butterfly-dream' (Zhuangzi) of our Ego.

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<sup>18</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 133 Anm.

## 2. Egocriticism

Nietzsche

Nietzsche's pre-postmodern deconstruction of the Ego is a critique of Cartesian and Kantian egotism scil. subject-centrism. In one of his late fragments Nietzsche says: "We newcomers are all opponents of Descartes and take arms against his lightness in doubt. One must doubt better than Descartes."<sup>19</sup> We already learned: in the modern era beginning with Descartes the Ego has stepped into God's place. But isn't this modern belief in the Ego also only a 'I- superstition' as Nietzsche says in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*?

According to Nietzsche we place a word there, where our ignorance begins, where we see no further, for example the word "I". Isn't the superstitious belief in the "I" – like a modern Zeus, who hurls bolts of thought – merely the pretense of an Ego as a processor, whereas in truth the processes play themselves out of their own accord?

"Thought is, therefore there must be a thinker', that is what the argumentation of Descartes comes down to. But that is to posit our belief in the concept of substance as an a priori certainty: that if there is thought, there must be something 'which thinks', is simply a formulation of our grammatical habit which posits a doer for each deed."<sup>20</sup>

"What separates me most fundamentally from the metaphysicians is: I do not confess that it is the "I" which thinks, rather I take the "I" itself as a construction of thought, with the same position as 'material', 'thing', 'substance'. 'individual' (...); a mere regulative fiction, then, with whose help a sort of continuity and thus 'recognition' can be laid into, written into a world of becoming. The belief in grammar, in the lingual subject, object and verbs has enslaved metaphysicians up until now. I teach the renunciation of this belief."<sup>21</sup>

For Nietzsche the "I" becomes a 'fiction', a 'fable'. The Ego is philosophy fiction. We have a "phantom of the I in our heads which determines us to a great extent."<sup>22</sup> "The "I" is that fallacy, without which a certain genus of living creatures could not live."<sup>23</sup>

In reality Descartes' *res cogitans*, his thinking thing for Nietzsche is a no-thing.

Nietzsche, the pre-postmodernist has broken the Ego- monopoly.

The Ego rolls, to play with Nietzsche's word, from the centre into an X, involuntarily, by itself

I conclude: after Nietzsche we learned that our beloved Ego is only a 'Phantom of the Opera' of our perceptions.

But is the deconstruction of the Ego really a loss or isn't it rather a gain?

Let's make a big jump back from Western (pre-)post-modernism to Eastern pre-modernism.

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<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche, *Die nachgelassenen Fragmente*, Günter Wohlfart (Hg.), Reclam 7118, Stuttgart 1996, 161f.

Fragment 40(23); my translation.

<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche, loc.cit., pp. 223 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, loc.cit., p. 149.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, loc.cit., p.56.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, loc.cit., p.146.

## B. East

### 1. Ego-forgetting

Zhuangzi

In chapter 1 of the Daoist Classic *Zhuangzi* we find the remarkable conclusion: *zhi ren wu ji, the ultimate man has no ego*. The 'ultimate' man is the one who arrived on the way (*dao*) .

Feng Youlan said: "To be without self is the essence of Chuang Tzu's doctrine."<sup>24</sup>

I wouldn't use the word 'doctrine' – Zhuangzi has no doctrine – but nevertheless I agree : to be without an Ego is the - empty - centre of Zhuangzi's thoughts.

At the beginning of chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* we find a man sitting in deep meditation. His companion is astonished and asks him : "What is this? Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes?" The man practicing the *dao* responds : " Yes, I just lost my Ego, *wu sang wo*." In chapter 6.9 the practicing man responds in other words: "*zuo wang, I sit and forget*."

How is that possible? Chapter 7.6 gives the answer: "be empty, that is all. The perfect man(*zhi ren*) uses his mind like a mirror, going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding (*ying*) but not storing."<sup>25</sup> And in same chapter 7.3 it says: "...follow along with things the way they are (*shun wu ziran*) and make no room for personal views (*wu rong si*)."<sup>26</sup>

Go along with things (*shun wu*), self-so (*ziran*), forget your self (*wang wo*), lose your self (*sang wo*), this is the way of the 'ultimate' man without an Ego (*wu ji*). To be on the way (*dao*) means to follow the flow of things, self-so, self-forgetting. To avoid misunderstandings I repeat: Going self-so-ing means losing , forgetting the self. *Ziran* and *wu ji* are two sides of the same coin.

What does that mean for us 'pathfinders'? I think it means : *Laß dein Selbst sein*, let your self be, in the double sense of the word *let it be*.

I 'm coming to the limits of my rusty English. I'm trying to say: the true being of my self, is its going away, its losing. Maybe the title of the last Beatles-song is helpful. My true self is (exists) only if I let it be, if I let it go, if I let it go along with things, self- so.

Let me make a little detour and take a run-up in order to jump into a thought which is well-protected by a high wall of modern philosophy, a wall built and reinforced by philosophers like Descartes and Kant. I'll try to jump into the 'deep water' of my Self, to dive into my Ego, in order to look at its surface from underneath.

To take my run-up I quote a passage from Brook Ziporyn's stimulating book *The Penumbra Unbound* where Ziporyn quotes the great neo-daoist philosopher Guo Xiang, Zhuangzi's commentator and editor: " My life is not generated by me; thus my whole life long ,(...) whether I sit, stand, walk, stop ,move (...), all my feelings (...), my knowledge, my abilities, whatever I have , whatever I don't have, whatever I do, whatever I encounter, none of it is (because of) me. It is all simply self-so."<sup>27</sup> With Guo Xiang's words in mind I dive now into the 'deep water' of my Self and ask myself: 'What is the being of my Self?' The abysmal answer emerges : my self itself is self-so. This is my 'Ego-koan.'

Back on the surface of my 'Ego-pond' I ask myself again – like Augustine - : '*quid enim est ego?*' '*What am I?*' and my answer also is the old one : '*nescio quid*' , '*I don't know what*'.

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<sup>24</sup> Yu-Lan Fung, *Chuang-Tzu*, New York 1964, 81.

<sup>25</sup> *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1968, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Loc.cit. 94.

<sup>27</sup> Brook Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound*, State University of New York Press, 2003, 40.

## **2. The Relevance of a Daoist Ethos in our Time**

### **For a return from a pretentious universal morality to a daoist ethos beyond morality**

Lecture given in Shaoxing/China, 2005 and in Taipei/Taiwan, 2006

1. Kant's categorical imperative
2. Kongzi's golden rule
3. Huainanzi's reciprocal resonance

#### **Introductory remarks**

Thank you very much for this friendly invitation to Taipei. I am an old German professor of philosophy and study ancient Chinese philosophy, especially my favourite Zhuangzi in my Shan Zhuang, my mountain retreat in southern France.

Long time ago I started to study philosophy in Frankfurt/Germany. The mainstream in the philosophy department was German Idealism. Kant was a must. Like many others I specialized in Kant and 'Critical Theory'. The PhD supervisor of my thesis on Kant was Jürgen Habermas.

Why do I talk about Habermas here? Not only because he is the most famous German Philosopher living today and because he probably is the only German philosopher who is well-known abroad, even in China, I now learn. He even is a honorary member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. I talk about Habermas, because this Neo-Kantian with his eurocentric moral universalism is the representative of contemporary Kantianism, and good old Kant seems to be the new model in modern German philosophy as well as in modern Chinese philosophy. I met Chinese Kantians at the Academy of Social Sciences in Shanghai as well as at the Academia Sinica here in Taipei.

I quote a few sentences from an interesting article by Zhou Derong, published last year (21.7.04) in the FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung): "The spiritual achievements of the Chinese in the last two decades are solely based on Kant's critical theory of reason. Ironically enough Kant's comeback in the early eighties had to do with Deng Xiaoping's statement, which roughly reads: Practice is the sole criterion for verifying the truth (of a practical theory)."

Unlike Kant I believe that this is true. And therefore I also believe that Kant's critique of practical reason itself has to be criticized. His so called practical reason is in truth very unpractical. Moreover it is not practicable; there is no link between his practical reason and practice.-

I'll come back to this point in a minute. But please don't misunderstand me. I totally agree with the prophetic words of Kant: "Our age is the true age of criticism, to which everything (sic!) has to submit." But I would like to add: everything, yes, even this criticism itself. To accept the consequences of Kant's critique ultimately means to go beyond Kant. You remember Kant's famous words from the end of his 'Critique of Pure Reason': "The critical way alone is open". Right, but I

would like to take Kant seriously and go one step further: “the **metacritical** way alone is open”. That means, we have to criticize criticism especially with regard to his critique of pure practical reason and its pretentious and – dare I say - dangerous universal morality. Why dangerous? I’ll try to explain. Let me come to the first part of my paper.

## 1. Kant’s categorical imperative

What is morality? According to Kant the principle of morality is the categorical imperative. It is the one basic moral law of what he calls pure practical reason. According to Kant the categorical imperative is the only true expression of freedom and freedom means for him the autonomy of will. The categorical imperative goes: “Handle so, daß die Maxime deines Willens jederzeit zugleich als Prinzip einer allgemeinen Gesetzgebung gelten könne.” (“Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it shall become universal law.”) In short, to simplify a bit: beware of the potential universality of the principle of your actions. Only if you do that can your will be a good will, because ‘good’ means for Kant. ‘allgemeingültig’, (‘universally valid’). If you act with a good i.e. universally applicable will, you are acting ‘dutifully’ and your action can be called moral. Attention: affection (Neigung) is not allowed in Kant’s realm of morality, only duty (Pflicht). That is – in short – Kant’s so-called deontological universal morality of pure reason.<sup>28</sup>

Little excursion of topical interest.

It is obvious that the problem of a possible universal legislation is intrinsically linked with the claims for a universal validity of values and rights. There is no time to discuss in detail the delicate problem of human rights and their claim for universality. Only one remark: the crucial question seems to be, how far do we westerners universalize, i.e. inflate, our own best western principles and our own human rights determined by our own western values. How far do we blow up our local morals to a pretentious ‘global ethos’ (H. Küng)? I agree with R. Ames who correctly pointed out that “by assuming that there is only one model of human rights that must be enforced by a liberal form of government (one) simply does not take other cultures seriously.”<sup>29</sup>

The German Sinologist H.v. Senger showed in detail that the differences between western human rights positions claiming universal validity and the UN- conception of human rights are considerable. And I must confess that I was astonished when I read in v. Senger’s essay that the official human-rights position of the People’s Republic of China is more in accordance with the UN-conception than the European convention of human rights.

What I want to say in two words is: universalisation and globalisation are two pretentious, cloudy words. Mind your head!

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Deontological’ from Greek ‘dei’ , ‘must’, ‘have to’.

<sup>29</sup> R.T. Ames, *Continuing the Conversation of Human Rights in: Ethics and International Affairs*, vol 11, N.Y..1997 p.189, quoted after: H.v. Senger, *Die Uno-Konzeption der Menschenrechte und die offizielle Menschenrechtsposition der Volksrepublik China in: Die Menschenrechtsfrage, Diskussion über China – Dialog mit China*, Nr. 6 der Schriften der Deutschen China-Gesellschaft, Göttingen 1998, S. 102.

Back to Kant.

Let's recapitulate: according to Kant the moral question par excellence is: can you universalize the maxim of your will to act. This ability to universalize is what Kant calls the positive criterion of moral actions. There is a second criterion, which Kant calls the negative one. This negative criterion is self-contradiction. Both together are necessary and sufficient if your will with its maxims is to pass the test of morality. The test-question of pure rational ethics is: can you universalize the maxim by which you act without self-contradiction? Sounds complicated. Two examples may clarify.

Let's generalize the maxim to lie and suppose that all people lie. By doing so, we do indeed fall into self-contradiction. Why? Supposed the sentence "Everything is a lie" is true, then the sentence itself is a lie. But if the sentence "Everything is a lie" is a lie, then everything is not a lie and the sentence itself might be true etc. We see: it is possible to generalize the maxim 'lie!' but not without self-contradiction. Therefore it does not pass the test of morality, it is not in accordance with the categorical imperative.-

But let us give another example with more serious consequences. What about the command to kill? This is a command which is obeyed every day, everywhere in the world. If we were to generalize the maxim that killing is permissible, it would finally lead to mass extermination and ultimately to my own death. With regard to human life the result would be: no more human beings on earth. Well, this may be deplorable for a philanthropist like Kant to whom mankind is 'sacred', but please note the following: the universalisation of the maxim to kill does NOT lead to self-contradiction! That was already pointed out by Hegel<sup>30</sup>. I repeat: the total destruction of human life may contradict the ideas of the 'holiness of mankind (Kant) and it may lead to actual self-destruction, but not to logical self-contradiction. This shows: without external presuppositions like e.g. 'the holiness of mankind' the pure rational categorical imperative is no sufficient condition of the possibility of a moral action. Pure rationality is not enough.-

Conclusion: the maxim 'you shall kill' can be regarded as a principle of universal legislation (positive criterion) without leading to self-contradiction (negative criterion) and that means, -I'm sorry-, that this maxim is in accordance with the categorical imperative.

Isn't that remarkable: The total extermination of mankind is in accordance with the basic moral law of Kant's so called pure practical reason!?! That is what I meant when I spoke of the dangers of the Kantian pure moral rationalism.

Do you recognize the dangers of this moralistic rationalism in the following pompous words: "We want to substitute morality for egoism, principles for habits, duty for propriety and the power of reason for the obligation of tradition." These are not the words of Kant as I supposed when I first read them, but the words of his contemporary Maximilien de Robespierre, the executioner of the French Revolution, a man who said that he would even use terror as a means to achieve virtue. And he really did this until his reign of 'morality' which turned out to be a reign of terror came to an end in 1794 and he himself was executed on the guillotine.-

Moralistic purism, related to fundamentalism, has a tendency to turn into terrorism. They are two sides of the same coin. And the categorical imperative of pure rational morality has a tendency to become its own opposite. This is its dialectic.-

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<sup>30</sup> Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §135.

By the way: Seyss-Inquart said at the court in Nürnberg (Nuremberg) where the trials against the Nazis took place after the second world war: "The number of human beings you can kill on the basis of hate or love of killing is limited, but the number of those you can kill cold -bloodedly and systematically in the name of a military 'categorical imperative' is unlimited."-

Once more back to Kant and the problem of his deontological morality.

If my action is really to deserve the predicate 'moral' in the strict Kantian sense of this word, then I have to follow reason only. The true moral action of an *animal rationale* must be purely reasonable and rational, not emotional. I have to act 'aus Pflicht', 'dutifully'- 'nicht aus Neigung', 'not out of affection'. Compassion is – according to Kant – 'weak and blind' and 'has not the dignity of virtue'. But I would insist that: pure practical reason is not only dangerous because the categorical imperative as its basic moral law is no protection against misuse. Moreover: if we try to act according to the categorical imperative in a strict deontological sense, we see that pure practical reason is no sufficient reason for practice. It is impossible to change the big bill of abstract Kantian pure practical reason into the small coins of practical life in the concrete situation of real actions. I ask you: do we really try to save the life of Mengzi's child that is about to fall into a well because we act dutifully and reasonably, that is according to the categorical imperative? I doubt it. Rather we try to because of intuitive compassion, sympathy and affection. Is that - so to say - thoughtless goodness 'weak and blind'?

In short: my critique of Kant's critique of practical reason is: Kant's 'practical' categorical imperative, his good will, is not a good guide on our way to practice. To put it more simply: Kant's pure 'practical' reason is purely unpractical, it is not practicable. Strictly speaking it is a pure abstract theory of practice which does not contain the indispensable conditions of the possibility of concrete moral action.

My (pseudo-) 'categorical imperative' therefore is: no categorical imperatives!

Let's come down from the stars of moral universals to earth again! I agree with Wittgenstein 2, the Post-Kantian, who said: "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!"<sup>31</sup>

(By the way. In his essay *Zum ewigen Frieden*, ('To eternal peace') (1795) the later Kant does touch that 'rough ground'. With aversion and disapproval he talks about the following unmoral 'sophistic maxims' of some unscrupulous statesmen:

1. *Fac et excusa!* Act and excuse, gloss over your aggression!
2. *Si fecisti nega!* Deny what you did (wrong)!
3. *Divide et impera!* Divide and rule!

A miracle! How could Kant have known about the American intention to divide good 'old Europe', how could he have known about the stupid white man in the 'White House' and his terrorism aggravating 'war against terrorism'?

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<sup>31</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §107

Seriously: these imperatives are not at all categorical. But they obviously work very well as guidelines – admittedly in a bad way, a very bad way. In this regard, I agree with Kant.)-

Kant's critique of the immorality of unscrupulous misleaders is more striking than his own theory of deontological morality – and more striking than his critique of the 'golden rule'.

Let's have a short look at this latter critique before I come to the second part of my paper.

Discussing the practical (categorical) imperative in his treatise *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*<sup>32</sup> he quotes the golden rule in its Latin version and calls it trivial and unsuitable as a guiding moral principle. According to Kant it can't be regarded as a general (universal) law because it is not deontological, i.e. it does not talk about the duties human beings have, for example, towards each other. Therefore he pleads for replacing the golden rule by his categorical imperative. In contrast to Kant I personally plead for replacing his unpractical categorical imperative and for keeping to the good old golden rule.

## 2. Kongzi's golden rule

The Roman Emperor Alexander Severus was so delighted with the *regula aurea*, i.e. the golden rule, that he posted it on his palace:

'*Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*'. Translated into a well known German rhyme:

'Was du nicht willst, das man dir tu', das füg auch keinem andern zu',

,What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to others'.

