

# The Role of Daoism in Environmental Ethics in China

Karolina Epple

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Advisor: Dr. Evan Berry

For years, religious leaders have taken advantage of religion's power to affect thought, from individual opinions to pervasive societal worldviews. The moral authority ascribed to pronouncements by religious leaders on secular topics of which they have no special knowledge is surprisingly strong. Modern religious leaders are not taken nearly as seriously as they once were, during the Middle Ages in Europe, when they were considered not only spiritual leaders but as temporal ones as well. However, certain religious figures, such as Mother Teresa or the Dalai Lama, command great respect among religious and secular audiences alike, both at home and abroad, and their opinions are taken quite seriously. Other religious leaders, such as Focus on the Family's Dr. James Dobson, wield real power over the spiritual and political beliefs and decisions of members of their particular religion or sect domestically, though they have very little influence abroad. These examples show that despite the secularization of many Western societies, the strong influence of religion is still prevalent. Often religion still affects discourses on a wide variety of secular topics, occasionally supporting two seemingly opposing viewpoints.

Environmentalism is one such topic where the same religion has often both been used to promote destructive behavior and to support the preservation and nurturing of the planet Earth. Many environmentalists look solely for practical or technological solutions to environmental problems, for instance producing hybrid cars to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases being released into the earth's atmosphere. However, some environmentalists and ecologists pointed to cultural and religious discourses as a reason for the current environmental problems and proposed reworking cultural discourses to remedy these problems. In this paper, I will discuss why despite the strong presence of

environmental ideas in Daoist texts, Daoism may not be the best option in terms of reversing the Chinese environmental situation.

Environmental ethics is a relatively new field within the academic world. Until Lynn White published his controversial article, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis”, most people were not interested in the connection between religion and the environment. Since then, a variety of people have started studying this topic, from Christian theologians trying to prove White wrong to environmentalists trying to find the best way to market their cause. Scholars have looked at many world religions, discussing the merits and failings of each in providing a new eco-friendly worldview.

White accused the Judeo-Christian worldview prevalent in Western societies of causing current environmental problems across the globe. He saw anthropocentrism as the basis of Christian theology, allowing for exploitation of nature by humans for their own goals. The Genesis account of humans being “created in the image of God” led Christians and Jews to believe God had created them specially, above the rest of nature. “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient pagan-ism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends”.<sup>1</sup> White did not see this problem as being inherent in indigenous or Asian religious traditions, but he rightly realized that trying to adopt another culture’s worldview would not solve the ecological crisis. He instead focused on finding an alternate source of environmental thought within Western culture to counteract the devastating effects of the Judeo-Christian worldview, settling on St. Francis of Assisi.

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<sup>1</sup> White, Lynn, Jr. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, *Science*, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), 1205.

White's paper had an enormous effect on the purpose and focus of environmental ethics. "His fundamental assumption, that what we do collectively depends on what we collectively think; and the corollary to this, that to change what we collectively do depends on changing what we collectively think, led us to the conclusion that if we are to change what we do to the environment, we must begin by changing what we think about the environment".<sup>2</sup> From the 1970s onward, environmental ethicists have been trying to convince environmentalists and scientists that technological innovations will not solve the environmental problems, only lessen its current effects, while changing how people view the environment is more important. Religion is one of the greatest human motivators, not to mention being part of the original problem. Except for some deep ecologists and other radicals who promote widespread conversion to an indigenous or Asian religion with a more eco-friendly outlook, most mainstream environmental ethicists have pretty much agreed that most religions motivate people best within their own cultures.

Daoism has been a popular target of environmental ethicists, especially deep ecologists, in the search for a less destructive worldview, since it is a non-Western religion with promising environmental principles. As an ancient and vibrant religious tradition that has influenced Chinese thought, society and culture for millennia, Daoism has a large body of philosophical works that can be drawn upon to support or oppose a wide variety of different perspectives in ecology and otherwise. The influence of Daoism on Chinese culture is enormous, though in modern times, it is generally downplayed or not labeled as such, due to the severe repression of religion and traditional Chinese

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<sup>2</sup> Callicott, J. Baird. "Environmental Ethics: An Overview". *Forum on Religion and Ecology*, 2000. <http://fore.research.yale.edu/disciplines/ethics/index.html>

thought of the Maoist era. Daoist leaders today still make their voices heard on environmental issues, especially those affecting Daoist sacred mountains and monasteries, despite the fact that their influence has waned in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Scholars today have been discussing its possibilities since the early 1970s and continue to debate its usefulness for both the Chinese environmental situation and the global situation at large. Academics disagree on whether Daoism can positively influence and even give moral authority to environmentalism. Most scholars would agree that within the large body of Daoist teachings, there are many ideas that would lend themselves to promoting or supporting ecological positions such as systemic interconnectedness and continuity. However, many scholars are hesitant to recommend Daoism as a viable technique for motivating people to be more environmentally aware, even in China, because of the disconnections between belief and practice. Although it is possible that Daoist principles could inspire individuals, government bureaus, and businesses in China to act in a more environmentally ethical manner, it is uncertain whether or not Chinese people will translate these ancient traditional values into environmental activism.

In this paper, I will discuss the viability of Daoism to influence the current Chinese environmental situation. First, I will analyze the work of scholars who have found a connection between Daoism and ecology on the basis of principles found in sacred texts. I will further divide these papers into two categories: those arguing that when looking at the religion as a whole, Daoism's orientation toward nature makes it compatible with environmentalism and those arguing that though certain aspects of Daoist thought have environmentalist tendencies, much of the philosophy is neutral on

this topic. Second, I will survey literature disputing the claim that Daoism contains an ecological philosophy. This set of articles will be further separated into two categories: those postulating that the supposed connection between Daoism and environmentalism was developed by Western scholars who misinterpreted Daoist concepts according to their own biased worldview and those postulating that most, if not all, ideas within classical Daoism are neutral toward or possibly speaking against environmentalist concepts. I will then assess works of scholars arguing that Daoism may support environmental principles in its texts but these principles are not connected to Chinese religious practice. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of why the perspective of third group of scholars is correct, for environmental work both globally and within Chinese culture.

## **I. Background Information**

Before getting into specific arguments made by specific scholars, I want to give an overview of Daoism as a religion and a philosophy and also of some important Daoist concepts that are frequently discussed in relation to environmentalism.<sup>3</sup> I would also like to discuss the current environmental situation in China and why it is so urgent that something, whether religion, the government, or new technology, be used to find a solution to this growing problem.

### **Daoism**

According to tradition, Laozi (a name meaning ‘Old Master’) founded Daoism in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Daoism was founded as a reaction to the Chinese religion and philosophy of the time, and passages in early Daoist texts often directly addressed

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<sup>3</sup> When using Chinese words to discuss Chinese religious concepts, I will use the Pinyin style of romanization (in cases where I have quoted directly from a source in which the author elected to use the Wade-Giles romanization system, I will keep the original wording).

problems perceived in Confucianism. The *Daodejing* (*Book of the Way and its Power*) is one of the main Daoist texts and also one of the most widely translated religious texts because of its complex yet vague poetic expressions of mystical philosophy. The *Zhuangzi* is another very important Daoist text, written by a disciple of Laozi. These two classical texts are the most definitive texts on Daoism. In addition, around 1,500 sacred texts exist, so a wide variety of materials are available for discussion.

Daoism can be looked at as a philosophy or school of thought (dao jia 道家), represented by the concepts presented in a number of texts and practiced by a relatively small number of people, mainly monks looking to attain the Dao or become immortal. From the time of the Ming Dynasty until the present, there were two main schools of Daoism, the Heavenly Masters School (Zhengyi) and the Complete Perfection School (Quanzhen).<sup>4</sup> However, it is also important to keep in mind the more popular version of Daoism (dao jiao 道教), a religion practiced by many lay Chinese which manifests itself in the worship of many deities, sages, and immortals as well as in other aspects of Chinese culture.

The Chinese character, dao (道), has been translated in any number of ways but is most often translated as “way” or “road”. According to Mary Evelyn Tucker, “the Tao, then, is the self-existent source of all things, namely, a primary cause”.<sup>5</sup> The Dao is eternal and unchanging, the ancestor of all things, yet philosophically it is emptiness, immortality, and non-action. “It is beyond distinction or name and can only be

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<sup>4</sup> Lai, Chi-tim. “Daoism in China Today, 1980-2002.” *The China Quarterly*, No. 174 (Jun., 2003), 413.

<sup>5</sup> Tucker, Mary Evelyn. “Ecological Themes in Taoism and Confucianism.” In *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 153-4.

approached through image, paradox, or intuition. In its manifest form in the phenomenal world, it is said to have no particular characteristics and thus be empty”.<sup>6</sup> In popular Chinese religion, the Dao is also the main deity, who is equivalent to Lord-on-High (Shangdi 上帝) of an ancient Chinese religion that existed before the founding of Confucianism or Daoism or the advent of Buddhism from India.

Qi (气) is a very important concept in the Daoist understanding of the universe.

