

Two Paths to Self-Realization:
Übermensch and *Zhenren*
自我實現的兩條路徑：「超人」與「真人」說

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關鍵詞：「真人」、「超人」、自我實現、自我實踐、自我超越、自我轉化

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Abstract

This paper explicates the terms *Übermensch* and *zhenren* as different models for achieving self-realization, arguing that Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Zhuangzi 莊子 (369?-286 BCE) are not presenting a human ideal of perfectibility. They are describing, and attempting to evoke, a life-affirmative attitude crucial to their understandings of self-realization. After a brief discussion of the meaning of "self-realization," Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's respective understandings of society and nature are explicated to show how the *Übermensch* and *zhenren* differ. Their differences in tone are discussed by examining four shared motifs, namely the mountain tree, the roaring wind, the wanderer, and the thief. Nietzsche's approach entails the exercise of the will to power and some anxiety. Zhuangzi's path is carefree and easy going with a lack of anxiety. They offer two different approaches that can inform our own projects.

摘要

本文闡釋「超人」與「真人」作為通向自我實現的不同範式，並且論證：尼采（1844-1900）和莊子（369?-286 BCE）不是在表達關於人類之可完美性的理想，而是在描述、在試圖喚起一種肯定生命的態度，這對他們有關自我實現的理念至關重要。在簡論「自我實現」的意義之後，本文接著解釋尼采和莊子對社會與自然的理解，以顯示「超人」與「真人」間的區別。藉著剖析二者共用的四種意象——即山樹、狂風、流浪者及盜賊——尼采和莊子之間的差異更得以凸顯。尼采的觀點包含了權力意志之發揮以及些許焦慮。莊子之道則是悠然自得，無憂無慮。兩者提供的不同路徑，可作為我們各人追求自我實現的參照。

There is a perplexing difficulty in attempting to discuss Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's (1844-1900) and Zhuangzi's 莊子 (369?-286 BCE) notions of self-realization, that is, *Übermensch* (超人) and *zhenren* (真人) respectively. The difficulty lies in the antinomian, iconoclastic, somewhat skeptical, and the extremely non-systematic works of these two respective thinkers. Both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi respectively reject the common peoples' spiritual social values of their epochs, and each envisions a new program for humanity. Their proposals were so radically opposed to systematic, socially accepted theories and practices that they intentionally present ideas in a rhetorical, poetic, and metaphorical manner. Consequently a logical, systematic presentation of Nietzsche's or Zhuangzi's views runs the risk of dangerously misunderstanding their respective models of self-realization.

In this paper I explicate the terms *Übermensch* and *zhenren* as different models for achieving self-realization. I argue that Nietzsche and Zhuangzi are *not* presenting a human ideal of perfectibility,¹ but rather that they are describing, and attempting to evoke, a life-affirmative attitude or posture which is crucial to their understandings of self-realization. After a brief discussion of the meaning of "self-realization," I draw out, in part two, Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's respective understandings of society and nature to show how the *Übermensch* and *zhenren* differ. Their differences in tone will be discussed by examining four shared motifs.

1 See Nietzsche's rejection of this interpretation in *Ecce homo*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.3, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (eds.) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1969), p. 298. "Why I Write Such Good Books, I," in *A Nietzsche Reader*, R. J. Hollingdale (ed. and trans.) (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 247-248, # 229. My interpretation and translations of the *Zhuangzi* rely on the work of Burton Watson, and Angus C. Graham. Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968). Graham is especially sensitive to Zhuangzi's this worldly orientation; see Zhuangzi, *Chuang-Tzū: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-Tzū*, trans. by Angus C. Graham (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981); *Chuang-Tzu: Textual Notes to a Partial Translation* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1982), and *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989), pp. 170-204.

I.

In what sense can one say that the *Übermensch* and the *zhenren* are following different paths to self-realization? Let us examine these terms, and the meaning of "self-realization" as a prelude to explicating their differences. The term *Übermensch* is rich in connotation.² The word "*Mensch*" is neutral, meaning "people," or "human being." Yet "*Mensch*" has a degree of qualitative refinement; it does not denote the brute masses but the best people. "*Mensch*" is used to refer to a sensible, responsible person. The term "*Über*" is especially rich in connotation; its meaning as "above" or "over" plays a minor role in the expression "*Übermensch*," thus, making the translation "superman" misleading. "*Über*" should be understood as "going across" or "going over" in the sense of journeying under and through—with full immersion a person can "get out of" or "over" a life style which does not promote spontaneity and creativity.³ Walter Kaufmann (1921-1980) and Graham Parkes argue for adopting the translation "overman" as a way to redress the "superman" bias,⁴ while Robert Koettel suggests the translation of "all-around man" to evoke the image of creative integration with the environment.⁵

The concept "*Übermensch*" is Janus-faced in allowing both positive and negative readings. That is, "*Übermensch*" can be read negatively as an

2 Graham Parkes, "The Overflowing Soul: Images of Transformation in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*," *Man and World*, 16, 4 (Dec., 1983), p. 340, DOI: 10.1007/BF01252649.

3 Spontaneity and creativity are crucial concepts for both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi—spontaneity is the raw power of life by which a creature does what is natural for it to do, birds fly, fish swim; creativity is the refinement of the raw power of spontaneity which reveals one's achievement of self-realization.

4 Graham Parkes, "The Overflowing Soul: Images of Transformation in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*," p. 340. Walter Kaufmann, "Translator's Introduction," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. with commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 11, and "Translator's Notes," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 3.

5 This proposal for the translation emerged from numerous discussions with Robert Koettel. The expression "all-around man," however, is not to be understood in the conventional sense of "usefulness;" rather it must be read as comprehensive integration, that is going all-around and through, having seen and *done* it all.

overcoming (*Über*) of one's socialized, all-too-human perspective (*Mensch*); or it can be taken as a positive title or label bestowed on a person who lives the life of power in spontaneity and creativity, integrating fully with nature, others, and one's own disjointed psyche. The negation of the petty desire-centered self with its dreams of immortality and being a distinct indivisible entity is the first phase of self-overcoming in the process of self-realization as *Übermensch*.