The oldest reliable reference to the golden rule in the West is to be found in ancient Greece in the words of Isokrates (436 – 338 BC). We also find it in the Old Testament<sup>33</sup> and in the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament<sup>34</sup>. Different versions are to be found in Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. But the *locus classicus* of the *regula aurea*, the most prominent and probably the oldest reference of this world-wide-spread ethical law, is in Kongzi's *Analects*: "(...) Is there any single saying that one can act upon all day and every day? The Master said: Perhaps the saying about consideration: "Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you."<sup>35</sup> The one word that will keep us on the path to the end of our days is *shu*; Waley translates *consideration*. Others translate *reciprocal consideration*, *reciprocity* or *empathy*. In *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary* (No. 5875) it reads : "*shu*, the principle of reciprocity, making our own feelings (sic! G.W.) a rule whereby we are guided in dealing with others." Indeed, the crucial point seems to be that the word *shu* – with the

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<sup>32</sup> *Laying of the foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 2, p. 430 note, published 1785, between the *Critique of pure Reason* (1781) and the *Critique of practical Reason* (1788).

<sup>33</sup> Tob. 4, 15a.

<sup>34</sup> St. Mathew's gospel 7.12 and Luke 6.31.

<sup>35</sup> *Lunyu* 15.24 transl. by A. Waley. –There is another version in Mengzi 4A9.

'heart'-radical – concerns primarily our own feelings and empathy with others.<sup>36</sup> Originally it probably is not (only) aimed at our (head-) mind, at our reason and self-reflection. It is rather aimed at our heart-mind and compassion, our empathy and sympathy.<sup>37</sup> It takes into account that man is an *animal rationale et emotionale*. Kongzi's golden rule basically is not an abstract rational operation of generalizing or universalizing my own will or the intentions of my own ego. It is not something like a half-baked categorical imperative as some German philosophers and sinologists (G. Paul and H. Roetz) have it. Kongzi's golden rule deals with reciprocal consideration and responsibility in the literal sense of this word which has to do with response and being responsive to somebody. It is wrong to project Kant's iron categorical imperative with the ego as its foundation, back into Kongzi's golden rule. Kant's categorical imperative goes along with egotism, whereas Kongzi's golden rule goes along with communitarianism. The Neo-Kantian attempt to kantianize Kongzi is a variety of ideological Neo-colonialism. My recommendation to those Neo-Kantians is: go back to Rousseau! He emphasized that the real sources of the golden rule are conscience and feeling. If I am right, this applies exactly to Kongzi's words. In my opinion, the true path does not lead from Kongzi to Kant. The other way round! Via Rousseau it leads from Kant back to Kongzi. We have to go back in order to take a run-up and get ready to jump into present-day ethics and solve some of its problems. We have to go far back. Maybe even further than Kongzi. Instead of misunderstanding Kongzi's golden rule as a sort of primitive anticipation of Kant's categorical imperative, why don't we try to understand Kongzi's golden rule of reciprocal consideration and responsibility as a verbal formulation of an archaic reciprocal resonance, in other words as an expression of a preverbal intuitive way of responding/vibrating sympathetically? Isn't it possible that this archaic<sup>38</sup> reciprocal resonance lingers on in the Daoist *ganying*?

### 3. Huainanzi's reciprocal resonance

The concepts of *ying* and *ganying* are basic concepts in east-Asian ethics.

I will concentrate on Daoism. Especially in Daoist 'ethics', which we could call a negative ethics or in other words: an 'ethos without morality', these concepts play an outstanding role. *Ying* means *to respond spontaneously (ziran)*; in that sense it can be regarded as an explanation of that other daoist concept *wuwei*, which means to do or act without intention spontaneously.

What does *ying* mean in detail? In *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary* (no.7477) we read that *ying* means: *ought, should, must; suitable, right, fitting; necessary* etc. and with a different intonation: *to reply, to respond, to echo, to correspond* etc. And *ganying* means (no.3232): *moved to response through the feelings and affections, induction*. I agree with Charles le Blanc who emphasized in his detailed translation and analysis of the central chapter six of the HUAINANZI – a corpus of texts which we can regard as the 'encyclopedia daoistica' – "it is here assumed that it was around the idea of resonance (*ganying*) that the philosophy of Huainanzi was elaborated. Chapter six (...) is devoted

<sup>36</sup> Cf. U. Unger, *Goldene Regel und Konfuzianismus*, in: *minima sinica* 2/2003, p.19-41.

<sup>37</sup> The Greek word *sympathy* originally meant something like a sympathetic vibration, for example of bronze vessels. In music it was used of chords which vibrate together.

<sup>38</sup> If I say archaic, I am thinking mainly of the old barter society with its concrete 'exchange values' and without abstract 'cash values'.

explicitly to the idea of resonance.”<sup>39</sup> In the introduction to his French translation of chap.6 Le Blanc says : ”L’équivalence du non-agir (*wuwei*) et de la résonance (*ying*) est le nerf de l’argument du chapitre.”<sup>40</sup> “ The most perfect form of government is that of non-action (*wuwei*) for it operates through the natural (*tzu-jan*) resonance (*kan-ying*) of all things.”<sup>41</sup>

Looking for older sources of the Daoist key-term *ying* Le Blanc refers to the ZHUANGZI.<sup>42</sup> Indeed the notion *ying* occurs in several chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, for example in the story of wheelwright Flat in chap. 13.8. I have to skip that and concentrate on a well-known saying at the end of chap. 7, followed by the fascinating *hundun*-story. The passage reads in Burton Watson’s translation: “The perfect man uses his mind like a mirror, going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding (*ying*) but not storing”.<sup>43</sup> This is repeated in the *Huainanzi*, in chap. VI, 6b in a context, in which the author talks about *xiang ying*, reciprocal resonance, and gives the interesting example of the burning-mirror *fusui*, which gathers fire from the sun.<sup>44</sup> Probably this burning-mirror was a concave bronze-mirror which was used in Zhuangzi’s days to focus the sunrays in order to make fire.<sup>45</sup> Isn’t the ‘response’ *ying* of this burning-mirror *fusui* a very practical and striking example for the Daoist *wei wuwei* or *wuwei ziran*? It is an example of doing something (lighting, making fire ) without interference of myself, only by responsive self-so-ing (*ziran*). It is an example of a ‘speculation’ (from lat. *speculum*, mirror) without intellectual speculation, an example of a re-flexion without a rational reflection.-

*Ying* also occurs in a similar passage in ‘miscellaneous’ chap. 33.5 of the *Zhuangzi*, which is later on repeated in chap. 4 of the *Liezi*. It is interesting insofar as it offers more than the comparison with the mirror to explain the meaning of *ying*: “Moving, be like water/ Still, be like a mirror/ Respond like an echo.”<sup>46</sup> – This *minima moralia daoistica* – without morality – talks not only about optical reflection but also about acoustic resonance and thus reminds us of the acoustic and musical origin of the notion of *ying*. Chap.VI,6b of the *Huainanzi* gives a famous example of spontaneous reciprocal resonance, the example of the two zithers: ”When the lute-tuner strikes the *kung (gong)* note (on one instrument), the *kung* note (on the other instrument) responds (*ying*) ...This results from having corresponding musical notes in mutual harmony,”<sup>47</sup> The two instruments corresponding, i.e.co-responding, responding to each other reciprocally (*xiang ying*) and being in mutual harmony, are like the fishes enjoying each other and the heart-minds of people who vibrate in reciprocal resonance. They act in reciprocal spontaneity (*xiang ran*, conaturalité) without acting on purpose. They forget each other (*xiang wang*)<sup>48</sup> and respond in reciprocal oblivion, in reciprocal resonance and

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<sup>39</sup> Charles le Blanc, *Huai-Nan-Tzu, Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought*, Hongkong University Press, 1985, p.9. - Two years ago the first complete translation of the *Huainanzi* into a western language was published under the direction of Charles le Blanc and Remi Mathieu, *Philosophes taoistes, II, Huainanzi*, Paris 2003. As far as I can see, the French translation is excellent.

<sup>40</sup> *Philosophes taoistes II*, ibid. p.257. Cf. also XXI : « Pour le *Huainanzi* cette notion (*ganying*) est un aspect essentiel de la spontanéité naturelle, *ziran* et du non-agir, *wuwei*, des idées taoistes. »

<sup>41</sup> Le Blanc, *Huai-Nan-Tzu*, ibid. p. 192.

<sup>42</sup> *Philosophes taoistes II*, p. 259.

<sup>43</sup> B. Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York and London, 1968, p. 97.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. chap. VI, 4aa. Cf. Le Blanc, *Huai-Nan-Tzu*, p.120 and *Philosophes taoistes II*, p.267.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. H.H. Oshima, *A Metaphysical Analysis of the Concept of Mind in the Chuang-Tzu*, in: V.H. Mair (Ed.), *Experimental Essays on Chuang-Tzu*, p.63ff.

<sup>46</sup> *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, translated by A.C. Graham, New York 1990, p.90. Cf. also *Laozi* chap 73: *tian zhi dao ... bu yan er shan ying*, the *dao* of heaven does not make words but is good at responding.

<sup>47</sup> Le Blanc, *Huai-Nan-Tzu*, p.138, cf. *Philosophes taoistes II*, p. 271.

<sup>48</sup> In the *Zhuangzi*, chap.6.6 it reads:” Confucius said: fish thrive in water, man thrives in the way (...) For those that thrive in the way don’t bother about them and their lives will be secure. So it is said, the fish forget each

concordance. This intuitive spontaneous reciprocity and harmony results by itself (*ziran*, self-so-ing) without myself, without any rational reflection or deduction and without moral principles. The Daoist sage responds by itself-so (*ziran ganying*). This 'inductive', sym-pathetic, com-passionate co-respondance results from a natural feeling of 'responsibility' which is beyond morality and before morality in the sense of moral principles, laws and duties. It is a *résonnance du coeur*, a resonance of the heart-mind without reasoning.

Please don't misunderstand me: *ziran ganying* is no daoist 'categorical imperative', no universal law, not even a prescription, as a prescription it would be self-contradictory. It's just a description how good togetherness functions.-

Is all this too harmonious, too idyllic, too 'romantic'? I don't think so. This spontaneous, natural resonance follows the spontaneous necessity to do what has to be done. (N.b. please remember that *ying* also means *necessary, fitting, suitable* etc.) *Ying* means the necessary fitting response according to the changing situation. "Right and wrong are situational. In the appropriate situation nothing is wrong. Without the appropriate situation, nothing is right."<sup>49</sup> In the *Liezi* we read: "In any case, nowhere is there a principle which is right in all circumstances or an action that is wrong in all circumstances. The method we used yesterday we may discard today and use again in future, there are no fixed right and wrong to decide whether we use it or not."<sup>50</sup>-

Well now, I suppose that the Daoist *ganying* and *xiang ying*, this natural reciprocal resonance, which does not only refer to human beings, is more primordial than the Confucian *shu*, the rule of human reciprocity. It seems that the Daoist *xiang ran*, natural co-naturalité is the natural basis of the Confucian *ren*, humanity. It is the basis in the literal sense, how we move physically, with our body, following the right way, going together self-so-ing, com-municating with each other by forgetting each other.

But is this Daoist ethos without a reasonable morality not a bit too naturalistic or even primitive, good enough for fish and other irrational, unreasonable animals but not good enough for man as a rational animal? What about our human mind which makes us different from animals – or so we think?--- Don't worry! Of course we have to use our mind from time to time and think of each other. In this respect the Daoist *xiang ran* and *xiang ying* in the heart and the Confucian *shu* and *ren* in mind are complementary.

But we should not forget: despite the fact, that the Confucian *shu* leads to a (golden) rule which undoubtedly has to do with reason and brings Confucianism closer to rationalism, whereas the Daoist *xiang ying* has more to do with sense – a natural form of 'common sense', so to speak - : both ways, the Daoist and the Confucian, have a similar starting point: intuition and feeling - in one word: pre-rationality. This pre-rational basis, on which the Confucians build the 'belle étage' of their golden rule, is what distinguishes both Confucianism and Daoism more or less from a pure rational ethics à la Kant or a so called 'discursive ethics' of those who follow in Kant's footsteps.

Once again: please don't misunderstand me. Of course we need rational rules, norms and laws. They are necessary but not sufficient to play our game of life.

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other in the rivers and lakes, and men forget each other in the arts of the way." B. Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang-Tzu*, p. 87.

<sup>49</sup> *The Tao of Politics – Lessons of the Master of Huainan*, translated by Th. Cleary, Kuala Lumpur 1992, 39.

<sup>50</sup> *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, translated by A.C. Graham, New York 1990, p. 163.

Let's take Wittgenstein's example of the tennis-game in § 68 of his *Philosophical Investigations*: "It is not everywhere circumscribed by rules, but no more are there any rules for how high one throws the ball in tennis, or how hard, yet tennis is a game for all that and has rules too." –

Don't take me for a naturalistic anti-rationalist or irrationalist. I am pleading for a well-understood 'impure' reason, one which does not forget its own reason, its own ground. I plead for a cognition, which does not misunderstand itself as the opposite of nature, but recognizes its own nature and realizes that it is itself a very special site of nature.

I am deeply convinced : the more we 'straw-dogs' realize that we are 'animal- beings', the more we become real human beings, rational animals.- We have to bear this in mind in our ethics.-

In short : I believe that these ancient Chinese ideas – Daoist ethos even more than Confucian ethics in my opinion - can rescue us from our present Kantian headstands and enable us to walk on our way.

### Final Remark

The best comes from the West??? Do we westerners really have the bloody best western ethics in the world???-

Jürgen Habermas, the Neo-Kantian moral philosopher and the representative of the 'modern project' of a universal morality says: "our Western European morality of abstract justice is developmentally superior to the ethics of any culture lacking universal principles."<sup>51</sup>-

I would diagnose a western superiority complex. To impose the moral principles of a Kantian duty-ethics or a 'detranscendentalized' Neo-Kantian discourse-ethics on other cultures and to universalize moral imperatives – however 'noble' they may be – is a new form of ideological imperialism. Kantian and Neo-Kantian universalism is a secularized Christian universalism. The missionary pretension is an unmistakable sign for it. Let us be wary of Western moralizers, whether theologians, philosophers or politicians, who inflate their local values to global values, let us be wary of the moral inflation!

(N.b. Of course we have to generalize. Every concept is a *conceptus communis*. Our ordinary language doesn't work without generalizations, but fortunately we do have languages instead of one universal language.- We should be very reluctant to universalize. Uni-versalism goes – as the word itself says – together with monism and monism, for example in form of monotheism has an intrinsic tendency to be intolerant.)

Well, you Chinese took to heart those remarkable first words from Kongzi's *Lunyu* and have already learned from the West for many years. What about us Westerners? 300 years ago Leibniz said in the preface to his *Novissima Sinica*: "It is desirable that we for our part learn from them (scil. the

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<sup>51</sup> J. Habermas , in: H.L. Dreyfus/ S.E. Dreyfus *What is Morality? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Experience* in: D.M. Rasmussen (ED.) *Universalism vs. Communitarianism*, London 1990 p. 251.

Chinese) ...first of all the application of a practical philosophy.”<sup>52</sup> But up to now most Westerners are not yet ready to learn.-I try to follow Leibniz’ advice and learn from Chinese practical philosophy.

And here is my final hint for all Chinese philosophers who are keen to learn the best from the West. Please learn from me as a modern-postmodern Westerner and believe me: we all – Chinese as well as Westerners - still have much to learn from ancient Chinese philosophy, especially from Daoism.

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<sup>52</sup> G.W. Leibniz in: *Deutsche Denker über China*, A. Hsia (Hg.), Frankfurt 1985 p. 17.

### 3. Following in Zhuangzi's Footsteps Some Notes on Chinese Poetry and Painting

Inaugural Meeting of the Chinese Daoist Salon

Zhengzhou/ March 2010

Dao fa ziran

Laozi, chap. 25

#### Preface

Let me begin with some words on the way, I have followed in my own life.

To cut a long story short: Once upon a time I dreamt of philosophy as love of wisdom.

I went to university and became a good German Idealist – Kant, Hegel etc., ideal at least to get a good university-job in Germany. I got one, a comfortable chair in the philosophy department of an ugly German city. I even became dean of faculty –a little VIP -; and I was dissatisfied, unhappy.

Why? Well, when I was young and naive, I had decided to study philosophy, because I thought it had something to do with the art of living, with wisdom of life, wisdom I could use in my own life – stupid me!

After 20 years as a professional philosophy-professor I was disillusioned. Too much 'dust'.

I retired early and live now since 10 years in our mountain-cottage on the eastern slope of Mont Tauch in Southern France. I take care of the mountain goats of my wife and cultivate my garden. I write poems, drink my bottle of wine and mostly I am not unhappy --- rarely.

You see: I take good old Tao Yuanming (Tao Qian) as an example. He did well with his return to the countryside.

Meanwhile I searched for a practical philosophy and came across the *Laozi*. I started to prepare my own translation – translation is interpretation – together with some young colleagues; one of them was Hans-Georg Moeller. I even organized together with a former Chinese friend the first international Laozi- conference in Germany. I went East and traveled to China, again and again, up to today.

One day my friend John Minford, the translator of the Hongloulou, said to me: "Why always *Laozi*? Try the *Zhuangzi*, you will like it even more – and he was right. I 'tasted' the *Zhuangzi*, I 'ruminated' on it (*shu du*) and became more and more a 'Euro-Daoist', as Peter Sloterdijk said disparagingly. I don't care. I continued with 'my' *Zhuangzi*, translated parts of it and published two little pocket-books.

I wanted to introduce the great poet-philosopher Zhuangzi to German philosophers and literati, because he still is nearly unknown among non- sinologists. One of my former philosopher-colleagues

asked me once, if the *Zhuangzi* is one of these delicious Chinese fish-dishes. Well, in a way he was right, indeed he is delicious. For me as a philosopher who believes that philosophy means 'art of life' and has to do with *yangsheng*, *nourishing life*, for me as a philosopher with a poetic streak, the old laughing *dao*-fool Zhuangzi is the one who prepared my way.

