Rethinking Nietzsche-Daoism Affinities through Thus Spoke Zarathustra and the Daodejing

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To Professor Glen Newey (1961-2017),
whose spirit drew me to Leiden;

To Jasmin, the selfless friend and funder,
who made my journey possible.

To my dearest parents,
for their endless support.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

In this chapter, I will first present the Nietzsche-Daoism literature as it currently stands, then point out the methodological problem of an "approach from similarity." Afterwards, I will propose an alternative "approach assessing overall projects and structural characteristics." On the basis of this approach, I will explain the thesis strategy and outline its overall structure, themes, and chapters.[*]

1.1 A Review of Nietzsche-Daoism Studies

1.1.1 State of the Field

In the last quarter of the 20th century, interest grew in investigating the affinities between late nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and early Chinese Daoism, as found in the ancient texts of the *Daodejing* (also known as *Laozi*, hereafter the DDJ) and the *Zhuangzi* that were composed around 4th-2nd centuries BCE. Despite the temporal and cultural distances between Nietzsche and the early Daoists, scholars throughout the decades and across continents have found various reasons to sustain and rejuvenate this comparative interest. In the West, Joan Stambaugh (1991) in the 1980s suggested that both Nietzsche and Daoism reject metaphysical systems while retaining a certain kind of "naturalist mysticism" Graham Parkes (1994) in the 80s and 90s saw a resonance between Nietzsche's critique of the Platonic-Christian-Enlightenment legacy in search of the creative spirit through rejecting moral theory and embracing perspectivism, and early Daoism's critique of the contemporary Confucian moralism and idealized sagehood. In late 20th century China, Chen Guying (陳鼓應 1991) considered both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi as anti-traditionalist, while the former's anti-capitalist romanticism may serve as a link between Western and Chinese thought. With different emphases, these pioneers generally agreed that close affinities might be found between Nietzsche and the early Daoists.

This consensus about a high degree of comparability between Nietzsche and Daoism is still found in recent studies. Parkes maintains a firm confidence that Nietzsche and his Buddhist and Daoist counterparts are highly compatible in terms of naturalism, the relinquishment of ego, and self-overcoming.[1] Forese (2004), too, points out that the Daoist principle of "nothingness" (*wu*, 無) is very much present in Nietzsche's "radical nihilism," despite the latter's greater emphasis on individuation than the former. Coutinho and Sigurdsson (2004) also agree that both the early

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[1] See Parkes 1983, 1989, 1991b, 1993, 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2020a, and 2020b.

Daoists (and a few Confucians) and Nietzsche are "wanderers beyond boundaries" albeit through different approaches. A comprehensive "interplay" between Zhuangzi and Nietzsche can be found in Shang (2006) who thinks that Zhuangzi and Nietzsche show close affinities in various fundamental areas from their use of language to their ultimate project: the pursuit of freedom and the affirmation of life through embracing "nothingness" despite employing different approaches, solutions and emphasis on some minor issues. This attempt to identify affinities is shared by Sellmann (2014) who thinks that both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi attempt to evoke an attitude life-affirmation in their readers, though with contrasting tones. The abundance of literature may seem to suggest that a relation between Nietzsche and early Daoism can be established on a fundamental level. "Same but different and vice versa" (同中有異, 異中有同 *tong zhong you yi, yi zhong you tong*) has become a common expression of Nietzsche-Daoism comparison,[2] resembling what Morrison (1997) calls "ironic affinities" between Nietzsche and Buddhism. Wawrytko's (2008) evaluation is another example that, despite acknowledging the myriad of differences between Nietzsche and the *Zhuangzi*, still attempts to assess the achievements of both parties in light of, in her case, (Derridean) deconstruction.

Not everyone shares this confidence in comparative affinities between Nietzsche and early Daoism, of course, but the critical position does not seem appealing either. Moeller (2004), for example, worries that this field often falls into what he calls "Sino-Nietzscheanism" that "can sometimes reveal more about [itself] than about either Nietzsche or Chinese philosophy", given that scholars' enthusiasm to draw connections between the two usually leads to decontextualization and fragmentation (66). But Moeller appears to imply that it is better to understand Nietzsche and Chinese philosophy separately, in which case it is not clear how a meaningful intercultural dialogue between them can be established.

1.1.2 Critical Review

The supposed affinities between Nietzsche and early Daoism are not as stable as the comparativists have hoped for, and this for a number of reasons. Firstly, although they mostly agree that Nietzsche and Daoism are highly comparable, the existing accounts do not always agree with each other about what and to what extent they may be comparable. For example, Forese (2004) thinks that Nietzsche places more emphasis on individuation and Daoism more emphasis on diminishing boundaries.[3] Davis (2004, 2015) also suggests that Nietzsche and Daoist-Buddhist traditions might confront each other on problems of the will and ego(ism). In contrast, Parkes (2015a, 2015b) insists that Nietzsche's complete denuciation of the individual and egoism, along with his emphasis on self-mastery and self-overcoming, make him deeply consistent with Daoism

[2] Aside from the above mentioned works, this expression can also be found in Ames (1991) and Qiu (2011).
[3] Ames (1991) also shares this point regarding Nietzsche's relations with classical Chinese philosophies.