As the term "*Übermensch*" is peculiar to Nietzsche; so "*zhenren*" would seem to be Zhuangzi's neology. The term *zhenren* is likewise a compound expression, and like *Mensch* the term "*ren*" means "human being(s)" in the neutral gender. "*Ren*" (人) is distinguished from "*min*" (民) the indiscriminate masses; "*ren*" denotes someone who "stands out" who "puts himself forth;" such a person is unique. It is interesting that Zhuangzi would employ the term "*ren*" given its Confucian connotations.⁶ Zhuangzi's use of the term "*ren*" demonstrates that his central concern is the realization of the unique particularity of *ren* as a human being and not the masses.

The character "*zhen*" 真 is rich in connotation. Its radical or classifier, "*hua*" (化, transformation), carries the idea of working through or being sublimated and, then, emerging. "*Zhen*" means "true" or "real" in the sense of "authenticity," or "genuineness;" and later the expression "*zhenren*" was used in religio-alchemical Daoism to refer to the sage immortals (仙聖). In the context of the "inner chapters" of the *Zhuangzi*, *zhenren* means the "genuine person" or "actualizing person." The *zhenren's* concern for transformation through self-overcoming begins a self-realization path leading to co-creative integration with nature.

In this context "self-realization" should *not* be understood as a predominantly intellectual re-cognition or mental "realization" of a hidden

⁶ In the Confucian context, "*ren*" is the refined, cultured gentleman; the term is associated with the "authoritative person" (*renzhe* 仁者)—one who is of human kindness (*ren* 仁).

immortal self or soul. The "self" in "self-realization" is not a transcendental or essentialistic substance. I do not intend to draw up images of the Anglo-Germanic *selbst*. Rather "self" is used here as a reflexive prefix, though it is commonly employed as a reflexive suffix, as it is used in such expressions as "oneself," or "itself." "Self" is a part of speech, the grammatical subject or topic, in this case "human being," which is disclosed or opened up through its achievement or *realization* of its very own integration and intertwining with the world. The far reaches of the path of self-realization move into mystical experience, that is, the achievement of one's self-integration; it is a self-awakening—an eye opening, or consciousness jarring experience. This form of self-realization as awakening is initiated through the process of self-transformation.

The process of self-transformation plays an important role for both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi. In general, both thinkers accept a world of change, an ontological perspective of interrelated particulars transforming in a field of processes, and it is in part this ephemeral and transitory nature of things which demands that one *practice* self-transformation. Self-overcoming is the main task of transforming oneself which inspires insight leading to self-awakening. Both the *Übermensch* and the *zhenren* begin their respective paths of self-realization with self-overcoming. The *Übermensch* must overcome the solipsistic notions of an independent, necessary, simple, essence or substance of a soul, or core ego, and the *zhenren* must purify the heart and mind (*xinzhai* 心齋) and forget-self, that is, forget the contrived and formalistic role orientated social "me" of Confucianism. It is interesting to note that Zhuangzi's "purifying the heart and mind" is a meditation practice, whereas Nietzsche does not propose specific forms of meditation.

Popular interpretations of the *Übermensch* as a superhuman rising above the mundane world,⁷ and of the *zhenren* as a social drop-out who attains a type of

7. Here I am referring to the interpretations fostered by biased readings, and Nazi propaganda.

transcendent perfection via contemplation of nature⁸ are based on a "two world theory" (Nietzsche's *zwei Welten Theorie*) in which it is understood that the goal of human life is to *escape* this life and the human predicament. Such a reading requires the reader to impose a world view with which Zhuangzi had no contact and Nietzsche vehemently opposed. Writing in third century B.C.E. China, Zhuangzi was not exposed to the dualistic ontologies of Persia and India, and ancient Chinese culture provided no similar dualism before or during his life time.⁹ (Although there are Sinologists who dispute this point, they have not presented sufficient evidence, cultural or textual, to support their claim.¹⁰) Concepts like "perfectibility" or "human ideal" fit nicely into the concept cluster of a "two world theory" in which the "perfect" and the "ideal" are attained by rising above this here-now mundane world and participating in a higher transcendent order which bestows all values. For Zhuangzi, the *zhenren* or genuine person is not and cannot be judged by some external or transcendent source of value. Chapter six of the *Zhuangzi* highlights this point:

First there must be a genuine person (*zhenren*) before there can be genuine wisdom.¹¹

8 This second interpretation can be found in: Vitaly Ruben, *Individual and State in Ancient China: Essays on Four Chinese Philosophers*, trans. by Steven I. Levine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Herrlee Creel, "On Two Aspects in Early Daoism," in *What is Taoism? And Other Studies in Chinese Cultural History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), pp. 37-47; and Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993), *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts in Sufism and Taoism* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1967).

9 Chen Guying 陳鼓應 discusses the impact of their cultural backgrounds on their philosophies, "Nicai zhexue yu Zhuangzi zhexue de bijiao yanjiu [A Comparison of Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's Philosophies] 尼采哲學與莊子哲學的比較研究," in his *Beiju Zhexuejia Nicai [The Tragic Philosopher Nietzsche] 悲劇哲學家尼采* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian 三聯書店, 1987), pp. 235-288.

10 See Benjamin I. Schwartz (1916-1999), *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 47-55.

11 William Hung 洪業 et al. (eds.), *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu 莊子引得*, Harvard Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series 哈佛燕京學社引得, supplement no. 20 特刊第20號, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 15/6/3.

There is no higher wisdom or understanding than that which can be achieved in this life—wisdom is performed, not discovered.

Nietzsche, of course, opposed the notions of transcendence and the theories of dualism found in Greek, Persian, and Christian thought; he also argues against a transcendent source of value. A passage from *Zarathustra*, "Von tausend und Einem Ziele" (On a Thousand and One Goals), brings out this point:

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human-meaning!¹²

The *Übermensch* and the *zhenren* in their respective ways are not perfect ideals to be replicated in our own lives; but rather, as examples, they function as a *challenge*. They present, not a paradigm but, one unique qualitative example of self-transformation that can inspire our own particular life-projects. They present a challenge for people to act creatively.