I try to follow in his footsteps. Today I'll make three little steps.

First I'll remind you of Zhuangzi's well-known story of the dancing cook and the ox.

Second I'll make some remarks on the 11<sup>th</sup>.century bamboo-poet Su Shi ( Su Dongpo).

Thirdly I'll say something on the 17<sup>th</sup>.century one-stroke- painter Shitao (Daoji).

The motto of my paper is the last word in chapter 25 of the *Laozi*:  
*dao fa ziran*, *dao's law*: self-so.

## Main Part

### 1. Zhuangzi: The story of the cook and the ox (*Zhuangzi*, chap. 3.2)

I think you all know the famous story of the cook and the ox. It is one of the most influential texts in Chinese aesthetics.

I repeat the first part in order to draw your attention to two words, or rather to the translations of these two words, which could clarify the message of the story: care for life (*yangsheng*). -

I will use the translation of Victor H. Mair, for two reasons:

First, I like this translation on the whole because I believe it catches Zhuangzi's spirit much better than most other translations.

Second I use it, because Mair's translation was the basis for the first complete German *Zhuangzi*-translation, published in 1998 (sic!) by my friend Stephan Schuhmacher.

(Richard Wilhelm's first commendable, but incomplete and because of its Christian projections sometimes inadequate translation appeared 1912.)

I also used the Mair/Schuhmacher translation for my own pocket-book- version of the seven inner chapters.

But, nevertheless I have to criticize this translation. In the story of the cook it is especially the translation of two words which – in my opinion – presents a distorted picture of Zhuangzi's message. Truth lies in translation, in the double sense of the word *lies*.

Well, let's first listen to Mair's whole translation of the story, afterwards I'll come to my two little critical footnotes.

"A cook was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui. Wherever

His hand touched  
His shoulder leaned,  
his foot stepped  
his knee nudged,

the flesh would fall away with a swishing sound. Each slice of the cleaver (*dao*. G.W.) was right in tune, zip zap! He danced in rhythm to 'The Mulberry Grove', moved in concert with the strains of 'The Managing Chief'.

'Ah, wonderful!' said Lord Wenhui, 'that skill can attain such heights!'

The cook put down his cleaver (sic. G.W.) and responded: 'What your servant loves is the way (*dao*), which goes beyond mere skill. When I first began to cut oxen, what I saw was nothing but whole oxen. After three years, I no longer saw whole oxen. Today, I meet the ox with my spirit (*shen*, G.W.), rather than looking at it with my eyes. My sense organs stop functioning and my spirit moves as it pleases. (...) 'Wonderful!' said Lord Wenhui. 'From hearing the words of the cook, I have learned how to nourish life.' <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Wandering on the Way, Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang tzu*, trans. by Victor H. Mair, University of Hawai'i Press 1998, 26.

## Note 1

The Chinese character which Mair translates by cleaver (Schuhmacher has 'Hackmesser') is *dao*. His translation is a bit clumsy. Cook Ding does not chop, nor hack. The blade of his knife – like Burton Watson I prefer '*knife*' – sings, plays, dances, as it says in the text: *you ren* - the play of the blade in the empty space between the joints. (By the way: The *you* is the *you* we know from chapter one of the Zhuangzi : *xiao yao you* .)

And please mind Zhuangzi's word-play : *dao*, the knife is wandering (*you*) on the *dao*, the way. Remember what the cook says : "What your servant loves is the way (*dao*)."  
After three years practice (!) the cook is so skillful that he can forget all skills and just go along with the natural structure. He is able to follow things as they are without intervening intentionally. He himself no longer chops, the knife itself slices self-so, *wuwei ziran*.

(By the way: the second part of *ziran*, *ran* appears three times in Zhuangzi's description of the rhythmic dance of the knife.)

## Note 2

My second critique is to be seen in connection with the first one, but seems to be more important. I tried to point out that the cook himself does not any longer intervene personally, actually neither with his perception (*guan*) nor with his understanding (*zhi*), as it says clearly in the text and as Burton Watson, in my opinion the most reliable translator of all, also translates correctly: "Perception and (my underlining G.W.) understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants."<sup>54</sup>

When Mair translates "My sense organs stop functioning and my (my underlining G.W.) spirit moves as it pleases", then he makes the old mistake of Westerners to read the dichotomy of sensuality and rationality into the text. In the text is to be found no confrontation of "my sense organs" on the one hand and "my spirit" on the other hand. In the text we rather find the confrontation of my perception and my understanding on the one hand and *shen* on the other hand, and *shen* is more than "my spirit".

*Shen*, related to the Japanese *shin* – *Shinto* is the 'way of the gods' - , *shen* has originally to do with gods, spirits and ghosts, of the living as well as of the dead. *Shen* is, to quote Angus Graham,<sup>55</sup> something "daemoniac", which moves where it wants; mind the important difference: not where I want to move, not where my perception, my understanding or my spirit" moves. From Legge and Wilhelm up to Mair and Schuhmacher: always the same old trick of translation:

to conjure metaphysical rabbits out of a Daoist hat. Lost in translation!

Well, I prefer to translate *shen* by *inspiration* in order to make clear that not I am the leader and commander, not my self. The highest mastery, which cook Ding reached after three years practice, is to let it go, self-so; this leads to the right 'way'; *wu ji ziran*. The message is to forget myself ( *wu sang wo*) and follow nature. This is the right way to nourish life (*yangsheng*).

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<sup>54</sup> Zhuangzi, *Basic Writings*, trans. by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003, 46.

<sup>55</sup> Chuang-tzu, *The Seven Inner Chapters and other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu*, transl. by A.C. Graham, London 1981, 63.

Now I'll say something about poetry and painting. You will easily find the signs pathfinder Zhuangzi left behind. More than in the West, poetry and painting go well together in Chinese tradition. The poet-painter Su Shi said about the great Tang poet-painter Wang Wei, the master of the 'White clouds':

"If one enjoys Wang Wei's poems, one finds paintings in it.  
If one contemplates Wang Wei's paintings, one finds poems in it."

## 2. Su Shi ( Su Dongpo)

"Su Shih ( 1037 – 1101 G.W.) was one of the few Chinese literati to have mastered virtually all literary and artistic forms – *shih* poetry, *tz'u* poetry, *fu*, prose essays, calligraphy, and painting. The *shih*, especially the seven-character old-style poetry, was known for its spontaneity. (...) The tendency to be unrestrained characterizes Su's style. The art of writing prose, according to him, was no more than letting words flow where they should flow and stop where they should stop. Su often compared the art of painting to the art of poetry, saying that both should, like streaming water, run spontaneously."<sup>56</sup>

According to Laozi's word *dao fa ziran* I would say with regard to Su Shi: *shi fa ziran, the law of poetry is spontaneity.*

My dear colleague Karl-Heinz Pohl says in his book on Chinese aesthetics that Su Shi was so influential in poetry as well as in calligraphy and painting that one could regard the history of Chinese aesthetics in the last millennium as "footnotes to Su Shi".<sup>57</sup>

Let me add a personal footnote to tell you when I first came across Su Shi.

Several years ago, we went to a Chinese restaurant in Hangzhou named *Dong Po*. My Chinese daughter in law explained that it was named after Su Shi. During his exile in Hangzhou he contented himself with the lonely life of farming and compared himself to Tao Qian. He liked this life so much, that he began to call himself *Dongpo, Eastern Slope*, after the name of his farm in Hangzhou.<sup>58</sup> As a memento of Su Dongpo I planted a little bamboo-forest at our farm on the Eastern Slope of Mont Tauch in Southern France.

Like his friend Wen Tong (called Yuke) Su Shi loved to 'write' (*xie*) bamboo. In one of his poems he says about Wen Tong's art of writing:

"If Yuke writes bamboo, he only sees bamboo and never men.  
But it's not only that he never sees men, like in trance he has forgotten himself.

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<sup>56</sup> William. H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Ed.), *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Southern Materials Center, Inc. Taipei, 1986, 729.

<sup>57</sup> Karl-Heinz Pohl, *Ästhetik und Literaturtheorie in China, Von der Tradition bis zur Moderne, in: Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur*, Bd. 5, Verlag K.G. Saur, München 2007, 245.

<sup>58</sup> Karl-Heinz drew my attention to a mistake in my text. So Dongpo found his sobriquet Dongpo not in Hangzhou but during his first exile in Huangzhou, not far away from Wuhan. I haven't been there yet, but I'm sure that this place must have been as beautiful as the hills behind Hangzhou.

(An allusion to *Zhuangzi* chap. 2.1: *wu sang wo*, G.W.)

He himself became bamboo, which permanently grows freshly.”

A disciple of the great Japanese Haiku- poet Basho (1644- 1694), who, like Su Dongpo, admired Zhuangzi, records:

“The master said: ‘Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree, and about a bamboo plant from a bamboo plant.’ What he meant was that a poet should detach the mind from his own personal self. Nevertheless some poets interpret the word ‘learn’ in their own ways and never really learn. For ‘learn’ means to enter into the object, perceive its delicate live and feel its feelings, whereupon a poem forms itself. A lucid description of the object is not enough: unless the poem contains feelings which have spontaneously emerged from the object, it will show the object and the poet’s self as two separate entities, making it impossible to attain a true poetic sentiment. The poem will be artificial, for it is composed by the poet’s personal self.”

Don’t look at the bamboo, look as the bamboo.

The poem is ‘sans sujet’ as the French philosopher Derrida said. (The French word ‘sujet’ has the double meaning of ‘subject’ and ‘object’.)

Back to China and to Su Dongpo.

He gives an excellent example of the aesthetic meditation of his friend *Wen Tong*.

First you have to concentrate patiently, but then in the very moment of action, you act spontaneously, self-so-ing, as Roger Ames says; and your brush moves like a hawk who swoops down to catch the rabbit. Please remember this impressive picture when I talk about the one-stroke-technique of the painter *Shitao* in a minute.

The crucial point is – paradoxically speaking - *shufa ziran*, *the law of spontaneity and naturalness in the art of writing*.

A famous poem of Su Dongpo contains his ‘minima poetica’:

“Who writes a poem following rules (*fa*) has no idea of poetry.

Poetry and painting are founded on the same principle: like the work of nature – clear and fresh.”<sup>59</sup>

Otherwise it doesn’t breathe freely, it has no *qi*, no respiration-inspiration.

*Qi* is the flow of the *dao*. *Qi* flows naturally, spontaneously - *ziran*. The flow of *qi* is self-so.

The secret of Su Dongpo’s poetry as well as *Shitao*’s paintings is the rule of no-rule, *wu fa er fa*. Lü Benzong, a contemporary of Su Dongpo, called it ‘lively rules’, *huo fa*.

‘The death of my words give birth to the words’, they come and they go like the white clouds in the wind.

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<sup>59</sup> My translation. Cf. Karl-Heinz Pohl, loc.cit., 243.

### 3. Shitao (Daoji)

Shitao, also called Daoji, the great painter and calligrapher from the 17th. century (1641? – 1717?) respected Su Dongpo highly. Like him he was mainly inspired by Daoism. Lin Yutang called Shitao's *Treatise on the Philosophy of Painting (Hua yulu, 1700)*- the revised version *Hua pu* was published 1710 – as the best essay on art, ever published by a famous Chinese artist.

The essay begins with the words:

“In remote, ancient days there were no principles (*fa*). The primordial *p'o* (*pu* G.W.)- or state of uncarved block – had not been dispersed. As soon as the primordial *p'o* was dispersed, principles emerged. How did these principles emerge? They were founded upon the oneness of strokes (*yi hua*). This oneness of strokes is the origin of all beings(...) The principle of oneness of strokes is such that from no method (*wu fa*) method originates.”<sup>60</sup>

In chapter three Shitao adds:

“The perfect man has no method. Not that he has no method whatsoever, but, no-method is the method which is the perfect method (*wu fa er fa* ).”<sup>61</sup> Shitao's method of no method is the direct application of the Daoist *wei wuwei* or *wuwei ziran*. The true way of painting doesn't follow a fixed method (*wu fa*), it emerges spontaneously, naturally, self-so. *Dao fa ziran*. No misunderstanding : this spontaneity is no arbitrariness. It is the result of a long training. Its immediacy is mediated, it is the result of a long pictorial meditation. Shitao describes his method of spontaneity (*wu fa ziran*) according to which the one stroke (*yi hua*) emerges naturally with the following words: “ When the brush moves outward, it is like cutting something ( like cutting an ox ! G.W.), when the brush moves inward it is like lifting something. To make either a square or a circle, to make a straight line or a bent line, either upward or downward, left or right, all of these movements are similar to water flowing naturally downward and flames burning upward. They are natural (*ziran*) and free from the slightest artificiality. All of these actions possess a lively spirit and their methods are always integrated.”<sup>62</sup>

The highest art is without art(ificiality). The living one-stroke is spontaneous like a flying dragon and a dancing phoenix. Shitao's painter 'writes' like Zhuangzi's cook cuts. The playing brush as well as the playing blade find their 'way' self-so (*ziran*). No need that the artist himself intervenes. “When he grasps the brush, it is as if he were doing nothing”, as Shitao says.<sup>63</sup> But in the very moment when, after a time of motionless concentration, 'wind arises under the elbow 'of the man with the brush, then, all of a sudden, the brush moves self-so like a hawk who swoops down to catch the rabbit.

The art of writing poems and pictures correspond to the martial arts, and to the martial arts of living and dying.

But this is another story. Please have a look at my little book '*Die Kunst des Lebens*'.

([www.quenter-wohlfart.de](http://www.quenter-wohlfart.de), free download).

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<sup>60</sup> Earle Jerome Coleman, *Philosophy of Painting by Shih-T'ao, A translation and Exposition of his Hua-P'u*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, Paris – New York, 1978, 35f.

<sup>61</sup> Coleman, loc.cit. 47f.

<sup>62</sup> Coleman, loc.cit. 39f.

<sup>63</sup> Coleman, loc.cit. 102.

## Epilogue: Superfluous words on my own poetical essays

My motto: *xi yan ziran, few words self-so (Laoz , chapter 23)*

Apropos *xi yan*.

A poet doesn't make many words. Less is more – minimal art.

The poet doesn't make beautiful words- *xin yan bu mei –sincere words are not beautiful (Laozi chapter. 81)* He calls a spade a spade.

The poet is not sentimental. His heart-mind (*xin*) is empty like a mirror (Cf. *Zhuangzi, chapter 7.6*).

Then he is a speculator in the original sense of the word (Lat. *speculum=mirror*).

Then he is a resonator in the sense of the Chinese word *ying, resonance*. The poetical word is an echo of the music of the 10.000 things; it *responds* to them. Only if the heart-mind of the poet is not too full of himself and his feelings, then he can be *inspired (shen)* and catch the *spirit* of the moment. The poem is not 'poetical', too full of sentiments; it is not 'sweet'. It is rather bitter, at its best 'bitter-sweet', as the Greek poet Sappho said.

The Chinese poet Yang Wanli ( 1127 – 1206) gave a remarkable answer to the question "What is poetry?" "Did you ever taste sweets and tea ? There is nobody who doesn't like sweets. But first of all sweets taste sweet, but afterwards sour.(They can cause heartburn. G.W.) The tea however tastes bitter at the beginning but before his bitterness ends, his sweetness is matchless. It's the same with poetry."<sup>64</sup>

Apropos *ziran*.

How to write a poem? – Don't make words yourself, let it write itself. If you are sensitive, the words of poetry organize themselves, self-so. I call this poetical auto-poiesis. Do not intervene in the natural self-production of the poem. No artificiality! The highest art means to overcome artificiality and reach spontaneous naturalness, as we can learn for example from the Chinese poet Su Dongpo. Language (itself) speaks" (Heidegger) –and writing writes, if your verse listens to the con-versation of the words among each other. The words talk to each other silently, for example through their tones, their rhythm, their resonance (*ying*), their aura of connotations etc. The poet is the master of words insofar as he obeys words. He follows the potential energy (*shi*) of the flow of words.

Zhuangzi said: *zhi ren wu ji (Zhuangzi chapter 1.1),the highest man is without an ego* .

Accordingly I would add: *shiren wu ji, the poet is without an ego*.

The task of the great poet is to make himself untraceable.

You remember what Yan Yu (1180? – 1235?) said about the great Tang-masters:

They were like gazelles which hang themselves on their horns into the branches of the trees in order to leave no trace behind .

The sense of my minimalistic language games in one sentence:  
as few words as possible to catch the spirit of the moment.

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<sup>64</sup> My translation following Karl-Heinz Pohl, loc.cit. 277.

#### 4. Eternal Peace – Eternal War Reflections on Politics

Kant , Heraclitus, Sunzi and the Daoists

Lecture given at the 16<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Académie du Midi in Alet les Bains/France, 2006

1. **Kant**            Eternal peace: a sweet dream
2. **Heraclitus**    Eternal war: war as the father of all things
3. **Sunzi**            The art of war: how to defeat the enemy without fighting

The paper tries to show how ancient Chinese philosophy can help us to respond in a more peaceful, defensive way to the continual dangers of war and find a practicable way between outright bellicosity on the one hand and all-too-good pacifism on the other hand.

##### 1. **Kant** Eternal peace: a sweet dream

Kant, the predominant figure of Enlightenment in Germany, tells us about a Dutch inn with a plaque showing a graveyard and the ironical inscription: "To eternal peace".-

The Dutch inn-keeper was probably not a German idealist and daydreamer. But some people – maybe some of you too? – still dream the "sweet dream of eternal peace"<sup>65</sup>, especially some philosophers like Kant and some of the Kantians and incorrigible Neo – Kantians who follow in his footsteps, like my former PhD– supervisor Jürgen Habermas. They won't believe that eternal peace only will come true on the graveyard of mankind.<sup>66</sup> Like Kant they believe that the evil is self-destructive and therefore will – although in slow progress – make place for the moral principle of good.<sup>67</sup> In the last words of his famous essay on eternal peace Kant says that eternal peace is no empty idea but something that can be reached in continual progress.<sup>68</sup>-

This sweet dream of a steady progress for the better and for the final state of eternal peace belongs to the deep slumber of Enlightenment.