(and Buddhism), a vision generally shared by Shang (2006). Such disagreements invite further investigations.

Secondly, some disagreements are hermeneutic, or about different methods of interpreting the apparently self-contradictory texts by Nietzsche. This is at the core of the Davis-Parkes debate. Parkes (2015a, 2015b) believes that the egoist's willfulness is absent in and rejected by Nietzsche and that this is a strongly consistent theme throughout Nietzsche's writing. Davis (2004, 2015), in contrast, suspects that Nietzsche did not resolve this tension completely but retains it purposefully. Extending Ames' (1991) findings, Parkes then claims that conceiving "will to power as interpretation" may rescue Nietzsche from Davis' criticism. While both Parkes and Davis try to overcome the seeming contradictions in Nietzsche, the extent to which they succeed remains to be examined. After all, the retention of opposites is not a hallmark of Nietzsche's thought, for it is known for its attempts to overcome opposites. "Will to power as interpretation" sounds suspiciously accommodating for an advocate of a vision of humanity called the *Übermensch* or "overhuman."

The third, and more fundamental problem is that there are important contrasts between Nietzsche and Daoism that have been overlooked. It has not been discussed, for example, how Nietzsche's insistence on the self-legislative aspect of human life is compatible with Daoism's recommended conformity to *Dao*, the ultimate source of order in early Daoist cosmology. These three problems call an approach to Nietzsche and Daoism that looks for similarities into serious question.

1.2 Rethinking Cross-Cultural Methodology

The first and fundamental challenge for cross-cultural philosophical study, if not for all comparative exercises, is to locate a ground or theme as a bridge of relevance – what Stalnaker (2009) calls a "bridge concept" – to establish meaningful dialogue between thinkers or traditions exhibiting vastly different historical contexts and ideas. Without such a thematized bridge, no meaningful conversation can happen in the first place because all parties will just talk past each other.

In the studies mentioned above, this bridge construction is done through what may be called an *approach from similarity*, meaning that researchers first recognize apparent similarities between two parties, and then begin to investigate the source and extent of this parallel phenomenon. Parkes (2015a) shows remarkable methodological self-awareness in this regard when suggesting that this approach is a response to an *approach from confrontation*. For him, this latter approach only distances Nietzsche and his eastern counterparts based on unsurprising differences of historical or personal backgrounds. In contrast, he affirms that:

> [a]n investigation of parallels or consonances …… often reveals the unexpected, and prompts the question of how on earth Nietzsche keeps coming up with ideas about how to live that are so like the Buddhists. (42)

With such a focus in mind, he admits that between "Nietzsche A" and "Nietzsche B" – the Nietzsche who is anti-Buddhist and the Nietzsche who is consistent with Buddhist ideals – he has been advocating Nietzsche B as a coherent reading of Nietzsche without ever claiming this reading of Nietzsche to be the only or complete one (43). For Parkes, the problem of approach from confrontation is that each thinker or tradition simply has "quite different historical, cultural, philosophical, and personal situation" from its other, and so starting with confrontation naturally leads nowhere further than the already predictable divergences or, worse, the reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudices. Instead, pursuing "Nietzsche B" (in the manner of the approach-from-similarity) can at least benefit us by illluminating "the more compassionate aspects of Nietzsche's thought, which have traditionally been overshadowed by his reputation as a brutal precursor of Nazism" and help us to find a "kinder, gentler complement to his idea of life as exploitation" (58). Parkes further implores us to "refrain from confrontation and follow instead the way of comparison as far as it takes us – at which point we'll be in a position to discern the genuine differences between the two sides" (59).

An approach from confrontation certainly does not seem constructive, for indeed we could only reproduce the paradigm that informed our perception of cultural differences in the first place. However, an approach from similarity does not seem academically convincing either. To start with, it is at least equally important to question why Nietzsche and his supposed Eastern counterparts such as Daoists keep coming up with *contrasting* ideas, even in cases when these cannot be accounted for only by socio-historical differences. The more fundamental problem concerns *how we determine if there is any similarity at all* and *how significant the observed similarities are*. Observed consonances and parallels should first be subject to careful scrutiny, rather than being a preferred assumptions that can facilitate an investigation. It is then not surprising why, as the above literature review shows, the scholars' comparisons of Nietzsche and Daoism do not agree with each other. Their studies are guided by the similarities they observe, and their observations are informed by the particular hermeneutic positions they occupy, which assume that there must be similarities in the first place. This starting-point makes it unsurprising that their disagreements are about the content of the similarities only, since they have made their projects possible by assuming similarities are there to be found. A methodological rethinking is necessary to break this impasse and transcend the dialectical poles of confrontation-similarity. The new method needs to avoid both the danger of an approach from confrontation that reproduces and reinforces antagonism, and the

flaws of an approach from similarity which leaves similarities and differences alike under-examined.

1.3 Alternative Methodology, Strategy, and Materials

Listing the observed similarities and differences between parties can no longer satisfy us. This thesis proposes that we *approach thinkers of different traditions between whom we wish to create a comparative conversation from an overall assessment of their respective projects and the structural characteristics* of their thought, and on the basis of these foundations determine the validity and significance of possible comparisons. This is, I believe, the approach Berger (2016) employs to examine the relationship between Nietzsche and South Asian Buddhism, pointing out that the kind of life Nietzsche valorizes would be considered nihilistic by early South Asian Buddhists. This critical conclusion is achieved through a carefully contextualized reconstruction of the central philosophical concerns of each party which animates each of their philosophical systems.