Amidst these similarities a glaring difference begins to emerge. Namely, there is a contrast in Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's *tone*. In Zhuangzi the emphasis is on a balanced harmony and continuity of action and value; whereas in Nietzsche the focus is on discontinuity, overriding continuity with newly created values, breaking harmony by pushing the extremes. This difference in tone is substantive. From the aesthetic perspective, a difference in tone is as significant

12 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 71. Modifying Walter Kaufmann's translations, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, p. 59. A similar point is made in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Whatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less, but has been given *value* at some time, as a present—and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that concerns man!*" Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume v.2, p. 220, # 301; *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 242.

as a difference in content; from their respective aesthetic perspectives the *form* of presentation and its *content* are mutually determining—what is said is no more important than the manner of exposition. This difference in tone also leads me to qualify the claim that they are both iconoclastic thinkers: Nietzsche's iconoclasm provides a radical rejection of the long standing Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions; Zhuangzi, however, appears to be primarily directing his attack against the impositions of Fajia (法家, so-called Legalism), and popular forms of Confucianism during his day, for instance, Xunzi 荀子 (313-238 BCE) and other rigid interpreters of Confucian teaching. But Zhuangzi does not reject the whole Chinese tradition; his world view is not totally at odds with that of Confucius' organic life-affirmative perspective.¹³

What makes the *zhenren* "genuine" and the *Übermensch* "all-around" are their unique postures or attitudes toward and their understandings of life. They see the human condition in its dynamic fluctuations; they are unwilling to distort the paradoxes of human life by positing the existence of some better, other-worldly existence. The attitude of the *zhenren* and the *Übermensch* is to *affirm* this here-now human life. It is their life-affirmative attitude which sets them apart from the average person. They provide us with a different understanding of humanity's place in nature and the means for appropriating one's culture creatively.

13 For a further discussion of this common ground of Confucian and Daoist thought, see the introduction to James Sellmann, "Three Models of Self-Integration (*tzu-te* 自得) in Ancient China," *Philosophy East and West*, 37, 4, (Oct., 1987), pp. 374-391, DOI: 10.2307/1399029; and see Roger T. Ames, "The Common Ground of Self-Cultivation in Classical Daoism and Confucianism," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 清華學報, New Series 17, 1-2 (Dec., 1985), pp. 65-97.

II.

Nietzsche and Zhuangzi are not attempting to offer systematic arguments; they want to evoke an experience of the human condition—it is the experience of life that matters, not the intellectual conception alone. Their writings attempt to make people experience the paradoxes of life, for example, the complementarity of opposites—pleasure/pain, fortune/misfortune, life/death, and so forth. One of the deepest paradoxes of human life that they are struggling with is the problem of the natural and the unnatural, nature and culture. That is, to what extent is culture natural, and when does it become unnatural; and what is the relationship between oneself, one's culture, and one's species?

I argue that Nietzsche and Zhuangzi share an organic and an "existential," life-affirmative perspective, and in that regard they are generally in agreement about the relations between oneself, culture, and nature. However, their difference in tone generates substantive variations; they do not agree on many of the specifics which characterize these relationships, especially in their interpretations of nature. The similarities in their organic perspectives are founded on a revisioning of the part/whole, and at times, for Nietzsche, the particular/universal, relationship, and a radical affirmation of life by creating new values. The revisioning requires that people abandon substantialism and conventional Aristotelian ontology and logic, which hold the maxim that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."¹⁴ This kind of "greater whole" could be self-sufficient; a high priority for Aristotle. The informal fallacies of composition and division, confusing the characteristics of the parts as traits of the

14 Aristotle (384-322 BCE) argues for the priority of the state, as a whole, over the individual, as part; see Aristotle's, *Politics*, "[...] the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part [...]" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed.) (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 1129. Aristotle's *Poetics*, 8, also presents a description of organic unity in describing the unity of the plot as "[...] a complete whole, with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole." in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 1463. See also *Metaphysics*, book V, chapters 25-27, where part and whole are sharply distinguished.

whole and vice versa, operating as good common sense are useful to avoid conceptual confusion. To insist, however, that a part is *nothing but* a part is to fall into an equally fallacious view of reifying the whole as an independent and subsisting entity to which parts merely belong.¹⁵ For Nietzsche and Zhuangzi, the natural world is a living, dynamic-field of interrelated foci or particulars. Nature is complete but not whole; it is a dynamic field of interrelationships, but it is *not* greater than, prior to, or separate from the particular focus. The foci are those particular shapes which humans endow with meaning and value—tree, star, bird, reptile, mountain, and so on. The respective organic perspectives of Nietzsche and Zhuangzi do not accommodate the ontological priority of any particular over another.¹⁶ Their view on organic unity conflicts sharply with the part/whole relationship described in most scientific literature.¹⁷

In opposition to this interpretation of Nietzsche, a case might be built around a line from *Götzen-Dammerung* (*Twilight of the Idols*), namely "Aber es giebt Nichts ausser dem Ganzen!," ("But there is nothing besides the whole!") to refute the claim that there is *no* "whole greater than the sum of its parts" in Nietzsche. This phrase warrants attention. It is taken from the close of "Die vier grossen Irrthümer" (The Four Great Errors):

One is necessary, one is a piece of fatefulness, one belongs to the whole, one is in the whole; there is nothing which could judge, measure, compare, or sentence our being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, or sentencing the whole. *But there is nothing besides the*

15 See Francis H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), pp. 9-10 for a discussion of the part/whole relation in Hua-yen Buddhism which has relevant similarities.

16 Their shared organic perspective differs from the familiar organic theories such as those proposed by Aristotle, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), and others, in that these theories have always assumed that the part must serve the needs of the greater whole—leading ultimately to hierarchicalism, ontological disparity, and in politics, possibly, some form of totalitarianism.

17 Daniel Lerner (ed.), *Parts and Wholes: The Hayden Colloquium on Scientific Method and Concept* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963) almost every article in this work assumes what Ernest Nagel (1901-1985) calls "the superior whole," p. 135.

whole! That nobody is held responsible any longer, that the mode of being may not be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world does not form a unity either as a sensorium or as "spirit" (*Geist*)—that alone is the great liberation (*Befreiung*) [...].¹⁸

When we examine the expression "nothing exists besides the whole" in context, we can see that Nietzsche uses this phrase as a "reason" to reject the notion of a "choice position," an extrinsic, superior, or transcendent perspective which could be used to pass judgment on or be held responsible for a person's life. That "[...] no one has given man his qualities, neither God, nor society, nor his parents and ancestors, nor he himself—that no one is to *blame* for him."¹⁹ The "whole" here is the complex web of interrelations which comprise the particulars—the particular is nothing less than the complete network of all interrelationships, and the whole is nothing more than the particulars. Even if someone cannot accept this interpretation, it should be clear that the term "whole," in this context, is not the "whole which is greater than the sum of its parts."