In his essay on Enlightenment Kant claims that progress of Enlightenment is the original destiny of mankind .<sup>69</sup> According to Kant pure practical reason entitles us to presume " daß die Welt im ganzen

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<sup>65</sup> Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden*, Reclam , Stuttgart 1984, p.3

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.8

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.47

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p.56

<sup>69</sup> Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden , Band VI* , Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1966, p.58.

Elsewhere he says:"Die Bestimmung des menschlichen Geschlechts im ganzen ist unaufhörliches Fortschreiten (incessant progress)". R.Eisler, *Kant – Lexikon*, Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim 1964 ,p.156

immer zum Besseren fortschreitet “ (“that the world on the whole always progresses for the better”).<sup>70</sup> I doubt it!

In his late essay “Der Streit der Fakultäten”<sup>71</sup> Kant differentiates between three possible cases of future historical development:

1. constant regression for the worse, which Kant calls “moral terrorism”.
2. continuing progression for the better and
3. eternal standstill.<sup>72</sup>

Of course he favours the second of these and refers to the historical event of his time, the French Revolution, which – in his opinion – “proves” the “moral tendency of mankind” .<sup>73</sup>

Let’s have a look at the way of thinking of the most prominent revolutionary in this revolution. He claims : “we want to substitute morality for egoism, principles for habits, duty for propriety and the power of reason for the obligation of tradition.”<sup>74</sup> These pompous words are not the words of Kant as I supposed when I first read them, but the words of his contemporary Maximilien de Robespierre, the executioner of the French Revolution, a man who said that he would even use terror as a means to achieve virtue. And he really did this until his “reign of morality”, which turned out to be a reign of terror, came to an end in 1794 and he was executed on the guillotine.-

Moralistic purism, related to fundamentalism, has the tendency to turn into “ moral terrorism”. They are two sides of the same coin. And the categorical imperative of pure rational morality has a tendency to become its own opposite.<sup>75</sup> This is what one of my former teachers, Theodor. W. Adorno, called the “Dialectic of Enlightenment”.

In fact, in truth, it is not the belief in a continuing regression for the worse that deserves to be labelled as moral terrorism – as Kant did – but quite the reverse: it is the unrealistic, blind belief of the Enlightenment in the continuous progression towards the better that in fact may lead to regression and finally to self-destruction.-

Please don’t misunderstand me. I’m not an enemy of Enlightenment. But an unenlightened Enlightenment inevitably turns into its opposite, into mythology. That’s its dialectics. We need a new Hume to wake up Kant and all the little Kantians after him - the “Käntchen” as Jean Paul called them – to interrupt their critical slumber of Enlightenment. Enlightenment about Enlightenment is the

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> The essay dates from 1798, three years after *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795).

<sup>72</sup> Kant , *Werke* ,*Band VI* , p.352f.

<sup>73</sup> More precisely he speaks of the way of thinking of the spectators of the French Revolution , *ibid.* p.357 ff.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. H. Mainusch, *Auf dem Weg zu einem Weltethos*, in: J. Thesing/Th. Awe (Hg.), *Dao in China und im Westen*, Bouvier Verlag, Bonn 1999, p.200.

<sup>75</sup> By the way: Seyss-Inquart said at the court in Nürnberg, where the trials against the Nazis took place after the second world war: „The number of human beings you can kill on the basis of hate or love of killing is limited, but the number of those you can kill cold-bloodedly and systematically in the name of a military “categorical imperative“ is unlimited.“ Cf. *ibid.* p.205.

indispensable consequence of the project of modern Enlightenment. I totally agree with the prophetic words of Kant: “our age is the true age of criticism”<sup>76</sup> – and Enlightenment<sup>77</sup> to which “everything (sic! G.W.) must submit”. But I would like to add: everything, yes, even this criticism and Enlightenment itself. To accept the consequences of Kant’s critique ultimately means to go beyond Kant. As for the famous words from the end of his “Critique of Pure Reason”: “The critical way alone is open” I would like to remark: right, but an uncritical criticism falls back into dogmatism just as an unenlightened Enlightenment falls back into mythology. That means, we have to criticise criticism, especially with regard to Kant’s critique of the so called pure practical reason and his wishful thinking of moral progress for the better which is in danger of falling back into regressive “moral terrorism”. Therefore I emphasize:

The metacritical way alone is open.

Only a critique which doesn’t spare critique itself leads back from sweet critical dreams to reality.-

A last word to Kant. How naïve Kant’s faith in moral progress was, becomes apparent when we follow his arguments against his so called “moral terrorism” of a regression for the worse. Kant argues that such a regression cannot continue permanently because it “would be” self-destructive after a time. Obviously it didn’t enter his mind that such a self-destruction of mankind really can happen one day. And one need not be a pessimist – or even a terrorist – to realize that it will happen sooner or later. One only needs to be a realist.

In the first sentences of his book *Straw Dogs*<sup>78</sup> John Gray remarks: “... belief in progress is a superstition.”<sup>79</sup> “The irrational faith in progress”<sup>80</sup> is dangerous. “Progress and mass murder run in tandem. As the numbers killed by famine and plague have waned, so death by violence has increased. As science and technology have advanced, so has proficiency in killing. As the hope for a better world has grown, so has mass murder.”<sup>81</sup> I agree:

The hope for a better world in eternal peace is a delusion. Hope is dope. It lulls us to sleep with soft words and produces sweet dreams instead of facing reality.

Up to now Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the only places in the world where nuclear mass destruction weapons were used against the civilian population. Half a century after the “dazzling” success of the US in Hiroshima and Nagasaki a nuclear war is more probable than ever before, as the Nobel peace prize winner El Baradei lately acknowledged. “From the stone axe onwards, humans have used their tools to slaughter one another. Humans are weapon-making animals with an unquenchable fondness for killing”.<sup>82</sup>

Sooner or later they also will use mass-destruction weapons and exterminate each other. The self-destruction of Man seems to be only a question of time. I agree with John Gray: heaven and earth

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<sup>76</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A XI, Anmerkung.

<sup>77</sup> Kant, *Was heißt Aufklärung*, *Werke Band VI*, p.59.

<sup>78</sup> John Gray, *Straw Dogs*, Granta Books, London 2003. It was Hans-Georg Möller who draw my attention to this remarkable book.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.XI

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.29

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.96

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.92

will treat us as “straw dogs” – to remind you of the *Laozi*.<sup>83</sup> Then finally the “eternal” war, accompanied by the sweet dream of an incessant progress in Enlightenment with the ultimate goal of eternal peace, will come to an end.-

“... die vollends aufgeklärte Erde strahlt(sic! G.W.) im Zeichen triumphalen Unheils“.<sup>84</sup>

Difficult to translate: “The totally enlightened earth shines (radiates) in the sign of triumphant disaster”.

I resume the first part of my paper in 5 words:

Eternal peace is a dream.

## 2. Heraclitus Eternal war: war as the father of all things

I go back now from Kant to Heraclitus in order to take a run-up for a big jump from the West to the Far East in the third part of my paper.

One of the most cryptic fragments of Heraclitus, the “dark one”, is fragment B 52, a fragment of only 8 words. The fragment reads: “aion pais esti paizon, pousseuon; paidos hä basiläiä.” Kirk, one of the great Heraclitus-specialists translates: “Aion is a child at play, playing draughts; the kingship is a child’s.”<sup>85</sup>

Why do I bother you with this riddle? Because there are only two Heraclitean fragments dealing with “basileus”(king) and “basiläiä”(kingship).The first is fragment B 52, where Heraclitus talks about the basiläiä, the kingship of Aion, the second one is fragment B 53, where Heraclitus says that polemos, war, is the basileus, the king, of all.

Before we come to the war-fragment B 53, which is the focus of our attention, let us have a short look at the strange Aion-fragment B 52. Maybe we can crack these two “royal” nuts together. Maybe there is an intrinsic relation between polemos, war, and Aion.

What does “Aion” mean? Who is Aion?

Apart from chronos, the one who devours his children, and kairos, the bald-headed one with the curl on the forehead, symbolizing the right moment to grasp an opportunity, Aion is the third, not very well-known concept of time in ancient Greece. In a small dictionary you probably will find “(a)eon”, “era” or simply “eternity”. If you have a look at the *Liddle-Scott-Jones*, the classical Greek-English Lexicon, you’ll find out that the case is much more complicated and that the usual translation “eternity” is only the meta-physical end of a long developmental history of “Aion”, which originally

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<sup>83</sup> *Laozi*, chap. 5

<sup>84</sup> Th.W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Querido Verlag, Amsterdam 1955, p.13

<sup>85</sup> G.S.Kirk, *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments*, Cambridge University Press, 1954, p.XIII.-My German translation reads: “Das Leben ist ein Knabe spielend, Brettspielend; des Knaben: das Königtum.“ I think the game was backgammon. Cf.G.Wohlfart, *Also sprach Heraclitus, Heraklits Fragment B 52 und Nietzsches Heraklit-Rezeption*, Alber Verlag, Freiburg/München 1991, p.198.-In this book I wasted 200 pages on the interpretation of 8 words! When I lately had a look at this book, I found it even more cryptic than fragment B 52 itself.

meant something very physical. Let me cut this long story of “time” – for time reasons – very short. In later times “Aion” meant “eternity”, “the ages”, “a very long time”, but originally it meant “generation”, “age”, “lifetime” and more concretely the process of generating, engendering life. One meaning of “Aion” was “spinal marrow”(sic! The ancient Greeks believed, that the sperm came from the spinal marrow.) No doubt: “Aion” did not mean anything static or constant like an unchanging eternity. It rather meant the constant change of life(time). It meant the “eternal” i.e. never ending, periodical process of generating life: Aion was the cycle of generation (and degeneration or decline); the periods of becoming and passing by. This Aion is personified in Heraclitus’ fragment B 52 as a boy , playing a board game and this boy is the king (basileus), the kingship (basiläia) is his.

But what has all this to do with war?

Wait a minute please. In all probability the game Aion played, was a sort of war-game and the war in question was the war par excellence: the Trojan war. Here is not enough time to prove in detail to what extent the Heraclitean logos has its roots in the Homeric myth but in the mythic background of the allegory of life(time) as a playing boy in B 52 we find a simile of Apollo playing in the Trojan battle-field given by Homer in his *Iliad* 15.360ff: Apollo destroys the wall of the Achaeans like a boy building sand-castles on the beach only to destroy them afterwards. Aion, the king, plays his (board)-game of life like Apollo, the god, plays his war-game with the Trojans and the Achaeans as opponents.-

These few hints may allow me to turn to the famous war-fragment B 53, which follows in our most reliable source, in Hippolytus’ *refutations* directly after B 52.<sup>86</sup>

Fragment B 53 reads -I quote the first 8 words in Greek -: “Polemos panton men pater esti, panton de basileus...” Kirk translates the whole fragment: “War is the father of all and King of all, and some he shows as gods, others as men: some he makes slaves and others free.”<sup>87</sup>

As fragment B 52 combines Aion, life, with basiläia (kingship), so in fragment B 53 Polemos, war , is called “basileus”(king). My hypothetical interpretation is this: there is indeed an intrinsic relation between Aion and Polemos, or to be more daring : Aion is Polemos , life is war. Our own lifetime – from birth to the old age – as well as the times and ages are an eternal (cycle or period of) war.-

Let’s now have a closer look at war-fragment B 53 to see if my hypothesis is tenable. I again follow Kirk, who states that fragment B 53 “is concentrated on the world of men”.<sup>88</sup>

“...war here may be simply the war of the battlefield...”<sup>89</sup>War in this fragment is personified and endowed with the power normally ascribed to Zeus<sup>90</sup> and notably “...it is he, who exercises ultimate control over the Trojan battlefield.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Despite the fact that both fragments talk expressis verbis about king(ship) and deal implicitly ( B 52) or explicitly ( B 53) with war , there is – as far as I can see up to now - no essay to read both fragments together.

<sup>87</sup> G.S.Kirk, *Heraclitus*, *ibid.* P. 245.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p.246.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p.248.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* p.249.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* p.246.

You see: as in fragment B 52 fragment B 53 in all probability has to do with the Trojan war as the war par excellence at the time of Homer and Heraclitus. The statement about the Trojan battlefield “is probably an illustration of a more general contention by Heraclitus.”<sup>92</sup>

Fragment B 53 probably restates in more concrete terms the assertion in fragment B 80 , which says that “...ton polemon eonta xunon...” Kirk translates: “One must know that war is common (my emphasis G.W.) and right is strife and that all things are happening by strife and necessity.”<sup>93</sup> The fragment asserts that war is common not only to all men, but to all things. “War is universal”<sup>94</sup> and of course inevitable. “War and strife seem to have symbolized for Heraclitus the inevitability of change...”<sup>95</sup> Both war-fragments B 53 and B 80 assert the necessity for the continuation of change in the world, which again shows their affinity to fragment B 52. And all change for Heraclitus “is obviously related to the reaction between opposites.”<sup>96</sup>

“The total balance in the cosmos can only be maintained if change in one direction eventually leads to change in the other, that is, if there is unending “strife (or war<sup>97</sup>G.W.) between opposites.”<sup>98</sup> Heraclitus and many of his contemporaries – in the West as well as in the East – seem to have believed that.

In the words of Nietzsche’s commentary on Heraclitus: “ Aus dem Krieg des Entgegengesetzten entsteht alles Werden.”<sup>99</sup> The war between the Trojans and the Achaeans was just an illustration of the universal and eternal interaction of opposites. The Trojan war in the background of Heraclitus’ fragments B 52 and B 53 was just a concrete example for the eternal war. \_\_\_\_\_

From the beginning of the history of mankind there always have been wars and in all probability in the future there also will be wars. Heraclitus knew that.

By the way: the Spanish philosopher Savater counted that in the last 5500 years about 1240 million people were killed in 14 513 wars. Maybe he has forgotten some...

I resume the second part of my paper in 5 words :

Eternal war is our reality.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p.246.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p.238.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p.238.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p.187.

<sup>96</sup> G.S.Kirk – J.E.Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophy* ,Cambridge 1957, p. 195.

<sup>97</sup> *War* and *strife* are different words for the same concept.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.p.195.

<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe, Band 1* ,Verlag de Gruyter , Berlin 1980, p.825.

### 3. Sunzi and the Daoists ,The art of war: how to defeat the enemy without fighting

There is always war, everywhere – even in our own “heart-mind”.<sup>100</sup> Facing reality is no pessimism but realism. Realism is disillusionment of optimism. Glossing over doesn’t make things better. Let’s call a spade a spade: War is inevitable. If this is the case, what shall we do – and even more important, what shall we not do? War is unavoidable. If this is so, what is the best way for us to survive? In order to find and to go this way – which is more difficult than only theorizing about eternal peace and war –we must practice the art of war.

The “finest” art of war is war without(making)war. It is defeating the enemy without fighting. In the *Laozi* (chap. 73) we read: “*Tian’s way(dao)* is winning the war without going to battle.”<sup>101</sup> It’s true that the *Laozi* offers a philosophy of warfare not unlike that of the *Sunzi*.<sup>102</sup>

In the *Sunzi bingfa* it says: “Ultimate excellence lies not in winning every battle but in defeating the enemy without ever fighting”.<sup>103</sup> John Minford states in his commentary :” This famous axiom of Master Sun’s lies at the very heart of his treatise.”<sup>104</sup>

But how is it possible to defeat the enemy without fighting? Master Sun’s answer: if we use *shi* and act according to it – without acting intentionally (following our own will and emotions). *Shi* is the key-word in the *Sunzi*.<sup>105</sup>

What does *shi* mean? Roger Ames states that *shi* can combine a whole cluster of meanings, among them: *situation, circumstance, configuration, force, momentum* and *strategic advantage*.<sup>106</sup> In the context of *The Art of War shi* “means potential energy, or strategic advantage within a particular configuration of space and time.”<sup>107</sup> In short: *shi* means the *situational energy* or the *dynamic, potential energy of the situation*.<sup>108</sup> According to Lin Yutang *shi* denotes that which the situation is going to become.<sup>109</sup> Our task is it, to understand the dynamic of the situation in which we find ourselves and respond accordingly. We should not cling to fixed principles but go along with things and react “self-so-ing” (*ziran*) according to the situational potency or energy (*shi*). In other words: we should act (without personal action, *wei wuwei*) in *situational synergie* .

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<sup>100</sup> „Keinen Augenblick ist der Mensch von kriegerischen Gedanken frei(...)Was im Herzen sich regt, ganz im Verborgenen, ist der Krieg.“*Lüshi chungiu*, übersetzt von RolfTrauzettel, *Fürstenmoral im China des Altertums*, in :*Töten im Krieg*, Alber Verlag, Freiburg/München, ohne Jahreszahl, p. 126.

<sup>101</sup> Roger.T. Ames and David.L. Hall, *Dao De Jing*, Ballantine Books, New York 2003, p.192. The Chinese text reads: “tian zhi dao bu zheng er shan sheng” which means literally “Himmel dessen Weg nicht kämpfen aber gut siegen”.Cf also Ames’ commentaries to *Laozi* chap 30, 31 and 68.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *ibid.* P. 124 .Cf. also *The Art of War, Sun-tzu , translated with an Introduction and Commentary by John Minford*, Viking Penguin, New York 2002, p. XXII: “Master Sun shared (some would claim, abused) many of the Taoist’s basic notions.”

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* P. XXVII and p. 14. Cf. R.T.Ames, *The Art of Warfare* , Ballentine Books, New York, 1993, p. 85 and 111.