Qi is “vital energy”, the difference between the living and the dead. Tu Wei-Ming describes it as follows: “The most basic stuff that makes the cosmos is neither solely spiritual nor material but both”.<sup>7</sup> The whole universe from the brightest star to the tiniest ant is composed of qi and the qi is never static, flowing between Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. “The continuous presence in Chinese philosophy of the idea of ch’i as a way of conceptualizing the basic structure and function of the cosmos, despite the availability of symbolic resources to make an analytical distinction between spirit and matter, signifies a conscious refusal to abandon a mode of thought that synthesizes spirit and matter as an undifferentiated whole. The loss of analytical clarity is compensated by the reward of imaginative richness”.<sup>8</sup> The concept of qi is integral to understanding Chinese cosmology and philosophy.

Yin-yang theory is one of the most important concepts in Daoism and it is also instrumental in understanding Daoist cosmology. In Chinese, yin (阴) means “shady

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<sup>6</sup> Tucker, 154.

<sup>7</sup> Tu, Wei-ming. “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature”. In *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 68.

<sup>8</sup> Tu, 69.



place” and yang (阳) means “sunny place”. Yin-yang theory emphasizes the polarity inherent in the universe: yin and yang qi must both be present and in balance for everything to run smoothly. Although yin and yang are opposites, one cannot exist for long without the other and returning to or maintaining equilibrium is important. For instance, masculinity is yang and femininity is yin; day is yang, night is yin; summer is yang, winter is yin. In each of these examples, neither concept can be defined except by contrasting it with the other half of the pair.

Another pertinent concept is wu-wei (无为, literally “non-action”), the avoidance of acting with purpose yet not complete inaction. Wuwei tends to refer to the actor’s state of mind not to the physical action itself. It can also be described as the ideal of “acting effortlessly and spontaneously in perfect harmony with a normative standard and thereby acquiring an almost magical efficaciousness in moving through the world and attracting people to oneself”.<sup>9</sup> This concept arose within Daoism as part of criticism of Confucianism’s focus on social conventions and community ethics. In the *Zhuangzi*, there are many examples of people who exhibit unusual skill in performing tasks related to their vocations because they have emptied their minds of society’s moral values and channeled the qi in their surroundings.<sup>10</sup> The Daoist idea of *wu-wei* could be reflected in the need to act in harmony with the world as part of a push towards greater environmental sustainability.

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<sup>9</sup> Slingerland, Edward. “Effortless Action: the Chinese Spiritual Idea of Wuwei”. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* June 2000 Vol. 68, No.2. 296.

<sup>10</sup> Slingerland, 310.

Ziran (自然) is another important Daoist concept. “Ziran literally means arising from itself; accordingly it can be translated as ‘spontaneity,’ but it also means ‘nature’”.<sup>11</sup> The fact that ziran can mean both ‘spontaneity’ and ‘nature’ is revealing about the Daoist conception on nature. Nature is not fixed or ordered but it constantly moves and changes at random. The literal definition of ziran, ‘arising from itself’, also reveals an important point in Daoist cosmology, namely that the universe does not have beginning or end and that there was no creator, removed from the universe, making the world the way it is. Depending on the different meanings of the word, ziran can pertain to the ecological movement in a variety of ways.

Although all Daoist institutions were shut down during the Maoist era and many temples destroyed and priests persecuted in the Cultural Revolution, since 1980, Daoism has been experiencing a revival under the supervision of the National Daoist Association, a branch of the Chinese government’s Religious Affairs Bureau.<sup>12</sup> Many temples have been restored and ordinations of both the Quanzhen and Zhengyi schools have been performed. The National Daoist Association is also trying to recruit more young people, who will continue to carry on this ancient religious tradition after the death of the rapidly aging monk population of China. While the number of celibate, officially sanctioned, ordained Daoist monks and nuns (Daoist masters; in Chinese, daoshi 道士) in both schools is rising, the number of unofficial, often married, unordained Daoist spiritual

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<sup>11</sup> Paper, Jordan. “Chinese Religion, ‘Daoism’, and Deep Ecology”. *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*. Ed. David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 119.

<sup>12</sup> Lai, 415. (Daoism Today)

leaders, sanju daoshi (散居道士), is increasing as well.<sup>13</sup> A part of Daoism for many centuries, sanju daoshi often live in rural communities, are initiated by local masters instead of by the Heavenly Master, and perform Daoist rituals benefitting their communities at home instead of at a temple or sacred mountain.<sup>14</sup> The leaders of the National Daoist Association do not particularly approve of this grassroots, non-institutionalized approach and sometimes criticize the practices of sanju daoshi as not truly Daoist. Although Daoism is thriving in modern China, despite the setbacks of early Communist rule, Lai writes that “modernization, anti-religious policies, and government officials' misunderstanding of Daoism still present a great challenge to the survival of this indigenous religious tradition in China”.<sup>15</sup> The Chinese government is determined to control religion in China while pretending to offer religious freedom. The hostility toward and lack of understanding of religious issues and principles, even in indigenous Chinese religions like Daoism, among officials in the Religious Affairs Bureau and in all levels of Daoist Associations, hinder these officials from making informed, unbiased decisions for Daoist institutions across the nation.

Most Chinese people are Daoist, though they would not label themselves so. Many Chinese people follow certain rituals and customs that have become less religious and more cultural, but do not subscribe to a Daoist belief system. Although Daoism is one of the five state religions permitted in the Chinese Constitution, most people are reluctant to affiliate themselves with any particular religion due to the forced atheism of the Maoist era. In spite of this, a majority of Chinese people still go to a Daoist temple to

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<sup>13</sup> Lai, 421. (Daoism Today)

<sup>14</sup> Lai, 425. (Daoism Today)

<sup>15</sup> Lai, 426. (Daoism Today)

burn incense and pray every once in a while, celebrate traditional holidays, and rely heavily on astrology, numerology and fengshui. In some rural areas of China, the Daoist masters at local monasteries or at home exercise a great influence over the populace and Daoist rituals and celebrations are still an integral part of village life. Other cultural practices influenced by Daoism, such as traditional diets, traditional Chinese medicine, and feng shui are followed by an even larger number of Chinese people with little recognition of their Daoist roots. Other areas of Chinese culture such as Chinese brush painting, especially scenes containing mountains and water, gardening, and poetry are also powerfully inspired by Daoist ideas about nature and humanity.

### **China's Environmental Challenges**

With the onset of Chinese economic reforms in 1978, rapid growth of industry in China has taken its toll on the environment. Because the main concern of the government and many new private industries was, and still is, to raise the standard of living of citizens through privatizing industry, externalities and harm to public goods were not emphasized. By the 1990s, Chinese officials began seriously considering the environmental consequences of their economic policies. Recognizing that the government bureau created to address this issue had neither the time nor the budget to solve the myriad environmental problems, bureaucrats joined with civilian groups in an attempt to improve China's situation. The number and magnitude of environmental problems in China have grown as quickly as the economy has expanded. As a result, the number of NGOs dealing with environmental advocacy has also rapidly increased since the government allowed individuals to create social organizations (though they must register with the state). Considerable diversity exists among NGOs in China, ranging in degree of government

control from state-supported organizations to illegal, unregistered groups. Most NGOs, however, are registered within their province or city and are sponsored by a government bureau or business company.

## **II. Daoism Supports Environmentalism**

Many scholars have come to the conclusion that Daoism is essentially supportive of environmentalism, and as a result, can be used to promote ecological goals and issues, especially in China. However, these scholars do not always agree in what way Daoism supports environmentalism. According to some, looking at the religion as a whole, Daoism's orientation toward nature makes it compatible with environmentalism. These scholars tend to look at the over-arching concepts from which many Daoist principles flow, like interconnectedness between Heaven, Earth, and humans, or the all-encompassing nature of the Dao. Other scholars are of the opinion that certain aspects of Daoist thought have environmentalism tendencies, but much of the philosophy is neutral toward this issue. Such scholars emphasize either specific concepts or specific schools of thought that especially pertain to environmentalism as a whole or to certain ecological issues. However, all of these scholars agree that Daoism has potential in environmental ethics, despite their disagreements on where that potential is found.

In forming an environmental ethic, many scholars find certain existing religions more appealing than others for this particular use. Daoism is one such religion, because in the eyes of many religious and environmental scholars, Daoism's perspective on nature is compatible with an environmental view of the relationship between humans and nature. Systemic interconnectedness though the pervasiveness of qi requires Daoists to view humans as a small, yet integral, part of the cosmos instead as separate from nature, as

some other worldviews require. The way Daoists choose to look at the world also makes a difference in how they view nature.