In *Der Wille zur Macht*, passage # 711 sharply rejects the notion of an abstract or greater whole.

18 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.3, "Die vier grossen Irrthümer," section 8, pp. 90-91. *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, selected and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 500-501, # 8. Anthony M. Ludovici (1882-1971) gives a slightly different translation: "But there is nothing outside the whole!" in *The Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Volume 16, Oscar Levy (ed.) (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964), p. 43.

Since a very similar expression occurs in *Der Wille zur Macht*, let us examine that passage too. There is no place, no purpose, no meaning, on which we can shift the responsibility for our being, for our being thus-and-thus. Above all: No one could do it; one cannot judge, measure, compare the whole, to say nothing of denying it! Why not?—for five reasons, all accessible even to modest intellects; for example, *because nothing exists besides the whole* (*weil es nichts giebt ausser dem Ganzen*). And, to say it again, this is a great refreshment; this constitutes the innocence of all existence.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Band X (Leipzig: C. G. Naumann Verlag, 1906), p. 30, # 765. *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 402-403.

19 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Band X, p. 30, # 765. *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, and R. J. Hollingdale, p. 402.

Where the point of view of "value" is inadmissible:—

That in the "process of the totality" the labor of man is of no account,
because a total process (considered as a system—) does not exist at all;

that there is no "totality;" that no evaluation of human existence, of
human aims, can be made in regard to something that does not exist;

that "necessity," "causality," "purposiveness," are useful *unrealities*;²⁰

[...]

that the world is not an organism at all, but chaos; [...].²¹

This passage clearly shows that Nietzsche does not accept the idea of a greater whole, or a cumulative system of existence. In fact, in *Der Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche presents the web image of the mutual dependency of particulars: "In the actual world, in which everything is bound to and conditioned by everything else, to condemn and to think away anything means to condemn and to think away everything" (# 584).²² Alexander Nehamas wrote *Nietzsche Life as Literature* based on an interpretation of organic unity in Nietzsche's life work.²³ And Richard Shusterman presents a challenging appraisal of Nehamas's view.²⁴

20 Walter Kaufmann's note reads: "Nützliche 'Scheinbarkeiten'".

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht*, # 711; *The Will to Power*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, pp. 378-379. Kate Sturge provides a similar translation, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Rüdiger Bittner (ed.), trans. by Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

22 "Every atom affects the whole of being—it is thought away if one thinks away this radiation of power-will." (# 634), and "the properties of a thing are effects on other 'things': if one removes other 'things,' then a thing has no properties, i.e., there is no thing without other things, i.e., there is no 'thing in itself.'" (# 557).

23 Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

24 Richard Shusterman, "Nietzsche and Nehamas On Organic Unity," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 26, 3 (Fall, 1988), pp. 379-392, DOI: 10.1111/j.2041-6962.1988.tb01678.x.

Another strong similarity in Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's respective existential viewpoints is that self-realization requires a reevaluation or transvaluation of conventional, Christian, or Confucian, social values. I explicate the organic and the life-affirmative views by discussing four motifs which both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi share.

1. The Mountain Tree

Both Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Zhuangzi have a fascination with natural objects, and the mountain tree provides an important motif. In part this is due to the rich organic image which the mountain tree yields.

Consider that image: the mountain tree is firmly rooted in the rock and soil of a mountain ridge; the hard rock and gentle water flow have gnarled its roots. This precarious perch on the precipice is home for the tree, allowing it to grow strong and tall. The trunk and branches are twisted, bent and broken by the wind, rain, and lightning. And yet it grows, thrives, reaching out filling its context. In its severe and harsh environment, the mountain tree has formed an organic network. This organic unity is not the biological concept of a species filling a niche in a greater environment. It is a radical network which displays the full integration of the various particulars, and even opposites, such that there is *no* overriding whole, context, or environment. The image of the mountain tree has been used in humanistic psychology as a metaphor for personal development.²⁵

For Nietzsche and Zhuangzi, the dynamic completeness of nature is not greater than its focus; "the whole which is greater than the sum of its parts" is, for them, an aberration of the mind. The particular is a part of its context; yet the

25 Jean Houston argues that the nature of our woundedness defines much of who we are and what we choose to become, like trees that take unique shapes from growing around their scars. Carol S. Pearson, *Awakening the Heroes within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p. 91. Citing from Jean Houston, *The Search for the Beloved: Journeys in Sacred Psychology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 104-121.

context is never abstracted or represented as separate from the interrelationships and interdependencies formed among particulars. Nature, as the field, and the mountain tree, as the focus, are dynamically interpenetrating and interdependent—the tree *makes* the ridge what it is becoming; while the ridge and its eroding weather *make* the tree what it is becoming. However, Nietzsche and Zhuangzi have different perspectives on how nature functions, especially as regard to the interplay of opposites; I return to this topic below.

Keeping this organic image of interrelatedness in mind, note how Nietzsche and Zhuangzi use the mountain tree as a motif for self-realization. Nietzsche employs the tree motif in a number of ways. In part, he is drawing off of the Biblical image of the trees of life and wisdom in the Garden of Eden, and so for Nietzsche the tree is a source of "fruit," of growth and development—of new ideas and values. For example, in "Auf den glückseligen Inseln" (Upon the Blessed Isles), Zarathustra describes his teachings of the *Übermensch* as fresh fruit.²⁶

The tree is also used as an allegory for self-realization. In the chapter "Vom Baum am Berge" (On the Tree on the Mountain), Nietzsche employs this allegory. Zarathustra approaches a youth, who had been avoiding him, sitting under a mountain tree; he grips the tree and says:

"If I wanted to shake this tree with my hands, I would not be able to do it.

But the wind, which we do not see, tortures and bends it wherever it wants. *It is by invisible hands that we are bent and tortured worst.*"

26 "The figs are falling from the trees . [...] I am a north wind to ripe figs.

Thus, like figs, these teachings fall to you, my friends.

[...]

[...] I have taught you to say *Übermensch*."

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 105, for other references to the tree see, pp. 110 & 122; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, pp. 85, 89 & 98.

[...]

Zarathustra continued, "Why should that frighten you? But it is with man as it is with the tree. The more he aspires to the height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep—into evil."²⁷

Here we see that Nietzsche's process of self-realization entails a tension between moving up and over, and being rooted deep down. One cannot achieve new and higher values without being rooted in what is conventionally construed as "evil." A few paragraphs later Zarathustra compares the high mountain tree to the higher man on his way to self-realization.