<sup>104</sup> J.Minford,*The Art of War*, *ibid.* p. 133. Minford told me that he sent his translation with this axiom on the backside cover to J.W.Bush. The bellicist didn’t reply.

<sup>105</sup> J.Minford says that *shi*, together with the quoted axiom, lies at the very heart of *The Art of War*. J.Minford, *The Art of War* , *ibid.* p. 161.

<sup>106</sup> R.T.Ames, *The Art of Warfare*, *ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>107</sup> J.Minford , *ibid.* P.161.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* p. XXV and p. 111.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p. XXVI.

In the *Huainanzi* we read: “Right and wrong are situational. In the appropriate situation nothing is wrong. Without the appropriate situation, nothing is right.”<sup>110</sup>

And in the *Liezi* it says : “In any case , nowhere is there a principle which is right in all circumstances, or an action that is wrong in all circumstances. The method we used yesterday we may discard today and use it again in the future, there are no fixed right and wrong to decide whether we use it or not.”<sup>111</sup>

In chapter 1 of the *Sunzi* it reads : “Follow the advantage and master opportunity: this is the dynamic ( *shi* ) .”<sup>112</sup> In the central chapter 5 we find an illustration: “A rushing torrent carries boulders on its flood, such is the energy ( *shi* ) of its momentum.”<sup>113</sup> Mei Yaochen comments that passage: “logs and boulders are heavy objects. It is their own energy that enables them to move with ease. To move them by force is difficult. For an army to fight with the natural energy of the situation, and not with force , is the way of nature (*ziran* ,the “of itself” naturalness of the Tao).”<sup>114</sup> The skilful warrior doesn’t exhaust his own energy. The skilful warrior exploits the *shi*.<sup>115</sup> He *adapts to the situation*, he *follows the moment* (*yin shi*).

Let me try to illustrate this with a little joke. A Daoist “artist of war” and a good Christian have one thing in common. They are both not aggressive, they don’t strike first and if they get a slap on the face they turn out the other cheek.- The little difference is, that our Daoist – who is no Christian – skilfully avoids any contact with the aggressor who misses the Daoist, clutches at thin air because of the force of his own attack and probably loses his balance.-

The art of war is to be there at the right moment, but the “finest” art of war is not to be there at the right moment. This is more than a ‘Karate Kid’– wisdom.

Napoleon’s Russian-campaign in 1812 ended in a disaster just because the Russian troops were not there and Napoleon’s army got stuck in the Russian winter. Like the General of the Russian troops and like the great artist of war, Ho Tschih Min in the Vietnamese war<sup>116</sup> Zhuangzi’s skilful swordsman exploits the potential energy . He “reveals his emptiness to his opponent, gives him an advantageous opening, makes his move after him, (but G.W.) arrives before he does.”<sup>117</sup> The crucial point is: he does not make the first move. In chapter 15 of the *Zhuangzi* it says: “ Roused by something outside himself, only then does he ( the sage ) respond; pressed , only then does he move ; finding he has no choice, only then does he rise up.”<sup>118</sup> Attack is the worst defence. Don’t strike first! And above all: no pre-emptive strikes!

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<sup>110</sup> *The Tao of Politics – Lessons of the Masters of Huainan* ,transl. by Th.Cleary, Kuala Lumpur 1992, p.39.

<sup>111</sup> *The Book of Lie-tzu* ,transl. by Angus.C. Graham, New York, Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 163.

<sup>112</sup> J.Minford, *ibid.* p.6.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* p.27. R.T. Ames translates : “That the velocity of cascading water can send boulders bobbling about is due to its strategic advantage (*shih*).” R.T.Ames, *Sun-Tzu* , p.12o.

<sup>114</sup> J.Minford, *ibid.* p. 175.

<sup>115</sup> *Sunzi*, chap. 5 .Cf. J.Minford *ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Francois Jullien, *Traité de l’efficacité* , Paris 1996 , deutsch :*Über die Wirksamkeit* , Merve Verlag Berlin, 1999, p. 202.

<sup>117</sup> Victor.H.Mair, *Wandering on the Way, Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, Bantam Books , University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu 1994, p.314.

<sup>118</sup> *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1968, p.168.

“Invulnerability is defence, vulnerability is attack.”<sup>119</sup> “Prendre l’initiative, c’est le chemin de la ruine, réagir en dernier, c’est l’origine du succès. »<sup>120</sup>

The secret of successful action according to the potential energy of the situation (*shi*) is the spontaneous reaction. What matters is to react in response (*ying*) to constantly changing circumstances. In chapter 6 of the *Sunzi* it says: “Victorious campaigns (...) take form in response (*ying* G.W.) to the infinite varieties of circumstance.”<sup>121</sup> The quoted text continues. “Military dispositions take form like water (...) Water shapes its current from the lie of the land. The warrior shapes his victory from the dynamic of the enemy. War has no constant dynamic. Water has no constant form.”<sup>122</sup> Francois Jullien comments :“Of itself , water has no form. It is constantly conforming.”<sup>123</sup> Supreme military skill lies in deriving victory from responding (*ying*) to the changing circumstances in con-formity with the potential energy of the situation (*shi*). If the skilful strategist (re)acts accordingly, he is able to defeat the enemy without doing battle. He reaches the ultimate excellence which lies “not in winning every battle, but in defeating the enemy without fighting”<sup>124</sup>, as we already have learned. He can win a war without making war.-

Let me come to the end with a harsh or even apocalyptic final remark.

We bloody Germans made two World Wars and we lost both of them. We didn’t learn after the first one but I believe that we learned after the second.

The US won the second one – fortunately.

But the American Empire also launched several regional wars. They lost the war in Vietnam – fortunately and now they lost peace in Iraq and Afghanistan. But I’m afraid that the US-superpower didn’t learn. And I am afraid that it is not only this stupid white man in the White House who is not willing to learn.-

In all probability we will have a third World War – sooner or later. And in all probability the US will be involved. This new World War could be the first – and probably the last – nuclear one. And then it could be too late to learn – for all of us burned ‘straw dogs’.

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<sup>119</sup> J.Minford, *ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>120</sup> *Philosophes taoistes II, Huainan zi*, Texte traduit , présenté et annoté sous la direction de Charles LeBlanc et de Rémi Mathieu, Editions Gallimard, Paris 2003, p.29.

<sup>121</sup> J.Minford , *ibid.* p.37. It is no time here to go into the concepts *ying*, *ganying* and *xiang ying* in more detail. They are key concepts of ancient Chinese ethics. Cf. especially chap. VI of the *Huainanzi* .

<sup>122</sup> J.Minford, *ibid.* p. 37f.

<sup>123</sup> Fr. Jullien, *Über die Wirksamkeit*, chap. XI, *Bilder vom Wasser*, especially p.234f.

<sup>124</sup> *Sunzi*, chap.3.

## 5. Beyond Words

### Remarks on a Daoist Philosophy of Language

Second Part of a Lecture first given in German during the Symposium *Form und Gehalt in Texten der Griechischen und Chinesischen Philosophie* in Trier/Germany, 2008

#### Abstract

Interpretation of the fish-trap-simile in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 26.

Philosophical remarks on the meaning of *meaning*.

Conjectures on the wordlessness of words in poetry.<sup>125</sup>

Chapter 26 of the *Zhuangzi* closes with a famous simile, which one could call the parva dao-linguistica.

The simile goes as follows:

“A fish-trap is for catching fish; once you’ve caught the fish, you can forget about the trap. A rabbit-snare is for catching rabbits; once you’ve caught the rabbit, you can forget about the snare. Words are for catching ideas; once you’ve caught the idea, you can forget about the words.”<sup>126</sup>

The parallelism of the Chinese text shows the analogical logic of the text.

**Quan** zhe suoyi zai **yu**, de **yu** er wang **quan**;

**Ti** zhe suoyi zai **tu**, de **tu** er wang **i**;

**Yan** zhe suoyi zai **yi**, de **yi**<sup>127</sup> er wang **yan**.

The *Zhuangzi* compares fish-traps (**quan**) and rabbit-snares (**ti**) with words (**yan**), and fish (**yu**) and rabbits (**tu**) with **yi**. According to *Mathews’ Chinese – English Dictionary* **yi** means *idea, opinion, sentiment, thought, meaning, wish, will, purpose*. Victor Mair, as well as Angus Graham, translate *Idea*. Following Burton Watson I prefer to translate **yi** by *meaning*.

Let’s have a closer look at the parallel.

There are fish, which are caught in fish-traps and there are rabbits caught in rabbit-snares. When you have caught the fish and /or the rabbits you are content. You can forget about the fish-traps and the rabbit-snares and look forward to your meal.

And now to the words.

Words normally have a meaning (Bedeutung). They point (deuten) – metaphorically speaking - at something outside of themselves. To make things easier let us assume that this something is a real thing, an object, for example : the moon. The meaning of the word *moon* is the moon. The word *moon* points – so to say – to the moon.

Imagine the following romantic situation: During dusk I take a walk with a friend. All of a sudden she points to the sky and whispers: “Look there : the moon!” She also only could have said a little bit more mysteriously: “Look up there!” or she simply could have pointed silently to the moon without making words. What happens afterwards?

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<sup>125</sup> Lecture given in different versions in 2008 at the Universities of Karlsruhe and Trier /Germany.

<sup>126</sup> Victor H. Mair, *Wandering On The Way, Early Taoist Tales And Parables Of Chuang Tzu*, University of Hawai’I Press, Honolulu 1998, 276f.

<sup>127</sup> *De yi* literally means *to get (de) the meaning(yi)*. As a binom *deyi* also means *to be content, happy*. It’s obvious that master Zhuang, who loved puns, plays with this double meaning.-

When I understand the meaning of her words or her wordless gesture, I probably will look for a very short moment at her finger ( to find out in which direction it points), and then , without regarding the finger any longer, or listening to her words any longer, I will look up and watch the moon. Mind you: Without the verbal or gesticulatory indication, I perhaps wouldn't have become aware of the moon. But nevertheless: No matter how necessary the indication might have been: once I understood the meaning, that is: Once I got the message, I have to forget about the pointing finger or the word *moon* in order to watch the moon, the hazy pale face of the full moon.

Let's rest one more minute at this long-winded description of moon-watching because it might be instructive with regard to the meaning of the word *meaning*.

Well: The comprehension of the meaning of the word *moon* – or the understanding of the gesture - leads me beyond the verbal indication and beyond the mere idea of the moon - to the visual contemplation of the moon. What matters here is the transition from the word *moon* to the moon, or in other words: The transition from the concept *moon* and the conception of the moon to its perception.

The point is: the perception of the moon necessarily transcends not only this special verbal indication. No. It transcends every attempt of a verbal conception or description of the moon in its uniqueness and singularity. The perception of the moon in its momentary appearance can't be caught in words. Its individuality is unspeakable, unutterable. 'Individuum est ineffabile.'

Concepts, articulated in words, are abstract, general conceptions (Allgemein-Vorstellungen); they never reach the concrete, single perception (Anschauung) of a thing in its individuality and uniqueness. It is sensu strictu as well incomprehensible as unspeakable. Words only can point to the ineffable 'haecceitas' i.e. 'such-ness' or 'this-ness' of a thing.

(Of course not all words do that. We shouldn't forget Wittgenstein's arguments against Augustine's theory of language in the first paragraphs of his *Philosophical Investigations*. But despite some 'family resemblances' between Augustine and Zhuangzi, their point of view is different.)

Let's come back again to Zhuangzi's simile with the fish-traps, the rabbit-snares and the words. When I have understood the verbal indication and really watch the moon, then – prima vista -I don't think and/or talk about the moon, I just watch. During my perception (Anschauung) I forget the word and the concept (Begriff) of the moon.

The point is: In the very moment (Augenblick) I understand the meaning of the word *moon*, that is : In the moment I follow the indication and thus come to the real sensorial perception of the moon, I don't stare any longer to the pointing-finger but watch the moon.

I repeat: the word *moon* is an abstract, general conception (Allgemein-Begriff);

the moon is a concrete perception (Einzel-Anschauung). Kant told us: 'Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind', 'perception without conception is blind'. Regarding Zhuangzi's simile this would mean: I use the concept (and the word ) *moon* – so to speak- as spectacles, look through them and – forgetting them as spectacles – just look. I 'don't think, but look' (Wittgenstein). In other words: I use the word *moon* as an index-finger and – forgetting it as an index-finger- I go with the word *moon* beyond the word *moon* and look at the moon. The word is a means. It's meaning points through the word(sic!) beyond the word, and the point is: 'don't stare at the pointing finger, stupid!' In chapter 13.7 of the *Zhuangzi* it says: "Writing is that means by which the world values the Way, but writing is no more than words and words, too, have value. Meaning (*yi* G.W.) is what gives value

to words, but meaning is dependent on something. What meaning depends on cannot be expressed in language...”<sup>128</sup>

The chapter ends with a famous saying, which is to be found several times in the *Zhuangzi* as well as in the *Laozi*: *zhi zhe bu yan, yan zhe bu zhi*. The traditional translation reads:

“One who knows does not speak, one who speaks does not know.”<sup>129</sup>

*Zhi* means *to know* but also *to perceive, to be aware of*. To translate *zhi* by *perceive* is unusual, but it makes sense, especially in view of the story in the following chapter 13.8, the story of the wheelwright, whose knack can't be put in words. Therefore I follow Jean Francois Billeter who translates as follows:

“Quand on perçoit, on ne parle pas. Quand on parle, on ne perçoit pas.”<sup>130</sup>

‘If one perceives, one doesn't talk. If one talks, one doesn't perceive.’

Billeter refers to Wittgenstein and to a remark of Paul Valéry in his *Cahiers*: ‘ce que je pense gene ce que je vois’, ‘what I think hinders what I see.’

Once more back to Zhuangzi's fish-trap simile.

What we can learn is: It is important to find the right word at the right moment in order to catch the idea, in order to understand the meaning of something. Words are not at all worthless(sic!), as we have heard in the *Zhuangzi*, at least as valuable as fish-traps and rabbit-snares. But once we ‘caught’ (comprehended) the meaning(sense) of a thing, in ordinary life there normally comes the point, where we have to stop making words and come ‘ad rem’, ‘zur Sache’ ‘to the matter’.

If one caught fish and rabbits, in the end it matters to prepare them well and enjoy the meal. But one could find it bothersome to think of traps and snares during our meal. If we go to a restaurant, read the menu and understand the meaning of *smoked salmon*, we probably put the menu aside and wait for the salmon. Only to read the menu will not be enough to satisfy us.

In short: In the end words – as meaningful as they might be – must be forgotten in order to come to the concrete sensual experience. The colour of the flower of the artichoke, the sound of the bamboo-flute, the fragrance of thyme are as ineffable as the summer-wind on your skin or as the taste of a good smoked salmon. They all are beyond words, not in a meta-physical but in a very physical sense. Generally speaking: In ordinary life we sometimes have to forget words, concepts, ideas, opinions, wishes and intentions in order to follow the real course (*dao*) of life, the course of things, the course of time... The Daoist sage, whose wisdom (sapientia) simply means to take things as they are and ‘taste’ (sapere) them as they are, is a master of oblivion.

Zhuangzi's simile closes with a remarkable sentence. Most sinologists think that it is paradoxical and translate it as follows: “Where can I find a person who knows how to forget about words, so that I can have a few words with him?”<sup>131</sup> The Chinese text reads:

“Wu an de fu wang yan zhi ren er yu zhi yan zai.”

The basic meaning of the character *yu* in the second part of the sentence is *with, to take part in, to participate*. The traditional translation suggests that I want to find somebody who has forgotten words and then have a chat with him. I ask myself if it wouldn't make more sense to understand the *yu zhi yan* like this: I want to take part in, to participate in his forgotten words.

The translation then would read as follows: ‘Where can I find somebody who has forgotten words,

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<sup>128</sup> Victor H. Mair, *Wandering On The Way*,.128.

<sup>129</sup> Victor H. Mair, loc.cit. 128 and 211.

<sup>130</sup> Jean Francois Billeter, *Lecons sur Tchouang-Tzu*, Editions Allia, Paris 2002, 28.

<sup>131</sup> Victor H. Mair, loc.cit. 277.

so I can participate in those (forgotten) words?'- How?

For example this could happen, if I watch the moon together with my friend without making any more words and silently participate in her pleasure.

In my opinion the point in this last sentence is not, to make words again, but rather to take part in the wordlessness. Then the famous last sentence would not be paradoxical but rather trivial. I'm convinced that the great *Zhuangzi*-commentator and editor Guo Xiang also understood the sentence in this way when he comments: "If two sages don't have any longer *yi* (*ideas ,opinions, thoughts, wishes*), then they don't have any longer something to talk about."

As important as to find the right words in the right moment is it, to forget them in the right moment. The Daoist sage forgets his ego ( *wu sang wo* ) as well as his words. He says something without making words (*yan bu yan*). 'The highest man is without an ego ', '*zhi ren wu ji*' - I would like to add: at least temporarily – he is without intentions and ideas (*yi*). Francois Jullien showed this in his book *Un sage est sans idée*.

I repeat: The sage, that is the man who arrives on the right way (*dao*), forgets at the right time himself, his ideas, his thoughts and his words.

And a last word to 'word-oblivion': As the highest 'action' is without action (*wei wuwei*) the highest 'speech' is without words, it says something without making words (*yan bu yan* ).

Looking back to the famous fish-trap simile of our poet-philosopher Zhuangzi, I'd like to make a few final remarks on poetry. In poetic language the 'semantic work' of ordinary language becomes more evident. Following in Zhuangzi's footsteps I claim:

The poet uses words to let us forget words.

The poet doesn't make many words, especially no beautiful words. The poet doesn't make words at all. '*xi yan ziran*', 'sparing words self-so ' as it says in the *Laozi*.