In his article, “The Local and the Focal in Realizing a Daoist World”, Roger T. Ames argued that Daoism is uniquely suited to inform an environmentalist worldview because of its unique perspective on the relationships between people or other living things and their natural surroundings. He made six propositions about relationality in Daoism: “1) there is a priority of process and change over form and stasis; 2) there is a priority of situation over agency; 3) there is a priority of *historia* and *mythos* over *logos*, of narrative over analysis; 4) there is a contingent and negotiated harmony that attempts to get the most out of the existing ingredients rather than a deterministic and necessary teleology; 5) there is an indeterminate aspect entailed by the uniqueness of each participant that qualifies order, making any pattern of order novel and site-specific, irreversible, reflexive, and, in degree, unpredictable; and 6) there is a priority of a dynamic radial center over boundaries”.<sup>16</sup> Ames pointed out that through the ways Daoism differs from the Western perspective, Daoism offers a better worldview in terms of affecting the relationship between humans and the environment. Whereas Daoism often favors a more undefined perspective on time, space and the cosmos, Western thought delineates and demarcates both time and space.

In his article, “On Seeking a Change of Environment”, David L. Hall discussed how the anthropocentric view of nature in Western culture has caused environmental problems, but how Daoism is an example of a philosophy, that with an alternate perspective on order and nature, would produce a more satisfactory environmental ethic.

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<sup>16</sup> Ames, Roger T. “The Local and the Focal in Realizing a Daoist World,” *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 266, 268, 274, 276, 277, 278.

In the Western world, the study of ethics and cosmology has been based on reason and rationality for centuries.<sup>17</sup> Hall argued that any method using reason to overcome anthropocentrism, and thus the environmental crisis, will fall short since anthropocentrism can result from using reason, an ability found exclusively in humans. He found two problems with Western cosmology: the first “allowed for the possibility of many world orders” and the second is “the view that there is only one world order whose laws are relatively stable from the ‘beginning’ to the ‘end’ of the order”.<sup>18</sup> According to Hall, Daoism has an aesthetically ordered cosmology that can better accommodate environmental ideas, although it is not likely it can be used in a Western context. “Taoist ethics is in fact a sort of aesthetics in which we are ‘enjoined’ to be spontaneous (ziran) – that is, to act (wuwei) in harmony with things by deferring (wu-chih – no knowledge, wuwei – non-action, wuyu – objectless desire) to the intrinsic excellences (te – power) of items encountered and by enjoying acts of deference directed toward us by virtue of the appreciation of our te. Such an aesthetic ethics eschews antecedent principles or norms in the same manner that a creative individual would refuse to depend upon past norms for the determination of present actions”.<sup>19</sup> Daoist ethics calls on one to act naturally, creatively, and in harmony with humans and nature as a whole, foregoing the use of rules and precedent when acting. Although Hall found Daoism to be an effective environmental ethic, he realized it would not be nearly as effective outside of its cultural context as within.

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<sup>17</sup> Hall, David L. “On Seeking a Change of Environment”. In *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 102.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, 105.

<sup>19</sup> Hall, 110.

In his article, “Human/Nature in Nietzsche and Taoism”, Graham Parkes argued that a biocentric worldview such as that of Daoism or Nietzsche is much more conducive to environmental protection than the anthropocentric ones that characterized Confucian and Western societies in general. He pointed out that Western society is not without its philosophers who have seen the horrors of the anthropocentrism plaguing Western societies, resulting in environmental degradation. “Both Nietzsche and the Taoists share the view that the major problem is anthropocentrism – as a cause and also as a symptom of a relationship with nature that is out of joint”.<sup>20</sup> The solution to this problem of anthropocentrism is for humans to participate in natural phenomena, for Nietzsche by viewing oneself as only a small part of nature and for Daoists by viewing oneself as connected to Heaven and acting according to wuwei. However, there are differences in their viewpoints, namely that Nietzsche feared nature because of its amorality but Daoists accepted the amorality of nature as a fact of life.

The previous three articles contrast a Daoist worldview with a Western one to reveal the superiority of Daoism in addressing environmental matters. Ames and Hall both refer to the importance of the notion of the field and focus or the particular and the totality which describes the relationship between Dao and de. Another important idea is that reason is not important in analyzing morality, religion, or cosmology since knowledge tends to be more concrete than abstract. Ancient Chinese scholars wanted to know how this concept or object could be used, not what it is philosophically.<sup>21</sup> Ames and Hall concluded that Daoism is better suited to environmental ethics than Western

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<sup>20</sup> Parkes, Graham. “Human/Nature in Nietzsche and Taoism”. In *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 80.

<sup>21</sup> Ames, 275.



religions and philosophies because of a superior perspective on the world and how it works. However, Parkes showed that at least one Western philosopher, Nietzsche, had a very similar view to that of ancient Daoists, leaving hope for Western religion and philosophy in the realm of environmental ethics.

In his article, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature”, Tu Wei-Ming argued that Chinese cosmology, based on the concept of qi, inspires environmental principles. He contended that because humans arise from both yang qi and yin qi, from Heaven and Earth respectively, humans are like children of Heaven and Earth.<sup>22</sup> In this way, he applied the virtue of filial piety to the relationship between nature and human beings. However he also wrote that “forming one body with the universe can literally mean that since all modalities of being are made of ch’i, human life is part of a continuous flow of the blood and breath that constitutes the cosmic process. Human beings are thus organically connected with rocks, trees, and animals”.<sup>23</sup> Although it seems strange to think that humans and rocks are made of the same thing, qi symbolizes the interconnectedness of the natural world and the equality among the myriad things. “Forming a trinity with heaven and earth, which is tantamount to forming one body with the myriad things, enjoins us from applying the subject-object dichotomy to nature”.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to view nature as an “other” if everything in nature is made of the same basic material as human beings and connected by virtue of movement by that basic material.

Tu’s wording of the interconnectedness of Heaven, Earth, and humanity implies the connection between different branches of Chinese thought. By calling the relationship between nature and humanity a family one, he connected the Daoist concept of systemic

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<sup>22</sup> Tu, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Tu, 74.

<sup>24</sup> Tu, 77.

interconnectedness with the Confucian ideal of filial piety and traditional Chinese religion's practice of ancestor worship. In expressing the concept in this manner, Tu equated protecting and caring for the environment with respecting and providing for one's parents in old age or venerating and feeding the spirits of one's ancestors, which could potentially be a powerful motivator for many Chinese, considering the importance of family and respecting elders in Chinese culture and religion.

In their article, “‘Mutual Stealing among the Three Powers’ in the *Scripture of Unconscious Unification*”, Zhang Jiyu and Li Yuanguo argued that the Daoist environmental ethic is derived from “mutual stealing among the three powers” (*san cai xiang dao*), a theory found in *Scripture of Unconscious Unification (Yinfujing)* describing “the symbiotic relationship that exists among Heaven and Earth, the myriad things, and human beings”.<sup>25</sup> The myriad things and human beings “steal” from Heaven and Earth because their existence is contingent on receiving yang and yin qi from Heaven and Earth. Humans are the only part of this network whose actions are subject to moral standards because of human intelligence; therefore human morality affects the transformation of nature through mutual stealing. “The operation of the Dao places no restrictions on Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as regards their mutual stealing or mutual utilization. Daoism, as represented in the *Yinfujing*, sees nature and the myriad things as human beings’ best teacher, and as an unlimited vehicle for human enlightenment and social development”.<sup>26</sup> Despite the importance of human morality in the system of mutual stealing, Daoism, according to this text, does not lay out a strict set of ethical rules to

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<sup>25</sup> Zhang, Jiyu, and Li, Yuanguo. “‘Mutual Stealing among the Three Powers’ in the *Scripture of Unconscious Unification*,” *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 114.

<sup>26</sup> Zhang and Li, 118.

follow. Instead, nature itself and creativity are important guides on how to act correctly and thus promote balanced stealing.

In his article, “The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the *Scripture of Great Peace*: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature”, Chi-tim Lai used the concept of Central Harmony (zhonghe 中和) as found in the Han dynasty text, *Taipingjing*, to argue against scholarly interpretations of the Daoist perspective on nature as characterized by wuwei and ziran.<sup>27</sup> Heaven is characterized by yang qi, Earth by yin qi, and human beings by zhonghe qi. Central Harmony means that there is peace and equilibrium of qi among Heaven, Earth, and humanity. Human actions can affect the flow of qi between Heaven and Earth; therefore, evil actions will deplete the central harmony qi and cause calamity and hardship to come upon humans because of the distress of Heaven and Earth.<sup>28</sup>

This emphasis on humans and their immorality as the cause for suffering and hardship in the world is closely related to the Christian belief that the fall of Adam and Eve into sin lead to all kinds of suffering in the world. In each religion, it could be argued that polluting the earth is immoral; in Daoism, because morality is based on acting according to wuwei and ziran, or in harmony with nature, and according to one interpretation of Christianity, because it harms God’s creation, of which humans should be good stewards. However the Daoist belief makes the burden of guilt on humans heavier by placing the blame for hardships on one’s evil actions either in the present life or in a past one whereas Christians do not believe that God punishes specific sins with

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<sup>27</sup> Lai, Chi-tim. “The Daoist Concept of Central Harmony in the *Scripture of Great Peace*: Human Responsibility for the Maladies of Nature”, *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 97.

<sup>28</sup> Lai, 106. (Central Harmony)

specific disasters. This difference between the Christian and Daoist environmental ethics is crucial because it shows that humans in a Daoist world would be far more culpable for environmental disasters than humans in a Christian world would be. Because Christians feel a lesser degree of culpability, they would be more willing to exploit or destroy the environment without much thought for the results of their actions in the future.