And Zarathustra contemplated the tree beside which they stood and spoke thus:

"This tree stands here in the mountains; it grew high above man and beast.

And if it wanted to speak, it would have nobody who could understand it, so high has it grown.

Now it waits and waits—for what is it waiting? It dwells too near the seat of the clouds—surely, it waits for the first lightning."²⁸

The mountain tree and the higher man are both above and over the common such that they are lost in their loneliness with nothing to wait for but the lightning—Zarathustra's teachings concerning the *Übermensch!*

27 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 47; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 42. Italics added.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 48; *ibid.*, p. 43.

In "Die Begrüssung" (The Welcome), the king on the right compares Zarathustra's self-realization to the stately and noble pine tree.

"Nothing more delightful grows on earth, Oh Zarathustra, than a lofty, strong will: that is the earth's most beautiful plant. A whole landscape is refreshed by one such tree.

Whoever grows up high like you, Oh Zarathustra, I compare to the pine: long, silent, hard, alone, of the best and most resilient wood, magnificent,—

—and in the end reaching out with strong green branches for his *own* dominion, questioning wind and weather and whatever else is at home on the heights with forceful questions,

—and answering yet more forcefully, a commander, triumphant: Oh, who would not climb high mountains to see such plants?

Your tree here, Oh Zarathustra, refreshes and heals the heart even of the restless.

And verily, toward your mountain and tree many eyes are directed today; a great longing has arisen, and many have learned to ask, 'Who is Zarathustra?'²⁹

In the *Zhuangzi* the tree is often used as an example of a particular focus which is fully interpenetrating within its context. The tree's twisted and gnarled form display its co-creative relationship with its environs. Its interpenetration is so complete that it apparently does nothing artificial (*wuwei* 無爲), and so it is

29 Ibid., pp. 344-345; *ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

totally useless (無用). The carpenter's tools—social conventions—cannot be applied to it. Thereby, the tree lives out its natural span without being purposefully used up. For Zhuangzi, the tree not only provides an image of self-realization for the *zhenren* to emulate, but he integrates with the tree also. We see this at the end of chapter one, where Zhuangzi's logic-chopping interlocutor, Hui Shih 惠施, compares Zhuangzi's words to a humongous gnarled and twisted tree to which the carpenters cannot apply their tools. Zhuangzi retorts with the contrasting descriptions of the energetic wildcat and the lumbering yak, and then returns to the tree image.

Now you have this gigantic tree, and are worried that it cannot be used. Why don't you plant it in the uninhabited land of nowhere, or out in the fields of the broad frontier? There you can loiter in genuine action (*wuwei* 無為) by its side, or take a free and easy nap beside it. Axes will never shorten its life; things can never harm it. Without any means to be made use of, how could it come to grief or bitterness?!³⁰

The apparently useless but long lived tree is a recurring image in the *Zhuangzi*.³¹ It is usually discussed as an example of *wuwei*, that is, acting naturally and authentically, by being conventionally useless according to the standard values of what is understood to be useful.³² The genuine person (*zhenren*) emulates the mountain tree, integrating spontaneously with nature, creating a new value for life; being conventionally useless, she, thereby, lives out her natural life span,

30 William Hung et al. (eds.), *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 3/1/45-47; I have modified Burton Watson's translations, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, p. 35.

31 See Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, pp. 35, 63-65, and 209.

32 Many of the human "heroes" in the *Zhuangzi* are twisted and gnarled like the mountain tree, and yet these so-called "deformities" are natural to them; they allow these people to live out their natural span. Zhuangzi marshals a plethora of deformed persons to make his case that conventional standards of value and usefulness are socially contrived and externally imposed. For example, see the story of Crippled Shu, Harvard Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, supplement no. 20, *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 12/4/83; Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, p. 66.

making herself naturally "useful," opening up indeterminate possibilities for creative transformation. The genuine person can become anyone, anything.

2. The Roaring Wind

The wind motif is also important for understanding Nietzsche's and Zhuangzi's organic, interrelated, and life-affirmative perspectives. Symbolically the wind embodies the all-powerful and ever-present, yet extremely subtle process of change and flux. The wind represents the way of life, and it constitutes the field process of the way things are. For Zhuangzi, the wind is used as a means of transport. The huge Peng 鹏 bird and master Liezi 列子 fly with it, that is, all living creatures must avail themselves of the natural transformations to live and die well. The wind as natural change takes on the symbolic significance of affirming life in the face of constant flux. More importantly, the Daoist uses the wind motif to evoke an image of the interrelated organic field process. At the opening of chapter two of the *Zhuangzi*, we have Master Nanguo Ziqi 南郭子綦 attempting to describe the experience of natural mysticism, integration with nature, to his disciple Ziyou 子游. He appeals to the wind motif to highlight the interrelatedness of emergent foci in flux. Keep in mind that the wind is constituted out of and by the interplay of the environs, for instance, temperature, atmospheric pressure, terrain, and so on. Once the interrelations develop "wind," it in turn begins to shape and transform its environs—focus and field are mutually interrelated and co-defining. So Master Ziqi discusses the "wind" or the piping of heaven, earth, and man, and after elaborating them, the following summary is given.

Ziyou said, "So by the piping of earth, then, you mean the sound of wind blowing through the various hollows, and by the piping of man, then, you mean the blowing of flutes and whistles. But dare I ask about the piping of heaven?"

Ziqi replied, "Blowing on the myriad things without homogeneity, each is allowed to reflectively be itself; each of them integrates itself. But who does the sounding?"³³

The final question is rhetorical, highlighting the perception that there is, in fact, no privileged perspective which originates the blowing—the blowing of heaven is a creative enterprise entailing a mutuality and interdependence among the particular foci.³⁴

For Nietzsche, the wind is often symbolic of *Geist* (spirit/mind), and the transformation of ideas. Zarathustra compares the power of his spirit to the wind which drives a ship.³⁵ As such the wind motif strongly represents the existential challenge to affirm life in the midst of uncertain and changing social values; it calls for a trans-valuation, a new way of valuing which has gone through and beyond common evaluations. The last section of "Vom höheren Menschen" (On the Higher Man) provides a penetrating poetic image of the wind as a means to self-overcoming through the transformation of values:

Be like the wind rushing out of his mountain caves: he wishes to dance to his own pipe; the seas tremble and leap under his feet.