Underlying this approach is an emphasis on contextualization that aims at careful illustration of the overarching aims and values of examined thinkers and texts. Each of such parties is conceived as an entity that has their own specifically embedded concerns and life-process, which should primarily inform our interpretations of their ideas. A reconstruction of their thought should reflect a party's social-historical contexts, fundamental philosophical concerns, values and intention, as well as the consistency or development of their systems through time, along with their goals and ideals – the party's whole "hermeneutic horizon," to appropriate Gadamer's terms. To understand even one aspect of a philosopher, the whole body of the philosopher's aims must be consulted so that misreading due to decontextualization and distortion can be avoided. Such a carefully contextualized approach should also avoid the danger of what Parkes calls the approach from confrontation which is distracted by historically dependent factors and neglects the core philosophical concerns.

When applied in a comparative or cross-cultural context, such an approach aims first and foremost towards a faithful reconstruction of both parties that is firmly grounded in their respective contexts and overall projects; the philosophical concerns, approaches and goals of the parties shall always take hermeneutic priority over any particular similarity or contradiction between them. This approach should then prevent partial or fragmented readings of a certain party. It should also challenge researchers to overcome contradictory readings (such as that between Nietzsche A and Nietzsche B) and strive for a consistent, integral reading. The bridging themes that may emerge from these efforts will then provide a more solid ground for dialogue. In fact, a study conducted in such a manner will remain beneficial even if it concludes that the philosophical projects of the parties in question are incompatible with each other. This is because such a conclusion will be

based on a better understanding of the parties instead of upon a bias-informed confrontation or a partial, distorted vantage point of similarity. To clarify, this contextualized and comprehensive approach does not imply that we are donning some cloak of unattainable objectivity in any sense. This study does not argue for a non-perspectival objective interpretive position. Its only goal is to minimize arbitrariness and distortion by accounting for as much evidence as possible without ignoring inconsistent aims or being satisfied with listing similarities and differences.

The selection of materials and topics in the current study is based on a number of considerations. While the previous Nietzsche-Daoism studies are mostly interested in Nietzsche and the *Zhuangzi*, choosing the *Daodejing* as a more fitting target of comparison has two advantages. Firstly, the DDJ is of central importance in classical Daoism and was generally accepted as the core text of the Daoist tradition by all Daoist communities, regardless of their disagreements with one another. Secondly, the *Zhuangzi* is, arguably, an even more heterogeneous text in its origins than the *Laozi*, attributable to a far more diverse authorship, and so finding consistent aims even within the body of this one "anthology" would require a far longer study than this thesis can accommodate. Hence any finding in a Nietzsche-DDJ study should have significant implications for all Nietzsche-Daoism comparisons.[4]

The hermeneutic work concerning Nietzsche is also quite challenging. Aside from the quantity of his works and his unorthodox style of writing, his ideas and emphases changed throughout his life and it is debatable whether he had a coherent philosophical system through all of his transitions of perspective. However, this does not mean there are no patterns or a comprehensible process of evolution of his ideas. I select *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (hereafter *Zarathustra*) as the entry point in the current investigation. *Zarathustra* is arguably the most paradigmatic of his works. Although it requires great interpretive effort to illustrate its denotations, it does encapsulate Nietzsche's overall philosophical project, and so its structural characteristics reflect the fundamental patterns of his aims.

Zarathustra is not only an almost encyclopedic collection of the themes Nietzsche was engaged with, it is also a nexus work that connects Nietzsche's earlier and later philosophical pursuits. Along with *The Gay Science* (hereafter GS) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (hereafter BGE),[5]

[4] There are of course different versions, translations, and commentaries of the DDJ. This thesis will utilize the version edited by 3rd century Chinese scholar Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249 CE) as reconstructed by Chen Guying 陳鼓應 (2003), who has also consulted the archaeological discoveries from both the Mawangdui Silk Texts (馬王堆帛書, before 168 BCE) and Guodian Chu Slips (郭店楚簡, circa 300 BCE). For English translations of the DDJ's texts, I consult both Ames' and Hall's (2003) and Moeller's (2007), but modify their interpretations whenever I deem necessary, for which reasons and discussions will be provided. I remain fully responsible for all translated texts.

[5] Between his two published editions of GS, Nietzsche finished both editions of *Zarathustra*, after which BGE was published. The contents of the three books also overlap to some extent.

this set of books shows, on the one hand, the maturation of his ideas from his earlier days, such as his critique of metaphysics and the emphasis on becoming and overcoming. On the other hand, they also outline the themes such as "will to power" that he would further investigate and elaborate in the last years of his productivity. Furthermore, Nietzsche himself held high hopes that Zarathustra would attract people to his philosophy, and despite its failure in terms of public reception, he kept referring back to it with great pride in his later works such as *Ecce Homo* (hereafter EH).