The Daoist scriptures, *Taipingjing* and *Yinfujing*, are not so well known and analyzed as the *Daodejing* or *Zhuangzi*; however, the use of these two more obscure texts, in addition to the many texts referenced by Tu Wei-Ming, shows that there are other resources within Daoism beyond the small group of commonly studied main texts. Although Tu, Lai, Zhang, and Li used different texts, they came to a surprisingly similar conclusion about the relationship between Daoism and environmentalism. “Mutual stealing among the three powers” is the mechanism by which qi is distributed in the theory of Central Harmony. It is interesting to note that while Daoism is often seen as a biocentric religion due to its focus on systemic interconnectedness and ziran, human morality plays a huge role in determining functioning of the cosmos. In monotheistic religions with stronger anthropocentric tendencies, God (or a similar supreme being) controls every process and function in the cosmos with little regard for human actions. Despite the cosmic importance of human morality, the way Daoism advocates humans act toward nature specifically indicates a biocentric approach.

In his article, “‘Nature’ as Part of Human Culture in Daoism”, Michael LaFargue argued that the Daoist attitude toward nature, though not exactly the perspective described by many environmental scholars, is compatible with environmentalist aims. He uses several excerpts from Daoist and non-Daoist texts to show that in Daoism, the ideal

way to interact with the environment is through organic harmony, not untouched nature. He uses an example of a Daoist garden to illustrate this point. The garden was created to look like a perfected version of natural beauty, and the land was altered in such a way that it almost appeared untouched, except for the fact that it looked exactly like a Daoist painting.<sup>29</sup> The garden illustrates that there is a happy medium between drastically altering one's natural surroundings and leaving nature in its original condition. The dualism inherent in Western philosophy often leads environmentalists away from one extreme, exploiting the environment, to another, leaving nature exactly in its original condition (untouched nature). However a third option would be to work with nature to bring out stability and hidden beauty.<sup>30</sup> There is no way to avoid impacting the environment in some way throughout one's life, but one can act in harmony with one's natural surroundings.

In his article, "A Declaration of the Chinese Daoist Association on Global Ecology", Zhang Jiyu found that many Daoist principles are compatible with the global ecological movement. With the Chinese Daoist Association, he pledged to educate Daoists and lay persons about their ecological obligations, to continue reforestation, starting with Daoist hermitages, and to transform Daoist sacred sites into examples of the benefits of environmental engineering. He argued that since Heaven, Earth, humans and everything else on the earth are connected since they are all composed of yin and yang qi, humans should act in accordance with nature (ziran) and in the spirit of wuwei.<sup>31</sup> He

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<sup>29</sup> LaFargue, Michael. "'Nature' as Part of Human Culture in Daoism." *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 46.

<sup>30</sup> LaFargue, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Zhang, Jiyu. "A Declaration of the Chinese Daoist Association on Global Ecology," *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 3644.

proposed the Chinese Daoist Association first work to improve the environmental situation both at Daoist sacred sites and institutions, using this ecological work as a teaching tool for the general population, then perhaps expand the project to the rest of China. Already Daoist masters across China have been working in the areas surrounding monasteries to teach the lay people about the Daoist relationship between humans and the environment and to plant trees and grass to halt desertification, especially in Northern China.<sup>32</sup>

At the Third Ecology Protection Forum of China Daoist Temples and Pagodas in the autumn of 2008, 69 representatives of Chinese Daoist temples and associations met at Maoshan, one of the sacred Daoist mountains, to discuss the relationship between Daoism and the environment. They published the Maoshan Declaration, a document pledging to work in the next ten years to educate the Chinese population about environmental issues and their relationship to Daoism and to protect and restore the environment on holy mountains and temple grounds.<sup>33</sup> For modern Chinese Daoists, environmentalism is extremely important and a vital part of their religious tradition, citing the interconnectedness of Heaven, Earth, and humanity as proof of its relevance.

These two declarations by Chinese Daoist Associations illustrate a different, more activist version of a Daoist environmental ethic. While LaFargue argues that a Daoist environmental ethic would be the middle road of organic harmony which falls somewhere between thoughtlessly destructive action and absolute non-action, modern Chinese Daoists have interpreted their own religion in such a way that they are playing an active role in protecting and restoring the environment, first on their own property, then

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<sup>32</sup> Zhang, 369.

<sup>33</sup> Maoshan Declaration, National Daoist Association, 2008.

broadening their scope to include China as a whole. According to LaFargue, organic harmony means assisting nature in attaining levels of natural beauty and perfection that it cannot for whatever reason attain itself. In a sense, the reforestation projects and the clean-up projects on sacred mountains are applications of organic harmony, since these projects attempt to return the land to a more natural state before they were polluted or disrupted by human actions. However, both groups of Daoists chose a simpler justification for their environmental activism that is not held back by restrictions on forceful actions: the interconnectedness between Heaven, Earth, and humanity obligates humans to respect and work with Earth to maintain a healthy balance of qi throughout the universe. This justification conveniently skirts the issues of organic harmony and wuwei, both of which could be argued as opposing this new type of activism among Chinese Daoists.

In her article, “Ecological Themes in Taoism and Confucianism”, Mary Evelyn Tucker argued that Daoism and Confucianism should inform a Chinese environmental ethic together because they complement each other, with a Daoist perspective on the relationship between humans and nature and a Confucian focus on the interconnectedness of individuals, society, and nature.<sup>34</sup> With respect to the Daoist perspective, she wrote that the principle of the Dao indicates a world that creates and sustains itself with no beginning or end. In light of this view of the world as a life-giving creator, nature is seen as good in itself and not as the end to any human aim.<sup>35</sup> The Daoist concept of wuwei indicates the way those respectful of nature should act toward it. “While an extreme Taoist position might advocate complete noninterference with nature, a more moderate

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<sup>34</sup> Tucker, 151.

<sup>35</sup> Tucker, 154.

Taoist approach would call for interaction with nature in a far less exploitative manner. Such cooperation with nature would sanction the use of appropriate or intermediate technology when necessary and would favor the use of organic fertilizers and natural farming methods”.<sup>36</sup> Tucker argued that the concept wuwei would lead Daoists to act in harmony with the natural processes of the environment.

Tucker next described how the Confucian tradition relates to environmentalism as well. She wrote that “a Confucian ethic might be described as a form of social ecology because a key component is relationality in the human order against the background of the natural order”.<sup>37</sup> Confucianism focuses on regulating social relationships, the most important being those within the family, then the clan, then the village, then the nation, and finally the whole universe. “Many of these patterns of social and cosmological exchanges become embedded in rituals which constitute the means of expressing reciprocal relations between people and nature”.<sup>38</sup> Tucker asserted that through its focus on social ethics, Confucianism also dictates a relationship of respect between humans and the environment. When Daoist and Confucian elements are combined, a new Chinese religious environmental ethic based on a familial relationship between humans and nature modeled on the Confucian social ethics of the family is formed.

In his article, “Chinese Traditional Thought and Practice: Lessons for an Ecological Economics Worldview”, T. N. Jenkins argued that the three branches of Chinese traditional thought and also Chinese traditional folk religion have elements that support an environmental ethic. He focused on how economy affects ecological action in China specifically and how Chinese traditional thought affects the interaction between

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<sup>36</sup> Tucker, 155.

<sup>37</sup> Tucker, 157.

<sup>38</sup> Tucker, 157.



ecology and economy. He described the potential of Confucianism as follows:

“Confucianism promotes an ‘anthropocosmic’ social ecology with a spiritual dimension of embeddedness in the universe. This embeddedness reflects a belief that human moral virtues have their natural counterpart in cosmic processes, such that cosmological and human virtues comprise a single dynamic process of transformation in the universe”.<sup>39</sup>

He then pointed to *ziran* and *wuwei* as Daoist principles especially pertaining to ecology.

“Together, *tzu-jan* (*ziran*) and *wu-wei* provide appreciation of the need for humanity to understand, identify with, and yield to, natural rhythms and processes, and encourage the harmonious use of senses and technologies, rather than the imposition of form or moral judgement upon life’s processes, in order that humanity maintains a ‘consciousness of participation’ in the cosmos.”.<sup>40</sup> “In general, Chinese Buddhism stresses heed for the consequences of human actions, and life-affirming asceticism of restraint, care, saving, recycling, conservation and appropriate diet and consumption patterns. For economic policy, it suggests a ‘basic needs’ approach between extremes of indulgence and denial, an emphasis on co-operation and inter-dependence, practically manifested in frugal and sustainable partnership societies, and a precedence of quality of life (i.e. fulfillment of spiritual potential and universal heritage) over quantities of production and consumption (i.e. fulfillment of material potential and individual heritage)”.<sup>41</sup> Together these three traditions stress the influence human actions have on the natural environment and the importance of considering the cosmological consequences of production and consumption, technological innovations, and social ethics.