The poet's words are erasers. They erase themselves. They are on the way to silence.

The poet's words are signs of silence, utterances of the unutterable. They show the things in their ineffable individuality.

(First of all I think of the verbal minimalism of the Japanese Haiku, the so-called 'wordless word'.) The poet – like the sage – lets us forget words and ideas; his 'sapientia' is to let us taste the 'sapor', the taste of things. He lets us smell the fragrance of such-ness.-

The Chinese poet Yang Wanli ( 1127 – 1206) applied Zhuangzi's simile to poetry.

"How do you make poetry? - Words are most important! – No, better : the real poet should forget words and appreciate ideas (*yi*). No, better: the real poet should forget ideas! - - - But if he forgets words and ideas, what else is the essence of poetry? Well, just forgetting words and forgetting ideas, that is the essence of poetry, that is the real essence of poetry."

I made too many words. The one who makes words on wordlessness is like the legendary turtle. She wanted to cover over her trace but she only made it broader.

## 6. On the Way

### Notes of an Old Dao-Fool

Lecture given at the 19<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Académie du Midi in Alet les Bains /France, 2012.

#### Preface

Passengers

Basho and Li Bo

#### Main Part

Augen-Blicke

Zhuangzi and Laozi

#### Final Remark

Homecoming

Tao Yuanming

#### Preface

The poetic travel-diary 'Oku no hosomichi', 'Narrow road to the Interior' of the great Japanese Haiku-Master Basho (1644-1694) begins with the words:

"Sun and moon, days and months stay only for a short time as guests of aeons of time."

It is a quotation of the great Chinese poet Li Bo ( Li Bai or Li T'ai-po) (701?-762).

At the beginning of his 'Preface for the Poetry from a Spring Evening Party for my Cousins in a Peach Blossom Garden' he says:

"Heaven and earth are the guesthouse for the thousand things, where light and darkness pass by as guests through aeons of time. Life in this transitional world is like a dream. Who knows how often we will laugh again?"<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup><sup>132</sup> Cf. Classical Chinese Literature, Vol.1, Ed. by John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau, Columbia University Press, Y.Y., The Chinese University Press H.K. 2000, 723 and A Chinese Companion to Classical Chinese Literature, 281/82.

## Main Part

I'm sorry for bothering you with philology.

But sometimes philosophy is hidden in philology.

In my Li Bo quotation I used the old pre-socratic term *aeon* (cf. Heraclitus , Fragment B52) to translate the Chinese *bai dai* , which literally means *hundred dynasties, generations, periods* (cf. *Mathews' Chinese –English Dictionary* Nr. 5996).The Greek word *aeon*, normally translated by *eternity* originally meant the *circular, periodical (re)generation of life*. Beside *chronos* and *kairos* it was the third meanwhile nearly forgotten concept of time as a circuit in Ancient Greece. It reminds me of the Daoist concept of time, for example in the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 13 *tian dao*. There it says:

“The way of heaven revolves ceaselessly...

The way of the emperors revolves ceaselessly...

The way of the sages revolves ceaselessly...”<sup>133</sup>

The crucial Chinese character here is *yun*, which means *to revolve, a circuit of time* .

(cf. *Mathews' Nr. 7763*)

My point here is: The way (*dao*) , the way of heaven (*tian dao*) as well as the way of the sage (*sheng dao*) is a circuit.

In the *Laozi*, Chapter 40 it says: “Reversal (*fan*) is the movement of the Dao.”<sup>134</sup> Hans-Georg Moeller comments:” The reversal here pertains to the circular movement of the course of Dao.”<sup>135</sup> Right. Reminds of the *Zhuangzi*.

But what does the *Laozi* say about the movement of the *sheng ren*, the sage who is on the way? Does he move at all?

In the *Laozi*, Chapter 47 we find a surprising answer, which embarrassed me, an old globe-trotting dao-fool, when I read it first:

“Not to go out of the door-

to know the world.

Not to look out of the window-

to know the Dao of heaven (*tian dao*)

The further one goes out,

the less one will know.

Therefore the sage (*sheng ren*)

knows without going

names without seeing

completes without acting.”<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Wandering on the Way, Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, Victor H. Mair, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 1994,119.

<sup>134</sup> *Dao De Jing, translated with Illuminating Explanations* by Hans-Georg Moeller Open Court, Chicago and La Salle , Illinois 2007, 97.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. loc.cit 96.

<sup>136</sup> Cf.loc.cit.113.

What does that mean? “Noli foras ire”(Augustine) :”Don’t go out!”

Turn your eyes inward! Stay in your cell and pray!?

No thanks! Thank God I’m an atheist.

And as a philosophizing pagan nomad I’m not prepared to become a ridiculous animal rationale.

But what else is the meaning of this confusing chapter 47 in the *Laozi*?

Is there really a contradiction between the behavior of the sage in the *Laozi* and in the *Zhuangzi*?

I imagine legendary Master Zhuang’s *xiao yao you* , his *free and easy wandering*.

He was a wayfarer. He is my model, I’m following -or rather limping- in his footsteps.

But what about *Laozi’s bu chu hu* , don’t go out? Does it go together with *Zhuangzi’s xiao yao you*?

Of course there is a difference- at first sight. But at second sight there is also an identity in difference.

Let me try to explain.

First sight I disagree with the *Laozi* : In order to arrive on the right way, we have to go away , we have to leave.

We need no *utopia*, but we need the *heteros topos* (Foucault), the *other place* to turn back and reflect. Only if we leave the hometown (of our ideas), we are able to re-cognize it’s skyline and it’s limits.

The shortest way to arrive here and now may sometimes even lead around our globe, for example via the *oriens extremus*, via China.

One may stay away, but one also may turn back , and make a ‘periagogae’(Plato), a ‘Kehr’(Tauler), a ‘Umkehrung des Bewußtseins’(Hegel). We may complete our circuit and come back home –for example from China and see the home-fortress of German Idealism with different eyes.

This circular curriculum vitae – just for fun I call it a ‘*circulus virtuosus*’- reminds me remotely of the way of the sage in the *Zhuangzi*. He had no bicycle yet to cycle around the globe like some backpackers do today. But I can imagine the old freak on his aimless pilgrimages rambling without destination. The Tang-poet Wang Wei (701-761) tells us in a poem on Master Zhuang that he spent his time - far away from politics- as a guardian, wandering about, counting the trees in his garden. His circuit follows free and easy the cycle of nature. He goes with the flow of nature.

Naturalitas est mortalitas, mortalitas est naturalitas.

The leaves of the trees fall back to the roots, and their end will be the beginning of a new growth.

Like in a circle the end is the beginning.

The first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* has the title: *xiao yao you, free and easy wandering*. At the end of the first part of this chapter we find a word which the Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan regarded as the centre of Master Zhuang’s thoughts: *zhi ren wu ji*.

Usually it is translated like this: “The ultimate man – or the perfect man – has no ego. Let me forget about our big Ego today. I talked about this ‘Egod’ at the last Symposium of this Académy. Let me concentrate on the so called ‘perfect man’.

Well, at the end of the movie *Some like it hot* we learned that “Nobody’s perfect”.

Therefore I look for a better translation of the *zhi ren*. *Zhi* means *to reach ,to arrive at ,very, the extreme, greatest, best*. (cf. *Mathews’* Nr.982) The context in the *Zhuangzi* shows that the *zhi ren* is a synonym of the *sheng ren* ,the *sage*, whose way ‘revolves ceaselessly’, as we have learned in chapter 13 already.

Ergo: if the *zhi ren* arrives at the most extreme point of his ‘ceaselessly revolving’ way – which is a

circuit – he finally arrives at the beginning. His journey leads in a circle from A via B, C, D etc in the end back to A.

And this brings me back to the *Laozi* and to the ‘family resemblances’ between the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*.

Back ‘home’ in the end the *zhi ren* may come to the conclusion that there was no need to leave home and go out of the door. The ‘only’ change is a ‘change of aspect’ (Wittgenstein).

The crucial point is to reach another aspect of the here and now.

And this very change of aspect is it, what Zhuangzi’s ‘traveling sage’ has in common with Laozi’s ‘home-dwelling sage’. The change of aspect, the ‘Umkehrung’ is the identity in difference between them.

But how to *reach* this new point of view?

What is the best way to *arrive*? Impromptu, or after a long time of practice?

Subito, right away or gradually, after a long way of going?

Do we really have to travel, maybe even as far as China? – Maybe, maybe not.

Maybe we have to travel in order to *arrive* and understand, that there was no need to travel. The only thing we finally – maybe after a very long way, maybe not - have to do, is to realize that we *arrived* and mind you: This also may happen if we never went away and traveled around the world; it may happen just after a turnaround right here.

What we are looking for, is always (on all ways), already (all ready) here and now, in this very ‘Augen-Blick’. So we could say with the *Laozi*: Don’t look out of the window! Don’t search it far away, it is right here on the way in front of your eyes. Open your eyes, stupid, nothing is hidden! But with the *Zhuangzi* we could object: Sometimes it may need a long time and a long way to *arrive* at the ‘Augen-Blick’ and then finally it happens in no time. And the ‘happening’ of this ‘Augen-Blick’ is what matters in the end. The important thing is to realize what happens.

This is the sad happiness of the sage, his serenity.

Wittgenstein, the second, who was a ‘West-Zen-Master’ without knowing it, put it this way: “The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one’s eyes.)”<sup>137</sup>

In other words: “We want to understand something that is already in plain view. For this is what we seem in some sense not to understand.”<sup>138</sup>

Ergo: Don’t try to look behind, don’t search beyond or underneath, stupid meta-physician, it’s all hidden on the surface.

Well: The journey of the sage, that means of the one who *arrives*, finally is a wonderful journey into the here and now. The ‘way’ is here under your feet, what you search is now in this ‘Augen-Blick’ in front of your eyes.

With the following stories we come to a meeting-point of Daoism and Chan Buddhism. There is an old Zen-anecdote of a Japanese steamship which went up to the lower reaches of the Amazon river. The river was so broad that the crew thought, they were still in the ocean. They saw a British ship far out and asked them by signal to please spare some freshwater for them. To their surprise the British ship signaled back: ‘Put your buckets down into the water’.

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<sup>137</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 129

<sup>138</sup> Loc.cit. § 89.

The message of the story is: You are in the midst of it right now. If you try to direct yourself toward it, you go away from it! No need to search for it. You already *arrived*. 'The more you search for it, the further you get away from it', as Rinzai put it, the great Chinese Chan Master (9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) Did he have chapter 47 of the *Laozi* in mind : *bu chu hu* ?

To search for the truth, or for the meaning of life is like searching for the ox while riding on his back. The meaning of life is life.

Nothing behind, beyond. No transcendence.

No redemption which can be *reached*.

No paradise to *arrive at*.

No enlightenment to wait for.

No hope for progress. Hope is Pandora's dope. Progress is regress in our cyclical way of life. No treasure of wisdom to find. We finally come back with empty hands like Dogen the great Japanese Zen-Master (1200- 1253) came back from China, and this emptiness, this no-thing-ness was his treasure.

No philosopher's stone. "I've thrown away everything and I found the stone of wisdom" said the disciple. The master replied: "Throw it also away, otherwise it will be in your way."

The wise man knew: There is no higher wisdom to strive for.

By the way: my wisdom as an old dao-fool is: To get really wiser when we age, probably means to come to the conclusion that we don't get really wiser when we age.

The only *sapientia* of the *sage* is to let us taste the *sapor* of the 10.000 things.

(I translate Kant's famous *sapere aude* differently: *dare to taste*)

Dare to taste the bitter-sweet taste of the 10.000 things!

I guess, what these guys who *arrived* wanted to say was simply : In principle we already have everything we need in the end. But we are not aware of it. It is already in front of our eyes in this very 'Augen-Blick'. The 'secret' is an open one. It is here in no time. No time to waste. Don't wait for the future! Don't go away! If you don't realize-it here and now you never shall.

Right away you will be dead.

Let me tell you another hilarious little story.

One day a monk said to his master: 'You found it! May I ask you, how you made it?' The master laughed and replied: 'I never made it, I never found it. All of a sudden I realized, that I never had lost it. The bright sunlight on that stone over there is not a symbol of a so called 'enlightenment', which reveals something hidden behind. The sunlight itself is IT.'

The sun laughs: 'mysticism' bright as day, 'taghelle Mystik'(Musil). What could be more 'mysterious' than the clearness of the sunlight? In the clearness of that light the stone reveals itself – as a stone. Nothing behind. No meta-physics, no transcendence – at most into the immanence. The 'essence' is not hidden behind the bushes of phenomena. The phenomena itself are the 'essence'.

And another little story.

One autumn day Master Maido and his lay disciple Kosangoku took a walk together on the mountain. Maido asked Kosangoku: 'Can you smell the fragrance of the Mokusai tree?'

'Yes, I can.' answered Kosangoku.

'I have nothing to hide from you', was the Master's reply, which greatly impressed his lay disciple. I'm sure the sly fox Maido has stolen his impressive word about the fragrance of suchness from good old Kongzi. In the *Lunyu* we read: "The master said: my friends, I know you think that there is

something I am hiding from you. But there is nothing at all that I hide from you.”<sup>-139</sup>

No satoti, no enlightenment. Paradoxically speaking: Enlightenment is the sudden insight, that there is no such thing as an ‘enlightenment’ in the sense of a transcendent mysterious apparition, an ‘aurora borealis philosophica’, a bright philosophical northern light or to put it more rudely: higher esoteric nonsense.

All of a sudden in one ‘Augen-Blick’, in a blinking of the eye, in one ‘Augen-Blitz’, in a flash, an ordinary thing – a stone or a broken roof-tile comes to light, by itself. That’s all, that’s IT. IT’s nothing. “Master Easturb inquired of Master Chuang, saying, “Where is the so-called Way(*dao*) present?” “There’s no place that it is not present”, said Master Chuang.

“Give me an example so that I can get an idea,” said Master Easturb.

“It’s in ants,” said Master Chuang.

“How can it be so low?”

“It’s in panic grass.”

“How can it be still lower?”

“It’s in tiles and shards.”

“How can it be still lower?”

“It’s in shit and piss.”<sup>140</sup>

Profane Pan-Daoism. It’s everywhere. Here and now , just as it is – this is IT.

If we realize this, we all of a sudden may burst into a ‘great laughter’.

Just for fun and mocking on Kant I called it ‘transcendental laughter’. (Kant defined laughter as an emotion resulting from the sudden transformation of eager expectation into nothing.)

Please allow me to make a few more superfluous words about this puzzling ‘Augen-Blick’. You may say that I’m going to project my own romantic ideas about this ‘Augen-Blick’ into Daoism and Zenism respectively and the result is a sort of ‘Old Age’ mixture of Euro-Daoism and West-Zenism.

Well, I’m not afraid of intellectual mixed marriages in intercultural intercourse.

And I think that it would be a misunderstanding to believe that we completely can avoid misunderstandings. Understanding needs translation. And translation is interpretation.

Truth lies in translation, in the double sense of the word ‘lies’.

Therefore we transcultural travelers are always ‘lost in translation’ – in a way.

But if you travel, you can get lost. And maybe that’s the real adventure of traveling; the ad-venture (from Latin ,ad-venire’) to arrive, there where we didn’t strive to arrive.

Ok. Back to the ‚Augen-Blick’.

‘Wir leben nur Augenblicke und sehn den Tod umher’, said the German poet Hölderlin in his *Hyperion*. For 40 years the ‘Augenblick’ has been the Leitmotiv of my work. ‘*Der Augenblick*’ was the title of my first book and ‘*Augenblicke*’ is the title of my last book, published in the internet. So let me try to cut a very long story very short and summarize my ideas about these ‘fulfilled Augenblicke’ Hölderlin talked about.

For the last time a bit philology.

How to translate ‘Augen-Blick’? ‘Moment’ from Latin ‘momentum’, indicating a movement,

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<sup>139</sup> *Lunyu*, VII. 23.

<sup>140</sup> *Zhuangzi*, chap. 22.6. Cf. Victor H. Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, p. 217.

or 'instant' from Latin 'stare' 'to stand', indicating a standstill? –

These 'fulfilled Augenblicke' seem to be something like 'instantaneous moments', a contradiction. Let me try to explain.

Sometimes it may happen, that we,- maybe still half dreaming, waking up from a sort of 'butterfly-dream',- stare into the landscape in front of our eyes and, for one 'Augen-Blick', at a glance, all of a sudden realize something: there is a mossy stone or an old roof-tile in the setting sun, anything. The mossy stone seems to 'transubstantiate' itself into – itself.

What happens? For a moment the constant movement in the flow of time seems to stand still. This moment is an instant; it is a 'standing now', a 'nunc stans', time seems to stand still in no time. Nietzsche called this fulfilled 'Augen-Blick' 'sudden eternity', Benjamin 'profane epiphany' and Musil talked about 'daylight mystics'.

I would say with Proust: These 'Augen-Blicke' are 'time-crystals', twinkling with petites 'mémoires involontaires', they are bright crystals in the stream of time, frozen moments in the flow of time. These bright crystals are beaming with the sudden clarity of suchness. They are, so to say with Hölderlin's words in mind, lightnings of life in the night of death.-

### Final Remark

Return – Homecoming

"Reversal (*fan*) is the movement of the dao." This was the beginning of chapter 40 of the *Laozi*.<sup>141</sup>  
"The way of heaven revolves ceaselessly." This was the beginning of chapter 13.1 of the *Zhuangzi*. It revolves ceaselessly as well as the way of the sage. His heart-mind (*xin*) is empty (*xu*), thus it can mirror the white clouds, coming and going, self-so-ing.

(Following Roger Ames I translate 'ziran' literally by 'self- so-ing.)