Pairing up *Zarathustra* and the DDJ is also formally interesting. They both appear to include some kind of "teaching" that the authors want to convey to their audiences, and both mention certain "ideal figures," namely the DDJ's *shengren* 聖人 or "sage" and *Zarathustra*'s *Übermensch*, that they inspire their audience to become. Such formal correspondence, however, should not be mistaken as the starting point of this comparative study. The fact that they share formal features by no means suggests they offer similar teachings. Formal correspondence is strictly formal in appearance; it does not and should not by itself be taken as suggestive of philosophical affinities.

There is one last important hermeneutic issue requiring discussion. When the DDJ and Nietzsche appear to be articulating ontological accounts (about life, for instance) or even a metaphysics of the cosmos, this thesis will attempt to derive and discuss the *values and philosophical concerns* behind their accounts instead of comparing the accounts literally. This is because I concede to a challenge Nietzsche proposes, that:

> the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constitute the true living seed from which the whole plant has always grown. Actually, to explain how the strangest metaphysics claims of a philosopher really come about, it is always good (and wise) to begin by asking: what morality is it (is *he*–) getting at? (BGE 6 5.19-20)[6]

Researchers must reckon with this statement in their readings of Nietzsche himself, and not pursue naive readings of an ontological theory in Nietzsche's writing. On the other hand, although the DDJ has a strong metaphysical character, I suggest that this Nietzschean hermeneutic rule can also be applicable to a reading of the DDJ. Consistent with the proposed approach, what matters is the overall projects and structural characteristics of the DDJ and Nietzsche's thoughts. While an

[6] References to Nietzsche's works are marked with English abbreviations (and aphorism number when available), followed by volume and page numbers in Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (eds.), *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* (München/Berlin: DTV/de Gruyter, 1980; hereafter KSA) for the relevant German texts. The current instance "BGE 6 5.19-20" stands for "aphorism 6 in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in KSA vol. 5, pages 19-20." All emphases are original unless indicated otherwise. Quoted German texts will be *italicized*, and Nietzsche's original emphasis will be underlined (or **bolded** as Nietzsche occasionally does). Unbracketed ellipses are original, whereas bracketed ones are mine. With limited German proficiency, attempts were made to verify the translations. However, I rely heavily on available translated texts in published works as well as the courtesy of Professor Herman W. Siemens for translations of Nietzsche's unpublished notes, i.e., the *Nachlass*. All credits go to theses translators, but I am of course fully responsible for the use of these texts in this thesis.

account of the DDJ's cosmological framework will be crucial for understanding its own moral project, the apparent similarities and differences of the ontological/metaphysical accounts of the DDJ and Nietzsche are of minor importance to this thesis.

1.4 Thesis, Themes and Chapter Outline

This thesis will argue that Nietzsche and the DDJ oppose each other in the fundamental philosophical concerns. This opposition is rooted in their considerations of human autonomy, namely, the DDJ's heteronomous project centers on *Dao* in contrast to the more human-centered orientation of Nietzsche. This opposition has critical implications for their positions on the problem of, and complex related to, legislation and evaluation as a human phenomenon, on which issue the two parties also oppose each other. These differences pose the challenges that need to be overcome for any attempt to argue for significant philosophical affinity between Nietzsche and classical Daoism.

Chapter 2 will be dedicated to a focused reconstructions of the overall projects of the DDJ and Nietzsche by focusing on the issue of authority. It contrasts the DDJ's criteria of natural power and the key characteristics of the model of *Dao*, establishing the DDJ's heteronomous philosophy and preference for tranquility over conflict in the living of an ideal life. In contrast, Nietzsche intends to revitalize human autonomy, and his ideas such as "chaos" and "will to power" present a model of life that is dynamically pluralistic and active, and makes human culture into an ongoing and transforming agonism of values.

Based on the findings in Chapter 2, Chapters 3 and 4 will focus on the issue of legislation as a human value-giving/creating phenomenon. Chapter 3 will discuss the ontological problem of legislation and evaluation. It shows how the DDJ's heteronomous position constitutes a radical skepticism of human values, which leads to the recommendation of an anti-legislative stance on the part of sage-rulers. Conversely, Nietzsche affirms human legislative capacities and considers legislation a vital activity in and for the health of life.

Chapter 4 explores the issues of resistance, struggle, and conflict. The DDJ's heteronomous position informs its rejection of these results of competing human evaluations because it believes these phenomena to be the predictable but harmful consequences of human legislative pursuits. In contrast, Nietzsche affirms the indispensable value of these activities for life and its vital health, consistent with his pro-legislative and pro-autonomy position.

Chapter 5 will conclude that the DDJ and Nietzsche would consider each other as "nihilist" because each of them pursues what the other thinks is harmful to life. For Nietzsche, the DDJ represents yet another life-negating doctrine that suppresses human nature and autonomy, while for

the DDJ, Nietzsche's affirmation of human autonomy and legislative faculties only leads to endless escalation and never a solution. Finally, this chapter will revisit the historical value of the "approach from similarity" and suggest that the ability to reject the temptation to draw similarities is critical for the future development of inter-cultural philosophy.