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<sup>39</sup> Jenkins, T.J. “Chinese traditional thought and practice: lessons for an ecological economics worldview,” *Ecological Economics* 40 (2002): 41.

<sup>40</sup> Jenkins, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Jenkins, 44.

On the other hand, Jenkins pointed out that Chinese folk religion may not really be a viable long term solution because of its failure to affect Chinese environmental degradation in the past century. “Yet, popular religion embodies values of collective self-interest which may offer a survival advantage over short-term and ultimately destructive individualism and, from an environmental policy perspective, buoyant popular religious values can catalyse appropriate social change. The prospect of long-term environmental benefits, for example, may carry weight among the Chinese populace because of the importance of long-term material interests in a society in which ancestral concerns persist; and ingenious ways may be found to tap into popular practices (such as geomancy and traditional medicine) based on traditional organismic worldviews in which individual and community wellbeing are integrally related to wider cosmic wellbeing”.<sup>42</sup> He argued that Chinese folk traditions may be useful in motivating ecological action on issues in the short term but may not be the best option for creating a culture of environmental ethics.

Jenkins proposed that from a Chinese perspective, the current environmental situation was caused by the scale and type of economic activity, resulting from an imbalance of yin and yang, with yang dominating. Since traditional Chinese thought focuses on systemic interconnectedness, Jenkins applied this principle to modern economy as follows: “The implications of systemic wisdom applied to economics are far-reaching. The non-linear nature of system dynamics requires emphasis on optimal system size rather than maximization of single variables (e.g. GNP or profit)”.<sup>43</sup> If one does not focus on maximizing profit but instead on creating environmentally sustainable

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<sup>42</sup> Jenkins, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Jenkins, 50.

economies, the ecological situation would not continually progress toward greater destruction. Jenkins argued that since the Chinese economy and in fact the entire global economic system are responsible for the current degradation, the solution to environmental problems lies in revamping the economic system more along the lines of traditional Chinese philosophy.

Both Jenkins and Tucker chose to add other elements of the Chinese religion to the Daoist environmental ethic created in their articles because they each recognized the difficulty in separating the different strands of Chinese religion from each other. For Tucker, the social ethics in Confucianism and the reverence for nature in Daoism complement each other and when combined, form an environmental ethic in which acting morally toward other humans leads to a more protectionist attitude toward nature. For Jenkins, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religions all provide different perspectives on the environment, but no one branch of Chinese religion can support environmentalism completely on its own. He incorporates different aspects of each tradition, focusing especially on Confucianism and Daoism, into an ethic that advocates reforming the Chinese economic system in order to reduce pollution and environmental degradation. Tucker and Jenkins both realized the accuracy of this statement, which led them to avoid distinguishing as clearly between different branches of Chinese religion: “The Taoist ethic may be characterized as *yin* (i.e. feminine, intuitive, yielding, tolerant, permissive and mystical), in complementary contrast to the *yang* (i.e. masculine, rational, domineering and managerial) Confucian ethic”.<sup>44</sup> The syncretism of Chinese religion is highly fascinating because instead of viewing Confucianism and Daoism as separate religions, one could look at them as two schools of thought within one larger religious

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<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, 42.

tradition. The practice of Chinese religion did not change depending on whether one favored Daoism or Confucianism, especially if one was not one of the elite with the opportunity to become literate and educated in the classics. However, certain ideas from each school of thought trickled down to the common people; for instance, social relationships from Confucian philosophy and the yin-yang theory of qi were known even by the illiterate majority.

Some scholars would not go so far as to say Daoism, as a whole, is inherently in line with environmental aims, but they often agree that certain elements, schools of thought, or texts do support environmental ideals. Some examples include the text, *One Hundred and Eighty Precepts*, the Shangqing school of thought, the interaction between the concepts of Dao and de, and the concept of wuwei. Each of these scholars started from a different place in Daoism and, as a result, came to a different conclusion as to how Daoists should act toward the environment.

In his article, “Daoist Ecology: The Inner Transformation. A Study of the Precepts of the Early Daoist Ecclesia”, Kristofer Schipper focused on the ancient Daoist text, *One Hundred and Eighty Precepts (Yibaibashijie)*, and the environmental leaning many of the precepts take. As with the *Zhuangzi*, *One Hundred and Eighty Precepts* promotes living a simple life for monks, in addition to the idea that every organism lives best in its natural habitat.<sup>45</sup> This idea that every living thing should remain in its own natural habitat is not only based on the concept of wuwei but also related to a Daoist criticism of current religious practice of the time. “When humans approach nature from their anthropocentric point of view and begin to impose their ideas on nature, there is

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<sup>45</sup> Schipper, Kristofer. “Daoist Ecology: The Inner Transformation. A Study of the Precepts of the Early Daoist Ecclesia,” *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 84.

already a lack of respect. That this lack of respect is intimately linked to human religion, and especially to its sacrificial practices, is a very profound and important insight”.<sup>46</sup> The Daoist opposition to sacrifice not only counters the ritualistic nature of Confucianism, but also promotes an ecological worldview.

At least 20 of the precepts deal directly with the environment and some of these have a decidedly modern applicability. For example, precept number 36, “You should not throw poisonous substances into lakes, rivers, and seas” and number 53, “You should not dry up wet marshes” speak to environmental problems plaguing China and the rest of the world today.<sup>47</sup> Others deal indirectly with environmental problems, such as precepts promoting simple lifestyles and treating animals well. These precepts also speak to the ecological problems of today since consumption in Western countries especially has become a huge source of waste and the cause of much environmental degradation in its use of new technology and rapid production to provide perpetually unsatisfied consumers with more material goods.

In his article, “Respecting the Environment, or Visualizing Highest Clarity”, James Miller called for a much more spiritual approach to address environmental concerns based on techniques found in the Shangqing school of Daoist thought. According to Miller, visualizing harmony between the self and the cosmos will foster respect for the environment, which will in turn lower the levels of environmental degradation.<sup>48</sup> He emphasized the fact that without respect for the environment, no environmental preservation can occur. However, this method may not be the most effective since only

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<sup>46</sup> Schipper, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Schipper, 81.

<sup>48</sup> Miller, James. “Respecting the Environment, or Visualizing Highest Clarity,” *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 358.

monks and nuns practice Daoism in this type of way and not all monks or nuns in China are of the Shangqing school of thought. On the other hand, fostering correct thinking among the population has always been an important part of Chinese political and ethical theory so perhaps this approach of first focusing on viewing nature in the proper manner (though not necessarily through meditation) would lead to an environmental revolution in Chinese society.

Although they were citing different texts from different schools of thought, Schipper and Miller came to entirely different conclusions about the relationship between Daoism and environmentalism. Schipper extracted from the text direct regulations to be followed by monks that specifically addressed the environment and humans being a part of nature while Miller called for spiritual actions of the mind among Daoist monks and nuns. Schipper's precepts could and should be applied more generally to the population at large but visualizing harmony between self and cosmos will probably only be effective among monks and nuns. The problem with such an overtly spiritual approach is that the texts are generally vague on how to visualize this harmony and what the exact results would be of the recommended visualization. Another problem might be marketing this approach to a mostly agnostic Chinese population. Many Chinese would find this solution highly impractical if it only involved spiritual meditation, which is the way of monks and nuns. If however, it was expanded to include correct thinking among citizens, visualizing harmony between self and the cosmos could lead to a change in the relationship between humans and nature in China today.

In his article, "Putting the Te back into Taoism", Roger T. Ames argued that the polarity and interdependence of dao and de are instrumental in creating a Daoist

environmental ethic. De (德) is usually translated as “virtue” or “power”. Ames described it as follows: “there is a harmonious order, a regularity, a pattern achieved in the process of existence that is empirically evident and which brings unity to diversity, oneness to plurality, similarity to difference. Te, when seen as a particular focus or event in the Tao, is a principle of individuation; when seen as a holograph of this underlying harmony, diffusing in all directions in coloration of the whole, it is a principle of integration”.<sup>49</sup> De is the particular perspective of an action or event whereas dao is the process or natural environment for any de.<sup>50</sup> Framing the world according to polar concepts instead of dualistic concepts leads to an end of viewing the environment as an “other”. Ames argued that de together with dao emphasizes the necessity of looking at the world from an aesthetic, polar perspective and accepting constant change within the universe.

In her article, “Metic Intelligence or Responsible Non-Action? Further Reflections on the *Zhuangzi*, *Daodejing*, and *Neiye*”, Lisa Raphals argued that wuwei in Daoism doesn’t mean ignoring environmental problems and avoiding all action. She admitted that classical Daoism does not support large-scale intervention in the natural world but she did maintain that wuwei actually means individuals in the public sphere should use three methods of indirect action discussed in classical Daoist texts to help rectify the environmental situation, namely self-cultivation, action at a distance, and transforming the people through example. The first, self-cultivation, is used by sages to use their own forces of qi to create power (de). Since the self is connected to the cosmos

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<sup>49</sup> Ames, Roger T. “Putting the Te back into Taosim,” In *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 129.