For Tao Yuanming, the great old nature- poet (365 – 427)

"the life of man is like a shadow-play  
which must in the end return to nothingness."<sup>142</sup>

In his 'Rhapsody' 'The Return' he says:

"To get out of this and go back home!

My fields and garden will be overgrown with weeds – I must go back...

The clouds aimlessly rise from the peaks,

The birds, weary of flying, know it is time to come home....

So I manage to accept my lot until the ultimate homecoming.

Rejoicing in Heaven's command, what is there to doubt?"<sup>143</sup>

Enough dao-romanticism.

Some years ago I read a paper on Daoism in Hong Kong.

Chad Hansen, a wonderful guy, was the reader of a supplementary paper.

Afterwards he said to me:" Günter, you are a Dao-Romantic."

At that time I was a bit upset. Meanwhile I think he was right. Never mind.

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<sup>141</sup> *Dao De Jing*, trans. by Hans-Georg Moeller, Open Court, Chicago and LaSalle, Illinois 2007, 97.

<sup>142</sup> *Classical Chinese Literature*, loc. Cit. 501)

<sup>143</sup> Loc.cit. 518/19.

## Anhang

### 7. QI

#### Daoistische Geschichten vom Holzschnitzer Qing vom Flötenspiel des Himmels und vom großen Tuschedummkopf Shitao<sup>144</sup>

##### 1. Qi im *Zhuangzi*

Der Schnitzkünstler

Das Flötenspiel des Himmels

##### 2. Qi in der chinesischen Literatur und Malerei

...Cao Pis Essay *Über die Literatur ( Lunwen)*

...Shitaos *Traktat über die Malerei ( Hua yulu)*

##### Nachwort

Malen ohne zu malen

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<sup>144</sup> Der Text wurde am 17. April 2009 an der Hochschule der Künste Bern in der Schweiz vorgetragen.

## 1. Qi im *Zhuangzi*

### Der Schnitzkünstler (Kap. 19.9)

Der Holzschnitzer Qing schnitzte Glockenständer aus einem Stamm.

Er war ein so geschickter Schnitzer, dass die Ständer seiner Glockenspiele aussahen, als seien sie von Götter- oder Geisterhand (*shen*)<sup>145</sup> gemacht. Als der Herzog von Lu ihn fragte, was das Geheimnis seiner Kunst sei, antwortete der brave Mann: „Ich bin nur ein einfacher Handwerker, welche Kunst sollte ich schon besitzen?“

Aber da ist eine Sache. Wenn ich anfangs Glockenständer zu schnitzen, erlaube ich mir nicht, mein *qi* zu verschwenden. Ich betreibe Herz-Geist-Fasten (*xin zhai*).“

Die hohe Kunst des Schnitzens ohne einen Schnitzer zu machen erreicht der Schnitzer nur dadurch, dass er Herz-Geist-Fasten praktiziert, wie er sagt.

Was heißt das? Das heißt: Er leert sein Herz und er leert seinen Geist. Er vergisst sich und seinen Körper, der wie 'verdorrttes Holz' wird.

So entspricht die innere Natur des Holzschnitzers – sozusagen das Holz, aus dem er geschnitzt ist – dem Holz, das er schnitzt. Jetzt kann man von ihm sagen: „he doesn't look at the object but as the object“.

Es ist ihm geglückt, „das Natürliche mit dem Natürlichen zu verbinden“, wie es im Text heißt. Der *Zhuangzi*- Editor Guo Xiang kommentiert die Stelle mit den Worten: „Es besteht keine Trennung mehr von der Natürlichkeit (*ziran*)“. Auf dieses *ziran* werde ich noch mehrfach zurückkommen.

Was ist passiert?

Unser guter Holzschnitzer hat seinen subjektiven Geist sein gelassen und sich ganz auf die Sache eingelassen. Er hat geantwortet (*ying*) auf das so genannte Objekt, das aufgehört hat ein bloßes Objekt zu sein. Er hat ganz selbstvergessen geantwortet, von-selbst-so (*ziran*). Indem er dies getan und sich ganz natürlich dem Natur-belassenen Rohholz angepasst hat, hat sich das Kunstwerk ohne alle Künstlichkeit und gleichsam ohne eigenes Zutun (*wuwei*), wie von selbst gemacht. Alle Spuren selbstbewusster Kunstfertigkeit sind aufgehoben, so wie die Spuren jener sagenhaften Gazelle, von der Yan Yu in seinen *Gesprächen über die Dichtung* erzählt.<sup>146</sup> Sie hängt sich nachts an ihren Hörnern in einen Baum, um ihren Häschern zu entgehen.

So hält es der große Künstler auch mit den ‚Kunstkennern‘, die seine große Kunst erhaschen wollen. Große Kunst sieht so aus, als bedürfe es dazu keiner großen Kunst.

Große Kunst ist Kunst ohne Kunst.

Noch ein Wort zum Verhältnis von *qi* und *xin zhai*, dem Herz-Geist-Fasten.

Im 4. Kapitel des *Zhuangzi* heißt es:

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<sup>145</sup> Das Schriftzeichen *shen* spielt eine entscheidende Rolle in dem berühmten Stück von dem *inspirierten* Metzgermeister.

<sup>146</sup> Heinrich Geiger, *Die große Geradheit gleicht der Krümmung*, Alber, Freiburg/München 2005, 90f.

„Darf ich fragen was das Herz-Geist-Fasten ist? Kongzi (bei diesem Kongzi handelt es sich um einen fiktiven daoistischen Kongzi G.W.) sagte:

Höre nicht mit deinen Ohren, höre mit deinem Herz-Geist (*xin*).

Nein, höre nicht mit deinem Herz-Geist, höre mit deinem Lebensatem (*qi*). (...) der Lebensatem (*qi*) (...) wartet leer (*xu*) auf die Dinge. (...) im Lauf der Dinge (*dao*) sammelt sich Leere (*xu*). Leere (*xu*) ist das Fasten des Herz-Geistes (*xin zhai*).“

„Sei leer (*xu*), das ist alles. Der höchste Mensch gebraucht seinen Herz-Geist wie einen Spiegel (...), er antwortet (*ying*).“

### Das Flötenspiel des Himmels

Bevor ich versuche zu erklären, was es mit diesem seltsamen *qi* auf sich hat und was es mit dem Thema *flow* zu tun hat, mache ich es noch etwas spannend und erzähle Ihnen eine zweite Geschichte aus dem *Zhuangzi*.

Zu Anfang des zweiten Kapitels des *Zhuangzi* geht es zunächst wieder um die Selbstvergessenheit, um den Tod des Ego und dann – scheinbar unvermittelt – um das Flötenspiel des Himmels.

“Meister Qi vom Südwall saß und lehnte sich an sein niedriges Tischchen, schaute auf zum Himmel und atmete langsam aus (*xu*)<sup>147</sup>. In Meditation versunken schien er seinen Ich-Begleiter verloren zu haben. Yancheng Ziyou, der vor ihm stand, um ihn zu bedienen, sagte: ‘Was ist das ? Können wir wirklich bewirken, dass der Körper wie verdorrtes Holz (*gao mu*) und der Herz-Geist (*xin*) wie kalte Asche wird? Derjenige, der sich jetzt an das Tischchen lehnt, ist nicht derjenige, der sich vorhin an das Tischchen lehnte.’

Meister Qi sagte: ‚Es ist gut, dass du das fragst, Yan. Gerade habe ich mein Ich verloren (gerade ist mein Ego gestorben) (*wu sang wo*).

Kennst du das? Du hörst die Flötentöne der Menschen (*ren lai*), aber du hörst nicht die Flötentöne der Erde (*di lai*). Du hörst die Flötentöne der Erde, aber du hörst nicht die Flötentöne des Himmels (*tian lai*)’.

Ziyou sagte: ‘Darf ich es wagen zu fragen, was das heißt?’

Meister Qi antwortete: ‘Der große Klotz (*da kuai*) bläst seinen Lebensatem (*qi*) aus, dessen Name ist Wind.’“

Klar ist: Die Töne der Menschen sind die Töne der Bambusröhren der Flöte.

Die Töne der Erde sind die Töne, die der Wind in den Löchern und Höhlungen der Erde erzeugt. Aber was sind dann diese Töne des Himmels?

Guo Xiang kommentiert: „Wenn Zhuangzi vom Himmel (*tian*) spricht, dann meint er nicht den blauen Himmel, sondern er meint *ziran*“, das Natürliche, Spontane.

*Tian* ist im *Zhuangzi* oft ein Synonym für *dao*, für den natürlichen Lauf oder Fluß der Dinge, der, wie es am Ende von Kapitel 25 des *Laozi* heißt von-selbst-so verläuft (*dao fa ziran*). In der Tat ist *tian*,

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<sup>147</sup> Das chinesische Schriftzeichen *xu* ‚blasen, z.B. eine Flöte, bedeutet wörtlich : langsam Luft aus dem Mund ausstoßen. Es besteht aus dem Zeichen für Mund und für leer (*xu*) und wird genauso gesprochen.

Himmel, nicht etwas von *ren*, Mensch, und von *di*, Erde, Verschiedenes, sondern der natürliche und spontane Lauf dieser beiden.

Also: Das Flötenspiel der Töne des Himmels ist ein freies Spiel der Töne des *dao*, die von-selbst-so (*ziran*) erklingen, im Spiel der Bambusflöte des Menschen – wenn sich der Flötist mit langsamem, langem Atem wirklich auf den Wechsel der Töne versteht - , ebenso wie im Singen des Windes, dem Lebensatem (*qi*) der Natur.

Insofern fügen sich Anfang und Ende unseres *Zhuangzi*-Textes, der Tod des Ego und das Flötenspiel des Himmels zusammen. Beide scheinen ja auf den ersten Blick wenig miteinander zu tun zu haben, womit ja auch einige Interpreten in ihrer Translation-Interpretation offenbar einige Schwierigkeiten hatten.

Auf den zweiten Blick aber zeigt sich: Die Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Geheimnis der Flötentöne des Himmels ist zugleich die Antwort auf die Frage, wie es zu bewirken ist, dass der Körper wie verdorrtes Holz und der Herz-Geist wie kalte Asche wird. Dies ist nur zu bewirken, wenn es mir gelingt, mein Ego zu verlieren, mein Ego sterben zu lassen.

Wenn ich mein Selbst vergesse, es in den von-selbst-so verlaufenden Fluß der Dinge einlasse und dem spontanen, natürlichen Zusammenspiel der Dinge gehorche, dann gehorcht es – ganz ins Hören auf die Flötentöne des Himmels verloren – dem himmlischen *dao* (*tian dao*).

Wenn ich mich selbst verliere (*wu sang wo*), Herz-Geist-Fasten (*xin zhai*) übe und zum Nicht-Ich werde (*wu ji*), nichtig und leer (*xu*), dann folge ich von selbst den 10 000 Dingen unter dem Himmel in ihrem natürlichen Lauf (*ziran*). So entstehen auch die vollkommenen Flötentöne des Menschen, die Töne des großen Flötisten, indem die Flötentöne des Himmels durch ihn tönen.

Im 7. Kapitel des *Zhuangzi* heißt es an einer schönen Stelle, die mein französischer Kollege Francois Jullien zum Ausgangspunkt seiner *Eloge de la faduer* genommen hat:

„Laß deinen Herz-Geist (*xin*) treiben (*you*) im Faden (*dan*), vereinige deinen Lebensatem (*qi*) mit dem Gleichgültigen, dem Wüsten (*mo*), geh mit den Dingen (*shun wu*) - ganz von-selbst-so.“

## 2. Qi in der chinesischen Literatur und Malerei

Was ist nun dieses ominöse *qi*, dem wir an verschiedenen Stellen im *Zhuangzi* immer wieder begegnet sind?

*Qi* ist eines der ‚Urworte‘, das von den Anfängen der chinesischen Kultur bis in die Gegenwart die Mentalität entscheidend beeinflusst hat.

*Qi* bedeutet zunächst einfach *Gas, Luft, Atem, Hauch* sowie im übertragenen Sinne *Vitalität, élan vitale, Lebensenergie, Lebensatem*.

Die Etymologie des Zeichens *qi* ist aufschlussreich. Der Radikal baut auf drei parallelen Linien auf, die als Piktogramm für Wolken angesehen werden. In China ist im Sommer häufig zu beobachten, dass in bestimmten Regionen die Luftfeuchtigkeit zu Wolken kondensiert, die am Himmel als dünne,

parallele Dunstschichten erscheinen. Sie erinnern deutlich an die drei Striche eines alten Zeichens in den Orakelknocheninschriften aus dem 2. Jahrtausend vor unserer Zeit. Sehr alt ist auch die Vorstellung des Drachens als Regen und Fruchtbarkeit bringendes Wolkentier. Da die Wolkenbilder manchmal an die Gestalt des Drachens erinnern, ist *qi* als Lebensenergie eng mit der Vorstellung des Glück bringenden Drachens verbunden. Der Drache verkörpert den Rhythmus der Natur durch den Zyklus der Wolken.

*Qi* spielt auch in der chinesischen Geomantik *fengshui* – wörtlich: Wind und Wasser- sowie in der chinesischen Medizin eine wichtige Rolle.

In Analogie zur Kraft des Windes als dem Atem der Natur wurde der Äußeres und Inneres verbindende Atem des Menschen und die mit ihm verbundene Lebenskraft als *qi* bezeichnet. Der freie Kreislauf des *qi* in den Meridianen des Körpers entscheidet am Ende darüber, dass wir nicht zu früh 'das Leben aushauchen', wie wir sagen. Der freie, natürliche Fluss des *qi* kann durch Übung befördert werden. *Qigong* bedeutet: Übung des *qi*.

Erinnern Sie sich noch einmal an den Anfang der *Zhuangzi*-Geschichte vom Flötenspiel des Himmels, wo Meister Qi vom Südwall in Meditation versunken sitzt und langsam ausatmet. Auch beim gewöhnlichen Sprechen atmen wir aus. Intensiver ist die Atmung beim Gesang, der 'poetischen Muttersprache des menschlichen Geschlechts', wie Hamann sie genannt hat. Oft ist der Gesang begleitet vom Tanz, dessen Bewegung – z.B. auch beim Tanz des Pinsels in der Malerei - der vollkommene Ausdruck der Lebensenergie ist. Oft war dabei der 'Tanz des Drachen' vorbildlich.

Nicht nur in Malerei und Kalligraphie spielt das *qi* eine entscheidende Rolle. Auch poetische Komposition und musikalische Performanz gehörten, und gehören, in der chinesischen Tradition als Ausdruck des *qi* innerlich zusammen. Alles kommt an auf die lebendige Energie der Bewegung.

Dem möchte ich jetzt zunächst in der Literatur und dann in der Malerei noch etwas näher nachgehen.

### **Cao Pis Essay über die Literatur (*Junwen*)**

In seinem Kommentar zu Cao Pis (187 – 226) berühmtem *Discourse on Literature (Junwen)*, dem ersten der Literatur gewidmeten Essay im alten China, sagt Stephen Owen im Blick auf den Text: " Ch'i (*qi* G.W.) may be a 'something'. But it is an ongoing something, something in progress."<sup>148</sup> Entscheidend dabei ist: *Qi* flows naturally, spontaneously (*ziran*).

Wie man vom *dao* sagen kann: *dao* is flowing self-so-ing, so gilt auch vom *qi*:

The flow of *qi* is self-so (*ziran*).

Dem entspricht das chinesische Verständnis der Poesie als einer ex tempore ongoing performance, als einer improvisierten, spontanen Performanz.

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<sup>148</sup> Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1992, 66.

„Far more than in the West, the Chinese tradition recognized, or hoped to recognize, the poem as an event in time. *Ch'i*, moreover, gives a text an animate unity (...) In later theoretical writing the unity of *ch'i* will often be described as *yi-ch'i*, 'in a single breath', it is the momentum and continuity of ongoing movement.“<sup>149</sup>

Ein Atemzug – ein Augenblick – ein Strich (*yi hua*) beim Tanz des Pinsels:  
Sie entsprechen einander. Bei Shitao werde ich gleich darauf zurückkommen.

Der erwähnte Essay Cao Pis *Über die Literatur (lunwen)* ist, wie gesagt, die erste ganz der Literatur gewidmete Erörterung. Sie ist deutlich dem *Zhuangzi* verpflichtet. Der Traktat, der den Beginn der Literaturkritik in China markiert entstand, bevor Cao Pi im Jahr 220 als erster Kaiser der Wei-Dynastie fungierte.

Cao Pis Essay beginnt übrigens mit einem Satz, der in China sprichwörtlich wurde: „Die Literaten schätzen einander gering (*wenren xiang qing*), das war schon immer so.“<sup>150</sup> Wohl wahr.

Am bekanntesten aber wurde Cao Pis Essay, abgesehen von jenem Verdikt, für seine Bemerkungen zum Zusammenhang von *qi* und literarischem Schaffen.

„In der Literatur ist Vitalkraft (*qi*) die Hauptsache (*wen yi qi wei zhu*)“.<sup>151</sup>

Regeln dürfen den freien, natürlichen flow des *qi* nicht beeinträchtigen, wie wir auch von späteren Dichtern wie Wang Shizhen (1526 – 1590) und Ye Xie (1627 – 1703) hören.<sup>152</sup>

Diese Einsicht des Dichters Ye Xie verbindet ihn mit dem bereits erwähnten zeitgenössischen Maler Shitao (1641 – 1717), von dem jetzt gleich noch die Rede sein wird.

Zuvor möchte ich Ihre Aufmerksamkeit noch auf vier Worte eines sehr viel früheren Malers aus dem 5. Jahrhundert lenken, in dem es um die Art der Bewegung des *qi* geht.

Es handelt sich um einen der bedeutendsten Sätze der chinesischen Kunsttheorie, der auf den Personenmaler Xie He (ca. 450 – 510) zurückgeht.