Chapter 2
The Issue of Authority and the Characters of Vital Power

> "Human beings emulate the earth, the earth emulates heaven, heaven emulates the Way [*Dao*], the Way emulates what is naturally-self-so."
>
> – The *Daodejing*, 25

> "'This – is just *my* way: where is yours?' – Thus I answered those who asked of me 'the way.' For *the* way – does not exist!"
>
> – Zarathustra, "On the Spirit of Heaviness," 2

This chapter will reconstruct the overall projects of the DDJ and Nietzsche with an emphasis on the issue of authority. It will articulate the opposing positions of the DDJ and Nietzsche on human autonomy and the implications of this opposition for their ontological models of power and healthy living. I will show that the DDJ stresses the primacy of *Dao* not just in cosmic processes but in human affairs, effectively constituting a heteronomy, which contradicts Nietzsche's human-centered concerns. The DDJ's heteronomy is closely connected to its preference for tranquility as the ideal of life, in contrast to Nietzsche's model of "chaos" and "will to power" that is dynamically agonist, pluralist and active.

2.1 Ontological-Moral Heteronomy in the *Daodejing*

The ideas found in the DDJ emerged during the development of early Chinese civilization and the carnage of battles during the Warring States Period (403-221 BCE). For the DDJ, these problems are symptoms of the overindulgence of human civilization, deviating from the natural course (*dao*). For this sickness, the DDJ prescribes a naturalistic treatment. The thinker(s) whose ideas eventually contributed to the DDJ were "natural observers," seeking understanding of human affairs by observing natural phenomena (Chen 2018, 17-19). In response to the fundamental question: "What is the right way to live?", they answered in physical and physiological terms by referring to nature and proposing (however implicitly) that "*the right way to live is to live healthily by following the natural law of life*." The entirety of the DDJ is an elaboration of this idea, and as a political guidebook, it aims to inspire its aristocratic readers to become *shengren* (聖人) or "sage(-

kings/rulers)" who follow the model of nature and embody the principle of *wuwei* (無為) in their governance.

2.1.1 Model of Natural Power and the Heteronomy of Human Being

I suggest that the DDJ's model of nature is one of *natural power*. An outline of this model can be found in DDJ 25 which states the fundamentals of the work's cosmology:

> There was a thing that formed spontaneously, emerging before heaven and earth. Silent and empty, alone it stands, unaltered it stays, pervading in its cycle and never exhausted. It can be thought of as the mother of heaven and earth. I do not yet know its name, styling it as "*Dao*," reluctantly and arbitrarily I name it "great." Great is passing, passing is distancing, distancing is returning. *Dao* is great; heaven is great; the earth is great; the king is also grand. Four are greats in the realm, and the king is one of them. Human beings emulate the earth, the earth emulates heaven, heaven emulates *Dao*, *Dao* emulates what is naturally-self-so [自然 *ziran*]. (DDJ 25)

In this cosmology, *Dao* is the ultimate ontological entity and it emulates the principle of *ziran*, or naturally-self-so, which runs through everything from *Dao* to humans (Liu 2016).[7] Underlying this notion of naturally-self-so is the DDJ's conception of life and the cosmos in general as concretions of energy – vital power, so to speak. To learn how to live a healthy life, the most powerful entity in nature is then the best model.

I suggest that DDJ maintains two criteria for determining what has the most power:

(a) that which makes all things be as they are, and

(b) that which exhausts the least force or effort to do so.

These criteria are rather intuitive: The most powerful force is capable of affecting the largest number of phenomena as well as inducing these effects more easily than other powers. The most powerful entity in this sense must be what makes all things as they are and does so with minimum, if any effort. Such is this great entity *Dao*, which animates all things and does this so naturally and effortlessly that it appears things became as they are all by themselves, without external imposition. In the following discussions, we will revisit this set of criteria, especially the effortlessness suggested by Criterion 2.

With *Dao* as a model, the next question is the relations between *Dao* and all particular existents. Ames (1991) suggests that, in classical Chinese philosophies, a sense of spontaneity and agency is assumed to be present in the rise of individual life, which is related to nature as a whole,

[7] In all chapters of DDJ that include it – Chapters 17, 23, 25, 51 and 64 – *ziran* is always mentioned as a principle or state of things rather than an ontological entity.

like a focus in a field (134-140). This ontological observation is understandable, but it falls short in accounting for how the DDJ (and other classical Chinese philosophies) advocate *directing and limiting* human agency in order to cultivate the right quality or virtue (*de* 德).[8] Actions that deviate from the heavenly path are discouraged (Moeller 2006, 45). By nature, each life, including a human life, may have autonomous agency, but as DDJ 25 suggests, through a lineage of emulation, human beings follow the model of *Dao* as well.

This is not only an ontological assumption, but also bears normative weight, effectively constituting a form of heteronomy. This logic in the DDJ is straightforward: The ontological principle of an entity reveals not just its nature but also the way it ought to be or be handled. For example, it is of the nature of plants biologically to require water in order to live, and so they ought to be watered if they are not to wither. Therefore, if human beings by their ontological nature emulate *Dao*, the operating principle of *Dao* also provides guidance (another prominent sense of the word *dao*) toward health and good life for human beings and prescribes limits on human autonomy and agency. As Chen Guying (2018) correctly observes, for the DDJ, human social order ought to be informed by *Dao*'s cosmic order (48). Thus, human beings do have agency and spontaneity in their very being, but this capacity does not justify complete autonomy.