<sup>50</sup> Ames, 122.

through the flow of qi, cultivating one's own qi is also cultivating the qi of the cosmos.<sup>51</sup> The second, action at a distance, is also used by a sage to affect the lives of others indirectly. Raphals wrote that "a realized sage can have a nurturing effect on the world at large by acting at a distance".<sup>52</sup> The third, transforming the people through example, is a more direct type of action carried out by rulers in their kingdoms. Rulers should endeavor to create conditions in which people and nature itself can live their appointed lives peacefully.<sup>53</sup> Since the first two involve sages using internal spiritual acts and the third involves a ruler leading by example, it is hard to believe these Daoist ideas will be used by modern environmentalists, especially Western ones, who tend to be more concerned with immediate tangible results.

In his article, "Non-Action and the Environment Today: A Conceptual and Applied Study of Laozi's Philosophy", Liu Xiaogan argued that the Daoist concept of wuwei can be applied to a variety of environmental issues today and gave examples of two such situations in which a wuwei approach may have obtained better results. Liu described wuwei as follows: "It generally demands temperance of certain actions, such as oppression, interruption, competition, strife, confrontation, and so on. However the concept also positively implies a special manner and style of behavior, namely, 'action as non-action,' or 'actions that appear or are felt as almost nothing,' or simply, 'natural action'".<sup>54</sup> According to Liu, wuwei means acting in accordance with the Dao and as a result with one's natural surroundings. It is not a policy of noninterference by foregoing

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<sup>51</sup> Raphals, Lisa. "Metic Intelligence or Responsible Non-Action? Further Reflections on the *Zhuangzi*, *Daode jing*, and *Neiye*," *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 307.

<sup>52</sup> Raphals, 309.

<sup>53</sup> Raphals, 309-10.

<sup>54</sup> Liu, Xiaogan. "Non-Action and the Environment Today: A Conceptual and Applied Study of Laozi's Philosophy," *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 317.



action but it is a policy of noninterference by acting in a manner that does not upset the natural order of things. “Environmental preservation involves serious and complicated issues affecting various groups of people and different nations and regions; thus, it demands a patient, gradual, and enduring working attitude that is in line with the Daoist wisdom of wuwei”.<sup>55</sup> The complex nature of many of today’s environmental problems requires a careful assessment of the issue and prudent course of action. Applying wuwei to environmental problems may not instantly resolve the issue and repair the damage but in the long run, nature will be healed.

Liu also argued that in regard to environmental issues as well as in any problem, humans can make one of two types of mistakes: not making enough effort or making too much effort and thus creating a larger issue. The second of these is much more difficult to remedy due to the now larger scope of the problem and also due to the amount of resources committed to making that error in the first place.<sup>56</sup> When following the Daoist principle of wuwei, one would most likely choose a course of action that will not turn out to be the second mistake, which will not only be beneficial to the environment but will avoid waste.

Both Raphals and Liu found wuwei to be an important concept with environmental implications but in entirely different ways. Raphals wrote her article in response to an article by Russell Kirkland (which will be discussed more fully later in this paper), in which he argued that using wuwei in an environmental context would mean doing absolutely nothing at all, so she responded by asserting that specific types of action falling under the category of wuwei would be instrumental in resolving ecological

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<sup>55</sup> Liu, 320.

<sup>56</sup> Liu, 334.

difficulties. Liu took a similar approach, arguing that wuwei would mean acting with nature or as a part of nature after careful deliberation. Both Liu and Raphals would agree that aggressive direct action is often not the best option for addressing environmental problems and both cited Daoism's focus on wuwei as evidence that indirect action could play an important role in environmental activism today.

However there are differences in the approaches of these two scholars. Raphals focused on the actions of public figures such as sages and rulers whereas Liu applied wuwei to the actions of any environmentalist. The problem with Raphals's approach is the lack of Daoist rulers and sages in China and the world at large. Because the National Daoist Association is still recovering from nearly 30 years of Maoist control of China, which led to repression, persecution, and destruction, and because most Communist Party local, provincial, and national leaders lack religious sentiment, there are no sages or rulers to take up the environmental cause under Raphals's conception of wuwei. On the other hand, Liu's approach seems to be applicable to any environmentalist whether Daoist, Chinese, both, or none since he focused on deep consideration of all the facts, circumstances, and repercussions before acting.

Another difference lies in Raphals's focus on spiritual action compared to Liu's more practical focus. Liu's conception of wuwei and its application to environmentalism is not even inherently Daoist; it is just good advice in many situations. Although other Daoist texts and principles would support Liu's definition of wuwei, his application of it seems to be common-sense advice that many other religions and cultures would support. In contrast, Raphals's defined wuwei as the spiritual acts of sages, meaning the solution to China's current ecological crisis would depend on Daoist monks cultivating their qi.

Unfortunately, not very many practical Western ecological scientists would accept this type of religious solution, and it is unlikely Chinese scientists would either. It would also be difficult for the general public to get behind this effort since there would be no need for them to be involved in the action.

Among the scholars suggesting specific concepts within Daoism are environmental while other concepts are neutral, most also gave an example of a way to act environmentally ethically in accordance with that particular concept. In these articles, it is far easier to look at the practicality and effectiveness of the theory since one can determine whether the proposed action would really combat environmental destruction. Immediately, one can see two distinct categories of action: spiritual actions carried out by religious leaders and actions that can be carried out by lay people or clergy in their daily lives. There are two different comparisons between the categories: one between spiritual and mundane actions and the other between actions committed by leaders and by followers. In the case of nature, which is very much a part of the mundane world, I find mundane actions more practical. The line between the sacred and the profane is blurred in Chinese religion, since the earth is the mundane world but also functions as a deity that together with Heaven produced humanity. However, everyday acts would more effective in the Chinese environmental situation unless a majority of the Chinese population believes that meditation on the harmony of the universe can legitimately solve problems, which I do not believe is the case. It is much harder to choose between actions by leaders or by followers since it is usually better to get as many people on board as possible but when leaders act by example, people will follow and imitate their actions. The monks and other members of the National Daoist Association planned to utilize this idea in their

activism, in that they hoped their example of living and working “green” at monasteries and sacred mountains would inspire lay Chinese people to start living according to environmental principles as well.

### **III. Daoism Opposes Environmentalism**

While many scholars have argued for a connection between environmentalism and Daoism, a few scholars decided to argue the opposite point of view: Daoism is not inherently environmental and does not contain environmental concepts. These articles can be divided into two categories: those that argue that Western scholars have misinterpreted Daoist concepts according to their own bias and worldview, and those that argue that ideas within classical Daoism are neutral towards or against environmentalist concepts. The criticism of these scholars is imperative in order to remind the world of the shortcomings of any religion in providing an environmental ethic for its own culture or for another.

In his article, “Chinese Religion, ‘Daoism’, and Deep Ecology”, Jordan Paper argued that Western scholars have been grossly misinterpreting Daoist texts and that such scholars should not only be analyzing “classical Daoist” texts in the first place. Instead he pointed out that there is one unified Chinese religion combining elements from Confucian philosophy, Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. His point about syncretism within Chinese religion is not exactly new, but the idea of three separate Chinese religions that was developed by Jesuit Christian missionaries in China in the late sixteenth century has been around for so long that many do not think to question its ill-founded premise and the somewhat dubious scholarship behind its creation.<sup>57</sup> By Paper’s exceptionally critical analysis, scholars are drawn to Daoism because it is only a philosophy and does not have

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<sup>57</sup> Paper, 109.

all the institutional and ritualistic trappings of a religion. Yet they attempt to then use Daoism for the religious purpose of inspiring and instilling environmental ethics among the general population, a task which religion is far better equipped to accomplish than philosophy.<sup>58</sup>

Despite his critical view of other scholarly work on the subject of Daoism and environmentalism, Paper offered his own idea of the Chinese religious perspective on the relationship between humanity and the environment. He argued that elements of both Daojia (Daoism) and Rujia (Confucianism) inform this Chinese religious perspective. From Daojia comes an appreciation for nature based on the cosmological interconnectedness of Heaven, Earth, and humans.<sup>59</sup> However, Rujia adds that to truly act ethically toward the environment, one must also act ethically toward one's fellow human beings.<sup>60</sup> To enjoy life on the earth, it is important to protect the environment, especially through one's interactions with other humans.

Paper's accusation that Western scholars are twisting Chinese religion to suit their own ends is important to keep in mind and is also very accurate, considering the impossibility of scholarly objectivity. His point is well taken, though, since it is difficult to avoid bias when studying other cultures or religions and is often best to be up front about one's biases when making such a study. However, not all scholars interpreting Daoism in support of environmentalism are Western; in this paper, thus far, the works of five Chinese scholars, Tu Wei-Ming, Liu Xiaogan, Lai Chi-tim, Zhang Jiyu, and Li Yuanguo have been discussed and the work of a sixth, Yifu Tuan, will be discussed later. Of these six scholars, all agree that Daoism is at least in some respects highly compatible

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<sup>58</sup> Paper, 115.

<sup>59</sup> Paper, 119.