What gives asses wings, what milks lionesses—praised be this good intractable spirit that comes like a cyclone to all today and to all the mob.

33 Ibid., 3/2/8-9; *ibid.*, p. 37. I have modified the translation.

34 Burton Watson emphasizes the interrelatedness of heaven's dependency on earth and man. See, Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, p. 37, note 2.

35 Have you never seen a sail go over the sea, rounded and taut and trembling with the violence of the wind?

Like the sail, trembling with the violence of the spirit, my wisdom goes over the sea—my wild wisdom!

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, pp. 130-131; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 105.

What is adverse to thistle-heads and casuists' heads and to all wilted leaves and weeds—praised be this wild, good, free storm-spirit that dances on swamps and on melancholy as on meadows!

What hates the mobs blether-cocks and all the bungled gloomy brood—praised be this spirit of all free spirits, the laughing gale that blows dust into the eyes of all the black-sighted, sore-blighted!³⁶

The wind, as symbol of the *Übermensch*, sets its own values; it dances to its own flute. In doing so it achieves the impossible (gives asses wings) and devastates conventional mob values. This new way of thinking, this free storm-spirit dances, like the *Übermensch*, over the depressing nihilistic thought of the scholastics and academics. Like Zarathustra, this free spirit affirms life with a *storm of laughter*.

Zarathustra, himself, acts as symbolic embodiment of the wind: "I am a north wind to ripe figs."³⁷ That is, he lays to waste old, overly ripe, traditional ideas so that new ones might grow in their place. The process of natural change, flux, and the need to affirm new values in life are further embodied in the third motif: the wanderer.

3. The Wanderer

Wandering is a prevalent theme in the works of Zhuangzi, and Nietzsche. Wanderers are not travelers. They have no set destination. There is neither reason nor purpose to their journeys, and yet wanderers are on their way. In the Daoist context, the wanderer depicts the naturalized person. Like the wind, the Daoist

36 Ibid., Volume vi.1, p. 363; *ibid.*, p. 295.

37 'Verily, a strong wind is Zarathustra for all who are low [...]. Be ware of spitting *against* the wind!';

'[...] like a fresh roaring wind Zarathustra comes to all who are weary of the way [...].

And

'[...] a roaring wind that blows your souls bright.'

Ibid., Volume vi.1, pp. 105, 112, 254, and 389; *ibid.*, pp. 85, 99, 206, and 316.

wanderer moves around apparently without a purpose—going this way, then, that way, and coming back around again. With a strong reluctance to travel established roads, the wanderer is a way-maker. The wanderers' care-free meandering depicts their harmonization as *dao* 道. The wanderers are neither going anywhere, nor settling down. Like an autumn flood, they are on the move, but without a fixed conventional purpose or destination. They are not, however, totally without a program; the Daoist "purpose" is that of "path-maker." They are *dao*-makers, clearing new roads; co-creating the path of least resistance, the path of continuity and harmony carefree and easy wandering (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊). To depict human integration and harmony with the myriad things, our co-creative manifestation with the environment, Zhuangzi describes the genuine person as a "companion with nature."³⁸

Like the Daoist wanderer, Nietzsche's wanderer differs from the socialized person who travels for a reason with a fixed destination in mind. Nietzsche's wanderer, however, does not give us an image of a person living in harmony with nature *per se*, as the Daoist wanderer does. In a sense Nietzsche's wanderer is *lost*; he has lost the way, especially the old way established by various forms of nihilism. Nietzsche's wanderer cannot travel because the old reasons and destinations are no longer meaningful, nor can he simply emulate nature. Nietzsche's wanderer is doomed to roam until he can find his own way—forge his own values. As he says in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)* # 335:

[...] Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and evaluations and to the *creation of our own new tables of values* [...].
We, however, *want to be those who we are*—the new, the unique, the

38 *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 16/6/20, and 18/6/74.

incomparable, those who give themselves their own law, those who create themselves!³⁹

Or Nietzsche's poem, # 27 "The Wanderer," in the Prelude to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

"No path, abysses, death is not so still!"—

You wished it, left the path by your own will.

Now remain cool and clear, Oh stranger;

For you are lost if you believe in danger.⁴⁰

The wanderer plays an important role in the concluding sections of *Zarathustra* where he is ranked among the higher men.⁴¹ The wanderer sings the wasteland song which reveals his move beyond traditional European values. This song throws the higher men into a frenzy which brings on "the awakening" ("Die Erweckung"), and "the ass festival" ("Das Eselsfest") an attempt to establish new values. Zarathustra is dismayed at this and led to sing the night wanderer song (Das Nachtwandler-Lied) in which he wrestles again with the eternal recurrence as a new joy.⁴²

39 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume v.2, p. 243, # 335; *A Nietzsche Reader*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale, pp. 237, # 220; *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, pp. 265-266.

Also see *Zarathustra, Vom Wege des Schaffenden*, pp. 76-79, and *Von alten und neuen Tafeln*, pp. 242-265; Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Way of the Creator," and "On Old and New Tablets," in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, pp. 62-64, and pp. 196-215.

40 *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 31. *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 51. Also see "'The wanderer' speaks," in *ibid.*, # 380, p. 342.

41 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 384; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 312.

42 Kaufmann's translation of this title as "The Drunken Song" is apparently due to the frequent

We get two slightly different images of the wanderer. The Daoist wanderer co-creates a new sense of values by participating and integrating with nature; he has given up the determinative ways of civilized people and participates in the ways of nature through genuine action (*wuwei* 無爲). On the other hand, Nietzsche's wanderer is still in the process of attempting to forge his own way, his values. The Daoist wanderer enjoys integration with nature, floating down river, carefree and easy going; Nietzsche's wanderer is full of *Angst*, being tossed around on the rough and hazardous sea of trans-valuation. Nietzsche needs this *Angst* and suffering to *harden* and discipline the spirit against having anything like pity for others; he is struggling to overcome the softness of Christianity. The Daoists, on the other hand, seek to soften themselves up, to bend and flow with nature; suffering and anxiety are not the "natural" conditions for a Daoist; they are the plagues of socialization.