Er lautet: *qi yun sheng dong* und wurde so unterschiedlich übersetzt, dass man zunächst nicht vermuten würde, dass es sich um Übersetzungen ein und desselben Satzes handelt. Giles z.B. hat übersetzt: 'Rhythmic Vitality', Waley: 'Spirit Harmony – Life's motion' und Petrucci: *La révolution de l'esprit engendre le mouvement (de la vie)*.<sup>153</sup>

Wörtlich heißt es:

*Qi* – Lebensatem, Lebenskraft

*yun*- transportieren, in Gang bringen; Kreislauf (sic!)

*sheng* – gebären; Leben

*dong* – sich bewegen, verändern.

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<sup>149</sup> Loc.cit. 67.

<sup>150</sup> Karl-Heinz Pohl, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur*, Hg. Wolfgang Kubin, Bd. 5, *Ästhetik und Literaturtheorie in China*, München 2007, 89.

<sup>151</sup> Loc.cit. 91. Cf. auch Steven Owen, loc.cit. 65 ff..

<sup>152</sup> Karl-Heinz Pohl, loc.cit. 313 ff. u. 361 ff..

<sup>153</sup> Heinrich Geiger, *Die große Geradheit gleicht der Krümmung*, Karl Alber, Freiburg/München 2005, 88.

Eine 'wörtliche' Übersetzung könnte also vielleicht so lauten:

*Qi*-Kreislauf - Leben verändern.

Ich bin nicht sicher.

Bemerkenswert scheint mir aber jedenfalls zu sein, dass *yun* nicht nur die Bedeutung hat: to transport, sondern auch: to revolve, a circuit or period of time.<sup>154</sup> Die Bewegung des *qi* ist offenbar eine Kreisbewegung.

Dies ist im Blick auf das *Zhuangzi* nicht sehr überraschend.

Das Schriftzeichen *yun* begegnet uns zum Beispiel in dem bedeutungsvollen ersten Satz des 13. Kapitels des *Zhuangzi*, wo es heißt: *tian dao yun*, der Weg des Himmels nimmt seinen kreisförmigen Lauf.

Diesem 'Weg des Himmels' bzw. diesem 'Kreislauf der Natur' entspricht der freie, natürliche Kreislauf des *qi* – auch unser eigener 'Herz-Geist-Kreislauf'.

Ihm folgt der Weise, der sein 'Leben nährt' ebenso wie der Dichter und der Maler, und zwar indem sie nicht ihrem eigenen Selbst folgen, sondern selbstvergessen dem von-selbst-so verlaufenden natürlichen Kreislauf des *dao*.

Was könnte das konkret bedeuten?

### **Shitaos *Hua yulu***

Das besagte *yun*, die Kreisbewegung des *qi*, von der Xie He sprach, begegnet uns wieder in Shitaos *Gesprächen des Mönchs Bittermelone*, und zwar im Titel des sechsten Kapitels *Motions of the wrist*, wie Coleman übersetzt.<sup>155</sup>

Gegen Ende des Kapitels heißt es vom Maler: "He must first begin his practice with a revolving wrist."<sup>156</sup> Er muss üben, um den richtigen 'Dreh' des Handgelenks rauszubekommen.

Durch die kreisenden Bewegungen des Handgelenks wird die Lebendigkeit des Bildes erreicht. „When the wrist is gifted in flexibility, it flies and dances to unlimited heights.“<sup>157</sup> Das Kapitel endet mit dem Satz: "If the wrist has spirit, then streams and mountain peaks present their soul."<sup>158</sup>

Coleman, der *shen*, *in-spiration* ebenso wie *qi* durch 'spirit' übersetzt, beschließt seinen Kommentar der Passage mit den Worten:

„In the context of painting, the ideal became a disclosure of the *ch'i* possessed by all forms. Grasping the *ch'i* of things was deemed of greater significance than capturing mere sensuous beauty. *Ch'i* might, therefore, be conceived of as the animating influence of *Tao* in a painting, the vibrations of *Tao* or "Tao-energy."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Cf. *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary*, Nr. 7703.

<sup>155</sup> *Philosophy of Painting by Shih-T'ao*, A Translation and Exposition of his *Hua-P'u*, Earle Jerome Coleman, The Hague, Paris/New York, 1978, 60.

<sup>156</sup> Loc.cit. 64.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Loc.cit. 65.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

Im Folgenden möchte ich etwas näher auf Shitao (oder Daoji) eingehen, den ‘Mönch Bittermelone’ oder den ‘Großen Tuschedummkopf’, wie er sich selbst nannte. Dieser große chinesische Maler und Kalligraph des 17. Jahrhunderts (1641 – ca. 1717) war vor allem vom Daoismus inspiriert. Lin Yutang bezeichnet die *Gespräche des Mönchs Bittermelone (Hua yulu)*, das in veränderter Fassung 1710 als *Hua pu* erschien, als den „besten und scharfsinnigsten Essay zur Kunst, den je ein Epoche machender Künstler geschrieben hat.“<sup>160</sup>

Shitaos Essay beginnt mit den Worten <sup>161</sup>:

„In der Urzeit gab es keine Methode. Das anfängliche Chaos wies noch keine Unterschiede auf. Als das uranfängliche Chaos Unterschiede aufwies, entstand die Methode (*fa*). Wie entstand diese Methode? Sie entstand aus dem Ein-Strich (*yi hua*).“<sup>162</sup>

Shitao fährt fort, dass mit der Einführung der Ein-Strich-Methode eine Methode der Nicht-Methode (*wu fa zhi fa*) geschaffen sei, eine Methode, die alle Methoden in sich birgt.

Im 3. Kapitel ergänzt er: „Der vollkommene Mensch hat keine Methode. Damit ist nicht gesagt, dass er keine Methode hat, er besitzt vielmehr die beste aller Methoden, nämlich die Methode der Nicht-Methode (*wu fa er fa*).“

Der Weg (*dao*, griechisch: *odos*) des Malens bzw. des Schreibens, den man zur *Methode* machen kann, ist nicht der beständige Weg (*dao ke dao fei chang dao*).<sup>163</sup>

Der wahre Weg folgt keiner Methode (*wu fa*), er folgt sich selbst, bzw. dem *ziran*.

*Dao fa ziran*.<sup>164</sup> Das *wu fa*, ohne Methode, entspricht dem *wuwei*, ohne Tun; das *wuwei ziran*, ohne Tun von selbst so, dem *wu fa ziran*, ohne Methode von selbst so.

Diese Methode ohne Methode, nach der der Pinsel sich spontan und natürlich von selbst so bewegt und der Strich ‘freiheraus’ kommt, beschreibt Shitao im 1. Kapitel seines Essays mit den folgenden Worten:

„der Strich schießt heraus, hält inne, er kann viereckig oder rund, gerade oder gewunden sein, aufwärts oder abwärts verlaufen, nach rechts oder nach links. So steigt er auf und sinkt herab in jähem Wechsel, reißt sich los oder schlägt einen kürzeren Weg ein, wie die Schwerkraft des Wassers oder das Aufflackern einer Flamme, ganz von selbst (*ziran*) und nicht im Geringsten auf Wirkung bedacht. Auf diese Weise erfasst er die innere Natur der Dinge, gibt jeden Ausdruck wieder, nie außerhalb der Methode (der Nicht-Methode G.W.) und erfüllt alles mit Leben.“<sup>165</sup>

Im 16. Kapitel der *Gespräche* heißt es: „Seine Tusche ist wie von selbst da, und der Pinsel scheint sich ohne sein Zutun fortzubewegen.“<sup>166</sup>

Und in einer Beischrift: „Besitzt man das rechte Verständnis, lässt man bei dieser Beschäftigung seinem Pinsel lediglich freien Lauf und schon werden tausend Berge und Täler sichtbar, prächtigen Wolken gleich und eindrucksvollen Blitzen, die auf dem Papier aufflammen.“<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Lin Yutang, *Chinesische Malerei- eine Schule der Lebenskunst*, Stuttgart 1967, 144.

<sup>161</sup> Übersetzung ins Englische Lin Yutang, deutsch Liselotte Eder.

<sup>162</sup> Loc.cit. 147.

<sup>163</sup> *Laozi*, Kap 1.

<sup>164</sup> *Laozi*, Kap. 25.

<sup>165</sup> Lin Yutang, loc.cit. 148.

<sup>166</sup> Loc.cit. 161.

<sup>167</sup> Loc.cit. 166.

Ein knochiger Strich – fliegendes Weiß.

Der lebendige Pinselstrich, erfüllt vom *qi*, der 'dao-Energie' ist spontan wie ein fliegender Drache und ein tanzender Phönix. Shitao lässt seinem Pinsel freien Lauf, der sich bewegt, als schnitte er etwas, wie es im 1. Kapitel der *Gespräche* heißt. Er malt bzw. schreibt wie jener Koch Ding im *Zhuangzi* seinen Ochsen tranchierte. Er ließ das Messer selbst seinen Weg finden. Dieser Kochkünstler wie jener Schreibeckünstler waren ohne Selbst, so waren sie sich selbst nicht im 'Weg' und konnten dem *dao* folgen, von selbst so. „Die Poesie eines Bildes entsteht in einem bestimmten Augenblick(...) Eine echte Inspiration stellt sich ein wie ein Bild in einem Spiegel“.<sup>168</sup>

Der Künstler gebraucht seinen Herz-Geist wie einen Spiegel und antwortet spontan. „His movement is like water. His stillness is like a mirror. His response is like an echo.“<sup>169</sup>

Shitao schätzte den Dichter Su Dongpo ( 1036 – 1101) sehr hoch.

Su Dongpos Kunst des Schreibens „was no more than letting words flow where they should flow and stop where they should stop. Su often compared the art of painting to that of poetry, saying that both should, like streaming water, run spontaneously.“<sup>170</sup>

In einem Gedicht über Bambusbilder seines Freundes Wen Tong schreibt Su Dongpo:

„Wenn Wen Tong Bambus malte,  
Sah er nur Bambus, aber keine Menschen.  
Nicht nur sah er keine Menschen,  
Wie in Trance hatte er auch sein Körper-Ich verlassen.  
Sein Körper-Ich verschmolz mit dem Bambus,  
Auf unergründliche Weise brachte er (des Bambus) reine Frische hervor.“<sup>171</sup>

Von Basho, dem großen japanischen Haiku-Dichter aus dem 17. Jahrhundert, der dem Zhuangzi sehr verpflichtet war, wird ein Ausspruch überliefert, den jeder Dichter, der kein bloßer Worte-Macher ist, in seinem Herz-Geist bewegen sollte. Ich werde deshalb nicht müde, ihn immer wieder zu zitieren. Wie bei Su Dongpo geht es um das Aufgehen des ‚Ich-Selbst‘ des Dichters im ‚Da-selbst‘.

Der Basho-Schüler Hattori Doho erklärt es so:

„The master said: 'Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree, and about a bamboo plant from a bamboo plant.' What he meant was that a poet should detach the mind from his own personal self. Nevertheless some poets interpret the word 'learn' in their own ways and never really 'learn'. For 'learn' means to enter into the object, perceive its delicate life and feel its feelings, whereupon a poem forms itself. A lucid description of the object is not enough, unless the poem contains feelings which have spontaneously emerged from the object, it will show the object and the poet's self as two

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> *Zhuangzi*, Kap. 7. Übersetzung von Victor H. Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, Honolulu 1994, 341.

<sup>170</sup> *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, W.H.Nienhauser Jr., Editor and Compiler, Su Shih, p.729.

<sup>171</sup> Zitiert nach Rolf Trauzettel, *Verlust der Peripherie*, in: *minima sinica*, 2002, 59.

separate entities, making it impossible to attain a true poetic sentiment. The poem will be artificial, for it is composed by the poet's personal self." <sup>172</sup>

Words – flowing, self-so-ing , mit dem Lebensatem der Dinge, die zu Wort kommen.  
Ja, sie wäre zu finden: die Antwort auf das, was mich ohne Worte anspricht,  
die Antwort auf das, was mir ohne Worte zusagt, eine Antwort ohne Worte zu machen.  
Darauf käme es an: auf das wortlose Wort.  
Es glückt nicht oft.

## Nachwort

### Malen ohne zu malen

Der Bambus ist ein beliebtes Motiv in der chinesischen Malerei. Er ist stark und elastisch, er hat feste Knoten und er ist innen hohl – leeres Herz, leerer Geist.

Der (Bambus)Maler ist – wie der Dichter – gedankenlos und gefühllos, er hat seine Gedanken und seine schönen Gefühle an die Dinge verloren. Er findet sich selbst in den Dingen. Wie gesagt: 'Don't look at the object, but as the object.'

Du selbst bis da-selbst im frischen Grün des Bambus. Es sieht sich in dir. Nicht ich sehe den Bambus da, vielmehr ereignet sich das Sehen des Bambus im Sinne des genitivus subiectivus et obiectivus. Mein Sehen seiner ist sein Sehen meiner.

In diesem Augenblick betrachtest du dir nichts, sondern du glotzt als Hohlkopf in wieder gewonnener Blödigkeit, so hohl wie der Bambus, so leer wie ein Spiegel. Es ist der Augenblick des großen Todes des Ego. In diesem Augenblick bist du nichts als Bambus, Nichts als Bambus.

Das ist der stille Augenblick des Gesichts der Dinge, der Augenblick der 'realization' des Selbst-so der Dinge, das Spüren ihres Lebensatems, der die Tuschespur zum Leben erweckt.

Wenn ein Tuschespur-Meister ein Meister ist und kein bloßer Schön-Schreiber(Kalli-graph), dann wird er seine schönen Gefühle und alle Spuren seiner eigenen Kunstfertigkeit verschwinden lassen, so wie jene Gazelle des YanYu. Wenn ein Maler ein Maler und kein bloßer Bilder-Macher ist, dann wird er jenen Punkt erreichen, an dem nicht er, sondern an dem sich das Bild selbst verfertigt. In dem Moment, in dem der Herz-Geist sich von dem, was sich zeigt, hat bewegen lassen, macht sich auf einmal das Bild ganz von selbst. Der Maler malt, was sich in ihm sieht. Er malt ohne zu malen. Das Malen malt.

Dazu muss der Maler Stille schaffen. Es zeigt sich, dass sich in dem wortlosen Gedicht der Stille des Bildes diese Stille an besonderen Stellen zu verdichten scheint. Ist es überraschend, dass sich diese Stellen als leere Stellen erweisen?

Gerade die Stelle völliger Leere kann die sinnvollste, ikonisch dichteste sein.

Das Papierweiß, das uns so oft in chinesischen Bildern begegnet, ist ein Schweigen, das plötzlich beredt wird; es ist eine Leere die gelesen werden kann.

Den Meister erkennt man an dem, was er weggelassen hat.

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<sup>172</sup> Zitiert nach Makoto Ueda, *Matsuo Basho*, Tokyo/New York/London 1982, 167f..

An diesen leeren Stellen als den Kulminationspunkten des Bildes sammeln sich die Farben gleichsam im Weiß. Die Farben scheinen sich aufzuheben in Schatten. Die Farbtöne verklingen ins Tonlose. Um diesem Klang zu folgen, muss der Maler vollkommenes Echo sein, vollkommene Resonanz.

Wie hieß es doch im *Zhuangzi* vom wahren Menschen: „His movement is like water, his stillness is like a mirror, his response is like an echo.“<sup>173</sup>

Ein Wort, das die chinesischen Maler von alters her beherzigt haben.

Ob Cézanne wohl insgeheim ein Chinese war, so wie Van Gogh ein Japaner?

In einem Gespräch mit Gasquet sagte Cézanne etwas, das mir so gut gefallen hat, dass ich es auch hier als Schlusswort zitieren möchte:

„Was soll man von den Toren denken, die sagen, der Maler sei geringer als die Natur! Er ist ihr nebengeordnet. Wenn er nicht eigenwillig eingreift(...) Sein ganzes Wollen muss Schweigen sein. Er soll in sich verstummen lassen alle Stimmen der Voreingenommenheit, vergessen, vergessen, Stille machen, ein vollkommenes Echo sein.“<sup>174 175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Victor H. Mair, *Wandering on the Way*, Honolulu 1994, 341.

<sup>174</sup> Paul Cézanne, *Über die Kunst, Gespräche mit Gasquet*, Hamburg 1957, 9.

<sup>175</sup> Der Text dieses Vortrags rekurriert im 1. Teil auf das *Zhuangzi*-Büchlein des Verfassers: *Meister der Spiritualität, Zhuangzi*, Herder spektrum, Freiburg 2002.

Der 2. Teil berücksichtigt bei den Bemerkungen zu Shitao Passagen aus dem 5. Kapitel meines Buches : *Der Philosophische Daoismus*, Edition Chora, Köln 2001.

Die beiden inzwischen vergriffenen Bücher können jetzt frei im Internet herunter geladen werden:  
[www.guenter-wohlfart.de](http://www.guenter-wohlfart.de)

## REFERENCES:

### Introduction

#### **Critical Remarks on Western Universalism**

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### Lecture 1

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### Lecture 2

#### **The Relevance of a Daoist Ethos in our Time**

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### Lecture 3

#### **Following in Zhuangzi’s Footsteps**

#### **Notes on Chinese Poetry and Painting**

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### Lecture 4

#### **Eternal Peace – Eternal War**

#### **Reflections on Politics**

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### Lecture 5

#### **Beyond Words**

#### **Remarks on a Daoist Philosophy of Language**

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## **Lecture 6**

### **On the Way**

#### **Notes of an Old Dao-Fool**

Lecture given at the 19<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Académie du Midi in Alet les Bains / France, 2012.

## **Lecture 7**

### **Qi**

#### **Daoistische Geschichten über den ‚Lebensatem‘**

Vorlesung an der Hochschule der Künste in Bern/ Schweiz , 2009.

I was too lazy to translate the text into English. The dear reader may forgive me!