<sup>60</sup> Paper, 121.

with environmental thought, although Yifu Tuan found it difficult to see the practicality in using Daoism in environmental ethics. It is unclear whether Paper also found interpretations by Chinese scholars suspect or whether he generally found their interpretations better than those of Western scholars. A quick survey of the literature presented in this paper shows that the articles of three of the Chinese scholars already discussed focus on exceedingly similar interpretations of the interconnectedness of Heaven, Earth, and humanity through the flow of qi in the cosmos that none of the Western scholars, except Parkes somewhat vaguely and Paper himself, seemed to have understood. Instead, the Western scholars tended to focus on the more enigmatic concepts of wuwei, ziran, and the Dao itself, which are not mentioned by Chinese scholars as often.

It is also interesting to compare Paper's position to those of Jenkins and Tucker. All three of these scholars found that Chinese religion as a whole should be used in developing a single environmental ethic not one based on a single religion such as Daoism. The difference between Paper's and Jenkins's arguments is that Paper promoted the idea of the existence of one united, syncretic Chinese religion whereas Jenkins only argued that there are elements from Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religions which, when woven together, form a strong environmental ethic condemning materialism and promoting a more biocentric view of nature. Tucker's argument is similar to Jenkins's but only includes Confucianism and Daoism. In the end, however, Paper, Tucker, and Jenkins came to the same conclusion that a Chinese religious ethic combining different strands of traditional Chinese thought would be effective in promoting environmentalism across China and halting detrimental ecological practices. For these scholars, neither Daoism's focus on the relationship between humans and

nature nor Confucianism's "social ecology", dependent on interpersonal relationships, is broad enough to stand alone, but together they form a stronger environmental ethic, relating people to each other and to nature as well.

In his article, "'Responsible Non-Action' in a Natural World: Perspectives from the *Neiye*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Daodejing*", Russell Kirkland argued that the concept of wuwei found in classical Daoist texts does not promote environmental activism. He wrote, "I shall be radical enough to argue that we are reading texts from people of an alien culture, ancient China, who took seriously three propositions that strike most modern interpreters as utterly preposterous: 1) that Dao exists; 2) that it operates wisely and reliably, without human assistance; and 3) that any interventional activity by humans will inevitably interfere with that operation and will lead, ineluctably to unintended, by quite unavoidable, tragedy".<sup>61</sup> Kirkland argued that the ancient Chinese were essentially fatalist, and in spite of the magnitude of today's environmental crisis, would not have advocated interfering with the processes of the Dao. He argued against an interpretation of Daoism that calls on the practitioner to meticulously deliberate then act accordingly, the result being a moral deed. "In fact, from the classical Daoist perspective, it is clearly morally suspect for humans to presume that they are justified in judging what might constitute 'impending ecological danger,' or to presume that interventional action is necessary to rectify the situation".<sup>62</sup> In short, Kirkland found that according to the Daoist concept of wuwei, it is not morally right for humans to interfere with the processes of nature since

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<sup>61</sup> Kirkland, Russell. "'Responsible Non-Action' in a Natural World: Perspectives from the *Neiye*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Daode jing*," *Daoism and Ecology: Ways within a Cosmic Landscape*, ed. N.J. Girardot, James Miller and Liu Xiaogan (Harvard University Press, 2001), 294.

<sup>62</sup> Kirkland, 289.

that would imply that humans are above nature or know what's best for nature, which is clearly not a Daoist position.

In light of the earlier discussion of wuwei, Kirkland's position is very interesting, since both Raphals and Liu argued that wuwei does not literally mean not doing anything at all. He is correct in saying that wuwei would not promote radical activism, for instance that of Greenpeace, but his argument that wuwei means doing nothing is suspect, even if solely on the grounds that someone clearly acted in order to create the environmental crisis and no amount of inaction is going to fix the resulting crisis. Of course, two actions do not add up to one non-action but one action and one non-action don't add up to one non-action either. I would prefer acting a second time in a carefully chosen and deliberated manner according to Liu Xiaogan's definition of wuwei, since the situation might revert back to its original state as a result of the second action.

Kirkland also pointed out that any human interventions will interfere with the workings of the Dao and cause tragedy. This point is directly contradicted by the claim made by Tu, Lai, Zhang, and Li that the morality of human actions affects the status and flow of qi between the three powers, which can eventually lead to blessings or calamities. To eliminate this contradiction, I argue that if the human intervention is immoral, which in Daoism would mean not acting in harmony with nature (ziran), then it will disrupt the workings of the Dao and cause a great calamity. It follows that there must be at least the possibility of moral human intervention, in which case wuwei cannot mean doing absolutely nothing.

In their article, "Chinese Traditional Thought and Practice: Lessons for an Ecological Economics worldview", Jordan Paper and Li Chuang Paper argued that



despite the promising nature of Chinese philosophy, Chinese religion does not always correspond with environmentalism. “In essence, Chinese philosophical understanding does not separate a creator from the created, as in the monotheistic cultures. The natural world, including humans, is the reality beyond the ultimate nothingness; there is no other world than this one. Theoretically Chinese culture should be more sensitive to environmental concerns than those cultures whose religious understanding focuses on a world other than this one”.<sup>63</sup> Though philosophical Daoism provides an excellent basis for an environmental ethic, popular Chinese religion is not very eco-friendly. As an example, the Papers took a look at the One Child Policy, a method to control the Chinese population and thereby limit environmental destruction, and how it conflicts with traditional Chinese religion, which focuses on preserving the family line. In traditional Chinese religion, the family is extremely important. The living members of the family venerate and provide for the deceased members and in return, the ancestor spirits protect the living family members.<sup>64</sup> The family structure is patrilineal so it is important for each successive generation to produce at least one male heir.

Since the Chinese population doubled between 1950 and 1980, the government realized that something had to be done to slow population growth or massive starvation and ecological damage would result. The government then implemented the One Child Policy, allowing each family to have only one child with exceptions for minorities and rural families.<sup>65</sup> This state of affairs produced a conundrum since by law, each family can only have one child but according to Chinese religion, a male heir is necessary to carry

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<sup>63</sup> Paper, Jordan, and Paper, Li Chuang, “Chinese Religions, Population, and the Environment,” *Population, Consumption, and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses*, ed. Harold Coward (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 176

<sup>64</sup> Paper and Paper, 179.

<sup>65</sup> Paper and Paper, 182.

on the family line. Already there is a gender imbalance in China, due to female infanticide and gender selective abortions, resulting from the combination of the necessity of a male heir and the One Child Policy. The Communist Party tried to eradicate religion and the strong familial ties associated with it throughout the entire Maoist era and especially during the Cultural Revolution. This resulted in an interesting cultural phenomenon in which men who came of age before the Cultural Revolution felt obligated to produce a male heir but men who came of age during or after the Cultural Revolution are less concerned about this issue.<sup>66</sup> The only solution J. and L.C. Paper found to this problem is for Chinese religion to reformat itself such that gender equality is the norm and children of either sex may carry on the family line.<sup>67</sup> In that case, Chinese religion would not be promoting environmentalism through its own principles; it would be adapting to new social circumstances in order to align itself with environmental necessities.

Again Jordan and Li Chuang Paper raise problems defining Chinese religion. The nature of Chinese religion is difficult to describe, but for a long time Western scholars chose to look at religion in China as three separate religions, whereas J. and L.C. Paper contended that there is one Chinese religion with elements of each of the three traditions woven into a syncretic fabric. Few in China identify themselves with a single religious tradition since all three inform religious discourse in Chinese culture. By that definition, one might think the above article by J. and L.C. Paper is not about Daoism at all.

Whether or not the article is about Daoism specifically, I have chosen to include it because it illustrates two points exceptionally well: first, the disconnections between

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<sup>66</sup> Paper and Paper, 184

<sup>67</sup> Paper and Paper, 187.

religious practice and the theology or philosophy of Daoist texts in China, past and present, and second, an example of a blatant contradiction between environmental ideas and traditional Chinese religious thought.

The incongruity between religious practice and the philosophy in Daoist texts came about because of the low literacy rates in ancient China. Only the educated elite had the option of reading Daoist texts to ponder and study theoretical ideas such as wuwei or the Dao, so popular Chinese religion continued in almost the same manner as it did before the creation of Daoism. Religious practice in China deals with family, ancestors, superstition, and any number of other deities, whereas Daoist texts address issues, such as aesthetic ethics, theories of the nature and processes of the cosmos, relationality, and polarity, that have no real relevance to the daily life of the average Chinese peasant. Today few people in China beyond academics read these texts because they are viewed as boring and confusing. However, many Chinese people still perform rituals at the graves of their ancestors on certain holidays or during Spring Festival, the most important Chinese holiday. J. and L. C. Papers' article discussed the importance of maintaining the family throughout many generations through a male heir in Chinese religion, which is not likely to be an important issue in most Daoist texts.