2.1.2 The Tranquility of Natural Power

The DDJ describes the operating principle of *Dao*'s model of natural power as *wuwei* and this is what a *shengren* or sage-ruler should embody. The term "*wuwei*" is vague at best and its connotations in the DDJ are much more complex than a mere literal rendering of the words would betray.[9] For the current investigation, it is sufficient to focus on a few key characteristics of *Dao* and *wuwei*. Overall, the model of *Dao* is one of *tranquility*, which is characterized by *emptiness*, *equilibrium*, and *effortlessness*.

Through a "hypertext" reading of the DDJ as Moeller (2006) suggests, these characteristics can be found in a series of recurring metaphors. Recall how DDJ 25 describes *Dao* as "silent and empty," "unaltered" while pervading in cycles and never exhausted. A strong resonance can be found in DDJ 6 that chapter reads:

> The spirit of the valley never dies. This is called the great unfathomable female. The gate of the great unfathomable female is the root of the world. Wispy and continuous as

[8] One popular translation of *de* is "efficacy," as accepted by, for example, Hall and Ames (1987), Ames and Hall (2003), and Moeller (2006). While *de* suggests effect-inducing power, translating it as "efficacy" risks reducing its richness and complexity to (one of) its attributes.

[9] See Zhang and Berger (forthcoming 2022) who summarize the three major meanings the concept of *wuwei* is associated with in DDJ: 1.) Preventing potentially serious problems by handling them in early stages of development; 2.) using discretion and restraint in guiding things toward fortunate conclusions, and 3.) generating things without claiming dominion over them. These meanings are compatible with the following discussion.

cotton, barely existent, yet its productivity cannot be exhausted. (DDJ 6)

We will revisit the "unfathomable" nature in later chapters concerning human faculties. For now, our attention is first drawn to the metaphor of the "valley" (谷 *gu*), which refers to a general sense of low-lying land. Unlike towering mountains, lowlands, such as valleys, are shallow and "empty." In nature, water flows from the highlands to the valleys, where plants grow on the fertile soil and life thrives in abundance. For the DDJ, this phenomenon indicates the power of the *deep emptiness* of *wu* (無, nothingness or non-presence) that nurtures living things out of it and from which productivity springs. As Moeller (2006) correctly observes, there is a connection between this phenomenon and "imperishability" (8-12). Such emptiness "never dies" because, as DDJ 4 further elaborates, "*Dao* is empty, and when made use of, it does not fill up. So abysmally deep, as the ancestor of all things." DDJ 5 follows with the expression that "[t]he space between the heaven and the earth, is it not like a bellows? Empty but never emptied; as it moves, more comes out." DDJ 11 also famously interprets objects such as the hub of a cart wheel, a clay container, and doors and windows of a room in terms of their emptiness, their *wu*, which enables people to use the matter of the wheel, container and room for specific purposes.[10]

The inexhaustible and unaltered *Dao* suggests an endurance in *equilibrium*. It is not static, as *Dao* is permanently pervading and generating. This enduring equilibrium is illustrated by DDJ 33 which asserts thatthat "to not leave where one belongs is to be enduring." For the DDJ, things follow their nature and always return to where they belong, because their place of origin is where they are most naturally themselves. Whatever tends to move is not in a peaceful and stable state, therefore not where it is most comfortable. Naturally, as DDJ 25 states, the most powerful *Dao "*stays unaltered," for it is itself naturally-self-so.

The next important metaphor is the "barely existent cotton-like wispy continuity" (綿綿 *mianmian*), which suggests softness and weakness, indicating *effortlessness*. Softness and weakness is one of the major manifestations of the DDJ's principle of *wuwei* (Chen 2018, 180). Natural vital power in the DDJ is not "powerful" in the conventional, forceful sense, but is instead described as "soft" and "weak" with a minimum of if any physical presence. DDJ 40 also declares that "weakness (弱 *ruo*) is the usefulness of *Dao*," and that "things of the world are generated from presence (有 *you*); presence is generated from nothing (*wu*)." Combined with the above-enumerated second criterion of natural power that prefers effortlessness, this suggests *Dao*'s method is soft and weak and that the state of nothingness or non-presence precedes that of presence and all things.

[10] DDJ 11 is of course not hermeneutically simple. Berger (2014), for example, examines two readings of this chapter by Wang Bi and Zhong Hui (鍾會, 225-264 CE), the latter suggests a co-relation and mutual-reliance between *wu* ("nothing") and *you* ("presence"). Nevertheless, this difference does not change what is relevant in the current study, namely, *wu* is indispensable if something is to be "useful."

DDJ 76 further explains:

> In life, humans are soft and supple [柔弱 *rouruo*], in death, hard and rigid. In life, all things and grasses and trees are soft and frail [柔脆 *roucui*], in death, withered and dry. Hence it is said, the hard and the rigid belong to the dead, and the soft and the weak to the living. (DDJ 76)

This value of the "power of softness" culminates in the DDJ's praise of water, as expressed in chapter 78:

> Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water, and yet in attacking the hard and the strong, there is nothing that can surpass it. This is because water alters things with its nothingness [*wu*]. (DDJ 78)

Clearly, for the DDJ, it is the embodiment of the *wu* or "nothingness" of water that makes it the most powerful force among all things in the world. Unlike other visible and explicit forces with substantial "presence" which can violently break or penetrate something, the force of water emanates from its non-presence and affects its target with barely violent and visible effort.