The philosophical position underlying their distinct approaches is rooted in their unique interpretations of the operations of nature. Nietzsche understands nature to be value-free, often unfair, and cold.⁴³ The Daoists observe a pattern of balance in nature which they can emulate and in which they can participate. The soft and yielding *wuwei*, action-less action, or genuine action, is the way of nature which the Daoist participates in and co-creates. Nietzsche's wanderer ends up floating on fathomless hostile seas, where *Angst* and loneliness develop. The Daoists wander carefree and easy (*xiaoyaoyou*).

These disparities result in different consequences for their respective paths of self-realization. Nietzsche's path of self-transformation requires a "conversion-like" experience; where people are shaken to the root of their existence; despair

mention therein of Zarathustra's inebriated condition, but his translation covers-up the importance of wandering. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 317.

43 As just one example of "cold nature" see, Friedrich Nietzsche, "Geiz der Natur," in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 224, # 336; "Nature's Stinginess," in *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 267.

sets in and all looks meaningless.⁴⁴ Then, through self-overcoming there is a new evaluation of life—the all-around-overman emerges. "Von der schenkenden Tugend" (On the Pouring out Virtue), in *Zarathustra*, brings out this dialectical move from lonely retirement to far reaching creativity.⁴⁵ Where Nietzsche sees the need to embrace anxiety as a purging preparatory to self-overcoming, the Daoists seek to keep a balance between the fluctuations of anxiety and elation. The Daoist sages of "[...] antiquity slept without dreaming and woke without worry."⁴⁶ Zhuangzi's dreamless sleep and carefree life mark a sharp contrast with Zarathustra's disdain for "guten Schlaf" (good sleep). But from the context of *Von den Lehrstühlen der Tugend* (On the Teachers of Virtue) it should be clear that Zarathustra is rejecting a nihilistic morality, an "opiate of virtues," which knows no better meaning of life than that "wisdom was a sleep without dreams."⁴⁷ In this aspect, both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi are concerned about conventional morality stealing the existential vitality of life.

4. The Thief

The robber evokes the image of destroying old values—stealing them away—to make new ones. Sociologically "the thief" breaks traditional cultural values; he gives them up because he demands more out of life than what the oppressive social order permits. The image of the thief also represents a basic aspect of the human condition because life itself is seen as a robbery. Nietzsche

44 For a discussion of Nietzsche's ideas of such an experience see, *Ecce homo*, and *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, vol. vi.3, section 3, pp. 337-338.

45 "You that are lonely today, you that are withdrawing, you shall one day be the people: out of you, who have chosen yourselves, there shall grow a chosen people—and out of them, the *Übermensch*." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 96-97; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 77.

46 *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 15/6/6; modifying Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, p. 77.

47 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 30; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 30.

and Zhuangzi see the realities of life—killing, and decay. One life is perpetuated by taking another life. Since no one can live without "robbing," Nietzsche and Zhuangzi respectively recognize that moralities, even those which preach against robbing, are the greatest robbers. The *qujie* (Rifling Trunks 祛箠) chapter ten of the *Zhuangzi* is quite explicit in interpreting standard morality as a form of thievery:

But until the sage is dead, great thieves will never cease to appear, and if you pile on more sages in hopes of bringing the world to order, you will only be piling up more profit for Robber Zhi. [...] Fashion benevolence and righteousness to reform people and they will steal with benevolence and righteousness.⁴⁸

The *Zhuangzi* presents the character Robber Zhi as an exemplar of the genuine person, and one of its chapters is his namesake. After Confucius attempts to reform Robber Zhi, Zhi angrily responds that Confucius with his moral teachings is the "worse robber."⁴⁹ For the *Zhuangzi*, the robber symbolizes the naturalizing person; a person who has departed from the conventional values to affirm life *honestly*; to see it for what it is—a process of giving and *taking*, because robbers also give when they share the booty.⁵⁰

Nietzsche also recognizes that thieving is a way of life, especially that of the moralist. For example, passage #10 from "Von alten und neuen Tafeln" (On Old and New Tablets):

48. The passage continues:

How do I know this is so? He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be a feudal lord—and we all know that benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords. Is this not a case of stealing benevolence and righteousness and the wisdom of the sages?

A Concordance to Chuang Tzu, 24/10/16-18; Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, pp. 109-110.

49 *Ibid.*, 81/29/33-34.

50 *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 24/10/12; the robber's way entails "[...] dividing up the loot evenly [...]".

"Thou shalt not rob! Thou shalt not kill!"—such words were once called holy; [...].

But I ask you: where have there ever been better robbers and killers in this world than such holy words?

Is there not in all life itself—robbing and killing? And that such words were called holy—was not truth itself killed thereby?

Or was it the preaching of death that was called holy, which contradicted and contravened all life?⁵¹

Moreover, self-transformation requires the phase of the lion, and this beast of prey is a robber and destroyer of old values and duties.⁵² There is a difference to be noted between these two "existential" life-affirming perspectives; the difference hinges upon one's reading of their respective understandings of the interplay of opposites, and their use of negation and affirmation.

The way I interpret Nietzsche, "opposites," such as high/low, right/wrong, are overcome in the ironic process of going to the extreme, that is, "opposites" are deconstructed and reunited as the extremes of a spectrum. The images abound: the worthy enemy is one's best friend; despising to learn to love; peace is a means to war; to destroy in order to create; the highest good comes out of the deepest evil. Rob the old values, break the tablets to create new ones. Negation is not so much semantic as it is ontological, and to negate is to affirm the opposite which unites negation and affirmation in a dialectic exchange. Opposites are interlocked or brought together in their combative tension; they are not, however, interpenetrated—they do not mutually contain each other. To negate old values, a

51 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, in *Nietzsche Werke*, Volume vi.1, p. 249; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann, p. 202.

52 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27; *ibid.*, p. 27.

person creates new values by affirming the destruction of the old. There is a necessary tension between the opposites such that they cannot be separated; there cannot be one without the other—opposites are always interlocked, but they do not mutually contain each other. This creates Zarathustra's nausea; the recognition that the *Übermensch* always occurs with the rabble or small man—the two are inseparable as opposites. For Nietzsche, the overman goes under to start overcoming, destroys to create.