The fact that traditional Chinese religion opposes environmental ideas in this case is also very interesting. As stated before, the One Child Policy created a giant philosophical problem within Chinese religion because there is now a choice between overpopulation leading to starvation, environmental destruction, and death in this life and not having a male heir to carry on the family, thus leading to starvation and death in the

next life.<sup>68</sup> For J. and L. C. Paper and the Chinese government, the only way to resolve this conundrum is to change the religious tradition. The Chinese government is not actually concerned with Chinese religion, except in its efforts to get rid of superstition, but it has no intention of allowing mass starvation and environmental ruin because of overpopulation. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the Chinese government to ignore the religious traditions it wants to eradicate in favor of preventing a monumental disaster in the present life. Perhaps Daoist texts could be interpreted to support the One Child Policy because overpopulating Earth would not be acting according to ziran and wuwei and would most certainly cause disruption to the balance of qi between Earth and Heaven. However, this knowledge would probably have no effect on the current contradiction because of the aforementioned disconnection between Daoist texts and the Chinese religious reality.

#### **IV. Environmentalism in Daoist Theory and Practice**

A few scholars have pointed out that while Daoism does present many principles and concepts that could be applied to environmentalism, in practice using Daoism in environmental ethics would not be effective, neither in its own cultural context in China nor in Western cultures. These scholars have pointed to the existence of environmental degradation in China previous to exposure to the West and the gap between the philosophy and texts of a religion and the way people actually practice that religion as evidence of truth of their statements.

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<sup>68</sup> According to Chinese traditional religion, when a person dies, it is the responsibility of his or her surviving relatives to provide for him or her through rituals in exchange for protection from the ancestor spirits. If there is no male descendent to carry out these rituals feeding them, then the ancestors become hungry ghosts wandering the earth.

In his article, “Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China”, Yi-fu Tuan argued that since environmental destruction was present in China before exposure to Western influences, traditional Chinese religions and philosophies are just as ineffective in preventing an ecological crisis as the Judeo-Christian tradition. He criticized the approach of other scholars, saying they were too wrapped up in academic treatments of ancient texts to answer the real question of whether or not these texts influenced environmental action.<sup>69</sup> Tuan acknowledged the existence of environmental ideas in the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and other important Daoist texts but pointed to China’s past practices causing environmental degradation as proof that if Daoism was not effective in the past in China, it cannot be effective now in China or elsewhere in the world.

In his article, “Can the East Help the West Value Nature?”, Holmes Rolston, III, argued that Eastern religions would not be able to help Western societies value nature unless those societies converted to the religion in question, which is unlikely. Rolston discussed concepts from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism in his article and came to essentially the same conclusion about each, but I am mainly concerned with his points made about Daoism. He posed the question of whether the “binary opposition” of yin and yang (what I have earlier in this paper referred to as polarity) would be workable in conjunction with evolutionary science. While he acknowledged that science does support the Daoist conception of the universe’s endless cycles of yin and yang to some extent especially in biology, he also pointed out that there is no binary opposition in other areas

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<sup>69</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. “Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behavior: Examples from Europe and China,” In *Ecology and Religion in History*, ed. David Spring and Eileen Spring (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), 91.

of science such as geology or astronomy.<sup>70</sup> He then suggested that “perhaps the Taoist model is not so much a descriptive claim, scientifically or metaphysically, about the way the universe is operating, as it is a prescription for human conduct”.<sup>71</sup> This characterization of Daoism fits with the claim that the West has had too much yang for many centuries and needs more yin to balance it out. The solution to the ecological crisis according to Daoism would then be to incorporate more yin, more femininity and passivity into Western society’s relationship with the environment. Unfortunately, as Rolston pointed out, it is difficult to follow this advice since it is extremely vague. It forces one to consider how exactly one would incorporate more yin into environmental policymaking.

Both Tuan and Rolston do not find using Daoism to create an environmental ethic at all practical, but for different reasons. Rolston ultimately concluded that “the East needs considerable reformulation of its sources before it can preach much to the West”,<sup>72</sup> meaning if the East has not even found a way to create a viable environmental ethic with their own religions, the West will not be able to use them either. Tuan essentially limited his evaluation to the use of Daoism in the Chinese environmental situation, and concluded that if Daoist thought did not prevent the Chinese from destroying the environment in the past, it probably will not accomplish that task in the present. His conclusion can be applied to Western societies as well. Rolston compared Daoist cosmology based on yin and yang to evolutionary science to determine its ineffectiveness, but Tuan looked at history for an explanation. The difference between these two scholars’

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<sup>70</sup> Rolston, III. Holmes. “Can the East Help the West Value Nature?” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (Apr., 1987), 179.

<sup>71</sup> Rolston, 180.

<sup>72</sup> Rolston, 189.

perspectives lies in the point that Rolston is even skeptical about Daoism's relationship with environmental thought whereas Tuan only questions the effectiveness and practicality of such an application.

However, if one looks carefully at the work of other scholars, one can see similar doubts creeping into their analyses. For instance, in "Chinese Religion, 'Daoism', and Deep Ecology" discussed above, Jordan Paper presented his idea of a Chinese religious environmental ethic incorporating elements of both Confucianism and Daoism, which was strikingly similar to Tucker's but far less optimistic about its gaining positive results. "Those seeking to create alternatives to the dominant Western traditions are not likely to find a firm basis in fantasies of a Daoism that never existed. They too need to understand the realities, both positive and negative, of Chinese culture for models alternative to Western ones that will stand some chance of surviving the rapidly changing fashions of New Age religion".<sup>73</sup> Leaving aside his comparison of environmental ethicists to New Age religious followers, Paper is very pessimistic about the utility of Daoism as an environmental ethic in a Western context, reminding ethicists not to romanticize Eastern religions since there is always a negative side to every religious tradition. As evidence of one negative of using Daoism or Chinese religion in environmental contexts, in another article about Chinese population and the environment, Paper found Chinese religion with its emphasis on family to be utterly incompatible with a necessary ecological measure, the One Child Policy.

Lisa Raphals, when writing about the use of wuwei in environmental activism, is also somewhat skeptical of its usefulness. She posed questions that are difficult to answer: "Does our current situation entail a degree and kind of interference with nature/Dao that

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<sup>73</sup> Paper, 122.

is beyond the conceptual scope of these texts? Is our technological grasp of implements of mass destruction, through atomic warfare in the 1950s and 1960s and now through environmental disaster, simply beyond what these texts envisaged?”<sup>74</sup> If the answers to these questions are yes, then an environmental ethic built on Daoism would not address the new type of ecological crisis the world faces today. She is also skeptical of using texts to determine how people would act, writing, “Texts are not persons; we cannot predict the behavior of Daoist humans from Daoist texts, especially within a tradition that prized ‘flexible response to circumstances’ (ying bian) and the ability to deal resourcefully with unpredictable events”.<sup>75</sup> She addressed directly the problem Tuan found with many scholarly treatments of Daoism and environmentalism, namely, that texts and practice are often far more dissimilar than would be convenient for scholars attempting to objectively study them.

Altogether, six arguments against the utility of creating a Daoist environmental ethic have been voiced: 1) there is a deep chasm separating Daoist texts from Chinese religious practice; 2) the environmental ideas found in Daoist texts did not motivate the Chinese to avoid polluting and harming the environment in the past; 3) the principles to be followed within the environmental ethic are often vague or impractical, making it difficult to determine how to put them into practice; 4) if the modern ecological crisis is different from past ecological crises in type not degree, the ancient texts may not apply to this new problem; 5) Daoism is actually not its own religion, instead it is part of syncretic Chinese religion developed from elements of Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and ancient Chinese religion; and 6) using these ideas outside a Chinese context would be

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<sup>74</sup> Raphals, 310.

<sup>75</sup> Raphals, 311.



difficult due to differences in the theory of philosophy itself. Of these six objections, the first and third ones pose the greatest obstacles to using Daoism in environmental ethics in China, while the last one poses the greatest challenge to attempting to translate a Daoist environmental ethic across cultures. Though Daoism provides many principles and concepts that could justify an eco-friendly worldview, the concept of interconnectedness among Heaven, Earth, and humanity through the flow of qi being the best of those discussed, in the end, a Daoist environmental ethic will probably not be effective due to one or more of the objections listed above.

Even though a purely Daoist environmental ethic would not be practical, a Chinese religious ethic could be effective in China at least, because it would address the disconnection between religious texts and practice and clarify some of the vague environmental principles. Although there is no way to remedy China's past environmental conduct, one can only hope that in light of an environmental crisis of this magnitude, the Chinese will be motivated to act based on their religious traditions. Tu Wei-Ming's description of the interconnectedness between Heaven, Earth, and humanity as a relationship of filial piety illustrates how multiple strands of Chinese thought can support the same principle and appeal to a wider audience within China.

Daoism, like all major world religions, has been examined by many scholars of different fields, all looking for a justification for an environmental ethic in order to prevent the destruction of the human race. Numerous papers and books have been written about whether Daoism could be used to such a purpose, expressing many different perspectives on this issue. Although Daoism contains a variety of environmental principles, an environmental ethic based on texts largely unknown to the general

population would not be successful. Hopefully in the near future, the Chinese government will strengthen its effort to combat the environmental crisis in China, perhaps using Chinese religion to promote an ethical relationship between humans and the environment.

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