Indeed, as the DDJ's second criterion of power suggests, *effortlessness* is one key characteristic of *Dao*. DDJ 32 proposes that "[t]o analogize what *Dao* is to heaven and earth, it is like how small creeks and valleys flow towards rivers and oceans." The manner in which *Dao* animates or affects the world is similar to how creeks and valleys converge and run towards rivers and oceans – it naturally moves without obstruction or coercion. This emphasis on effortlessness is affirmed by DDJ 23's negative comments on "present" and disruptive effort:

> Violent winds do not last a whole morning, and torrential rains do not last a whole day. What is behind these occurrences? Heaven and earth. And if heaven and earth cannot sustain things for long, how much less the human being? (DDJ 23)

Such violent, "present" effort is simply not sustainable, and is therefore not an enduring model of power we ought to emulate.

The emptiness, equilibrium, and effortlessness of *Dao* then constitute a sense of *quietness and stillness*. As soft and wispy as cotton, it is not loud and exuberant, and here DDJ 6 resonates with DDJ 25 which also attributes "silence" to *Dao*. Considering the model of natural power and all the qualities mentioned above, it is then not surprising why the DDJ also favors quietness and stillness over instability and restlessness. Moreover, DDJ 45 observes and determines that "[b]eing restful beats the cold, keeping still beats the heat. Quietness and stillness can bring proper order to the world."

From such a model of natural power, the DDJ derives the operating principle of *wuwei*. As DDJ 43 pronounces:

> The softest thing in the world moves unhindered through [馳騁 *chicheng*] the hardest. The non-present [無有 *wuyou*] penetrates the seamless. This is how I know the benefit of *wuwei*. Teaching without words, benefits without *wei*, rare are those in the world who could reach them. (DDJ 43)

The image of all-penetrating water is at play again, with recurring elements such as effortlessness (the "unhindered") and quietness ("without words"). The benefit of *wuwei* is rooted in the absence of "presence' and "*wei*' or intentional effort. Now we have reconstructed the DDJ's model of natural power and its characteristics of tranquility. Before examining their implications on other issues, we shall consider Nietzsche and his portrayals of life and nature.

2.2 Human Autonomy in Nietzsche's Thought

In contrast to the heteronomy in the DDJ, we shall see that Nietzsche's project is concerned with human *autonomy*. For Nietzsche, the problem of his time (and human civilization in general) was not the excessive pursuit of the human, but the suppression and negligence of our autonomy. Unlike the tranquility of natural vital power in the DDJ, his alternative model, as embedded in his "will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*), is one of *dynamics*. Instead of emptiness, equilibrium, and effortlessness, this model is characterized by constant self-overcoming and is full of action, movement, striving, sometimes contradictions and agony.

2.2.1 The *Übermensch* and the Revitalization of Human Autonomy

Our investigation may begin with the *Übermensch* or the "overhuman," one of the staple concepts that is associated with Nietzsche. The teaching of the *Übermensch* is (in)famously preached by the esoteric protagonist of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the "Prologue" sections 3-5, Zarathustra outlines his teaching of the *Übermensch*, his expectations of the human, and warning against the crisis of "the last human" (*der letzte Mensch*). We shall first read the entire account. Zarathustra says,

> "*I teach to you the overhuman*. The human is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome it? […] The overhuman is the sense of the earth. […] I beseech you, my brothers, *stay true to the earth* and do not believe those who talk of over-earthly hope [for they are despisers of life]! […] What is the greatest you could experience? It is the hour of the great despising. The hour in which even your happiness disgusts you and likewise your reason and your virtue. […] Where then is the lightning to lick you with its tongue? Where is the madness with which you must be

> inoculated? Behold, I teach to you the overhuman: it is this lightning, it is this madness!" (Z I Prologue 3 4.14-16)

With the overhuman in mind, Zarathustra suggests that the value and mission of the human are "going-over" (*Übergang*) and "going-under" (*Untergang*), that the human is something to be overcome and he ought to engage in all manner of work such as sacrificing himself and preparing the world for the coming of the overhuman (Z I Prologue 4 4.16-18). According to Zarathustra, the current state of human beings is dangerous because people are proud of their "culture" (*Bildung*) which, they think, distinguishes them from goatherds and, with this belief, they are resistant to contempt for what they presently are, an important drive for self-overcoming. Zarathustra worries that this pride and resistance would ultimately result in a most despicable state – at least, this is how Zarathustra decides to confront his audience – namely "the last human." To overcome himself, the human must have "chaos" (*Chaos*) within him. For now, the people still have such "chaos" and are still rich enough to set a goal beyond the human. In time, however, such resources will be depleted and the human will no longer be able to overcome himself. The last human thinks he has invented happiness (*Glück*) and moved beyond the times when the whole world was mad (*irre*). He would not know "love" (*Liebe*), "creation" (*Schöpfung*), "yearning" (*Sehnsucht*) or the "star" (*Stern*) – a star like the overflowing sun which inspired Zarathustra to descend from his mountains. The last human will be forever satisfied with his current state and never strive to overcome himself to become something else. Thus, society will become homogeneous and no one will want anything different (Z I Prologue 5 4.18-21).