The way I interpret the *Zhuangzi*, it acknowledges a complementarity of opposites—which evokes the full range of co-creative possibilities of diversity and integrity, and that in going to the extreme the opposite will come around. The Daoist position differs from Nietzsche's in that the Daoist harmonizes with the cycle of flip-flopping opposites, attempting to co-create or strike a balance between the extremes; unlike Nietzsche, the Daoist does not need to push the extremes. The exchange of opposites occurs naturally. The Daoist rides the wave of creative transformation of thing (*zaowuzhe* 造物者). Furthermore, the Daoist unity of opposites differs from Nietzsche's in its radicalness; that is, for the Daoist each opposite actually contains the other—dark in light, luck in misfortune, dryness in moisture. Because of this interpenetration of opposites, any undue emphasis on one extreme leaves its bi-polar opposite. Thus, the Daoist recognizes a danger, a violation of nature as process, in pursuing what is esteemed as the worthy and valuable because their opposites, the unworthy and valueless, will also have to be recognized. The Daoists acknowledge this process in nature through the cycles of temperature, season, and climate change; they also see it at work in society—when there are worthy princes, there are unworthy bandits. The *zhenren* applies this perspective of nature to their own lives by striking a balance between the extremes. The Daoists want to avoid the extremes to avoid any harm, physical or psychological, that might shorten the natural life span. Daoist negation in its full sense is ontological too. It is not only a negation

of an opposite, but it is also the negation of the opposition itself.⁵³ The Daoists teeter-totter between the extremes. When they perceive one extreme coming on, they appear to take the stance of its opposite. They do this not to affirm the opposite as the goal or end; but rather to balance and harmonize both extremes. Since most of society is usually making positive affirmations, such as, seeking justice, fame, glory, profit, and so forth, the Daoists appear to be affirming the negative and passive modes. They do it to counterbalance the wild and dangerous flux of the extremes, not because the goal is in the opposite.⁵⁴

For Nietzsche and Zhuangzi mankind is basically a natural animal, and human society is at root natural too. The multitudes, however, denaturalize themselves by misinterpreting their place in nature. They forget that they have fabricated their interpretations of the world—this leads to a denial of life. Both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi acknowledge the need for interpretation, but they want to keep interpretation and action united, neither will allow mental interpretation alone. A person's interpretation of the world must be creatively lived out with a complete interpenetration of thought-action. There is a slight difference in focus or tone here. Nietzsche tends to emphasize overcoming the human, whereas the Daoists focus on naturalizing the human with the non-anthropocentric position of nature.

The basic difference between Nietzsche and Zhuangzi is that although both would agree that everything is interrelated, and that especially opposites are

53 For example, the idea of *wuwei* is not simply doing nothing as opposed to doing something; rather *wuwei* is an attitude, not a theory; or it is a posture, not an intellectual position with which a person performs an action. As an attitude, it is *not* attempting to achieve any certain goal which might exclude its opposite.

54 This use of the negative and its application in living the balanced life is expressed in the *Zhuangzi*, chapter seven:

Without any contriving purpose (*wuwei*) to be famous, to harbor plans, to manage affairs, or to be a wise ruler, just completely embody the inexhaustible and wander care-free without a trace. Exhaust what was bestowed by nature, but it seems though nothing was obtained. The completely naturalized person (*zhiren*) uses his heart and mind like a mirror. It does not advance; it does not welcome; it reflects but does not retain things. Thus, he is able to gain victory over things without being harmed. *A Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, 21/7/31-33.

locked in a bi-polar unity as complements, nevertheless they differ in their views on *how* self-realization is achieved. For Nietzsche, self-realization via self-overcoming is a struggle, which entails *Angst* and nausea, in which a person must actively assert *will power* to achieve the creative life-affirmative attitude of the *Übermensch*.⁵⁵ For Zhuangzi, self-overcoming is achieved paradoxically not by active, purposeful, willing but by genuine action which is co-creative with nature; rather than struggle with the tension of opposites, the Daoists embrace a carefree journey of riding the flow of creative transformations to balance or counterbalance the rolling fluctuation between extremes. Other basically tonal differences emerge from this. Creativity, for Nietzsche, is a kind of self-making or willing to promote a transformation. Daoist creativity is displayed in integration with nature; a will-less flow creatively appropriating the natural. Although both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi would like to escape the confines of the "ego-self," they do it differently. Nietzsche seeks an integration of "psychological complexes," whereas Zhuangzi would see these "complexes" as internalized social roles of which people must empty themselves. Finally, where Nietzsche is after a trans-personal perspective, that is, a perspective which is not limited to the disjointed subjective and anthropocentric view, the Daoists want a non-personal perspective, that is, a perspective which never entered into the subjective and anthropocentric realm—the realm of distinguishing human from non-human, self from other.⁵⁶ Nietzsche and Zhuangzi, then, offer us two different *ways* which can inspire us in our own projects of self-transformation and realization.

To contextualize these two important thinkers and their influence on East Asia allow me to cite a few example of their subsequent impact in East Asia. It should be well known to students of East Asian studies at the Daoists, and

55 In personal correspondence, Graham Parkes has commented on this passage, proposing that "if will to power is a cosmic interpretive force—comparable with *qi* or *dao-de*—it would not be so different from the Daoist position." Although this reading would bring the two closer together, I would still add that their respective interpretations of the process of nature differ in that *qi* is not as aggressive, not as bound by the contest, as will to power appears to be.

56 See the opening passage of the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 7; Zhuangzi, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. by Burton Watson, p. 92.

especially Zhuangzi, influenced subsequent literature, poetry and painting in China, Korea and Japan. For example, Zhuangzi influenced *haiku* poetry and the famous Japanese poet Bashō.⁵⁷ Kuangming Wu emphasizes the importance of Nietzschean play, and "rightly living and enriching our lives" by reading the *Zhuangzi*.⁵⁸ Nietzsche was influenced by Asian cultures and philosophies, and he in turn influenced Asian artists and thinkers.⁵⁹ Guying Chen prepared a study of Nietzsche and also made a comparison with Zhuangzi.⁶⁰ The writings of both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi continue to inspire and influence East Asian artists and philosophers. ♦

57 Peipei Qiu, *Bashō and the Dao: The Zhuangzi and the Transformation of Haikai* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

58 Kuang-ming Wu, *The Butterfly as Companion: Meditations on the First Three Chapters of the Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 8.

59 Graham Parkes (ed.), *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

60 See my translation of Chen's comparison of Nietzsche and Zhuangzi extracted from *Beiju Zhexuejia Nicai* in *ibid.*, pp. 115-129.

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