To analyze this extremely dense and enigmatic proposition, we need to consider Nietzsche's overall project within which Zarathustra and his teaching are to make sense. In the late 19th century, Nietzsche was concerned with the problem of modern Europe that was dominated by three major traditions in Western history: the philosophical tradition stemming from Plato's idealism, the religious tradition of Christianity, and the cultural legacy of the modern sciences and the Enlightenment. In addition, other historical trends played a role as well, such as the rise of industrial capitalism, consumerism, and Schopenhauer's pessimism. Simply put, Nietzsche encountered modernity as a philosophical problem (Gooding-Williams 2001, 1-5).

While the DDJ diagnosed the problem of its time as the over-development of human civilization, Nietzsche thought that the sickness of modernity – or of the entire tradition of western civilization for that matter, if not of the human world in general – was nihilism. In general terms, Nietzsche insisted that all those historical heritages were nihilist as they rejected the reality we naturally are in favor of the idealization of the human and its ideal place in a non-existent supernatural realm, the latter of which deflated, if not denied, the value of human nature in one way

or another.[11] They are those "who talk of over-earthly hope" and "despisers of life" in *Zarathustra*. Although modern sciences and the Enlightenment had brought a fundamental revolution in the European intellectual world, there are nevertheless two new trends that inherited, if not magnified, certain deeper prejudices. The praise of rationality in Plato was reinforced on account of the success of the modern positivist sciences. In addition, Platonic idealism and Christianity met one of two fates. They were re-affirmed as natural theology, which elevated an abstracted yet still personified nature to the station of the now-deceased God. Or, they were transformed into post-Enlightenment's transcendental theories based on the unquestioned authority of rationality which is assumed to possess universal legitimacy for all sentient beings. In other words, despite abolishing religious and metaphysical myths, modernity enthroned new gods through positing an idealistic bridge between rationality and nature.[12]

It is understandable why Forese (2004) would observe a shared sense of anti-absolutist "nothingness" or emptiness in early Daoism and Nietzsche. The DDJ is skeptical of any fixed and absolute concept, and Nietzsche also rejects any transcendent metaphysical system that claims to substantiate absolute values. However, this similarity is extremely limited, not just because, as Forese argues, Nietzsche considers nothingness as a negative limit while for Daoism it is positive. As discussed, although the DDJ affirms the ever-changing nature of *Dao*, it nevertheless construes *Dao*'s nothingness/emptiness (*wu*) as a guiding principle that humans ought to emulate. In contrast, for Nietzsche, the absence of absolute truth or metaphysical teleology is not a guidance, but places both the power and burden of value-creation on human beings themselves, as shown below.

The legacy of Western civilizational developments is considered by moderns as modern men as "culture" or a "form of education," namely *Bildung*, which is deeply concerning for Nietzsche. According to him, one fundamental problem with *Bildung* was its cultural-creative meaning and its ignorance and suppression of the creative life energy of human beings (Cooper, 2008: 607-610). With the dogmatic faith in the fruits of *Bildung*, people are "happy" and content with themselves and their achievements, ceasing to deplore the current state of things and no longer striving to create or "yearn" for something higher and better. They only follow but never command. In their modern quest for freedom, enlightening emancipation and moral autonomy, human beings still ignore the changing nature of the world. They continue to resort to moral heteronomy, attributing moral authority to a hetero-human source – previously in God, and now in the legacy of *Bildung*. This Platonic-Christian "man" is what Zarathustra tries to inspire people to "over-"come (Gooding-

[11] See Reginster (2006, 21-53) for a reconstruction of the complex notion of nihilism in Nietzsche's thought and why he thinks that, although Christian-Platonic ideals are not attainable, this does not make our life any less valuable.

[12] Gooding-Williams (2001, 46-72) offers a similar interpretation of the anti-Platonic and anti-Christian nature of Nietzsche's philosophical project.

Williams 2006, 65). When Zarathustra announces that he has found no greater power than good and evil (Z I Goals), he is challenging the established self-perception of modern morality under *Bildung*: Good and evil are not absolute values rooted in an otherworldly metaphysical system, but are expressions of power enunciated by humans. Zarathustra's teaching, therefore, is a breaking from *Bildung* and other European traditions as dogmatism and working towards a human culture that is "beyond good and evil," defeating dogmatic nihilism and ushering in a new era of human legislation (Gooding-Williams 2001, 48-50). As Reginster (2006) puts it, by invoking a goal and the possibility of goal setting, Zarathustra intends to inspire human beings as agents (24).

Nietzsche and the DDJ clearly diverge on the issue of authority. The DDJ refers to nature and advises people to emulate the natural model of *Dao*, while Nietzsche is very skeptical of any singular and overarching metaphysical principle that governs natural processes. Furthermore, the Daoist sage-ruler does not "command" in a Nietzschean sense. Instead, he enacts *wuwei* and discourages people's agency and desires by employing "raw wood that are not named" (無名之樸, *wuming zhi pu*), emphasizing on the basic needs for natural survival over the developed, civilized desires (DDJ 37). Other than this, the DDJ consistently stresses that the sage-ruler only "rears [all things] and does not lord it over them," assisting in their growth and thriving (within the framework of *Dao*) and does not make claim over them (DDJ 2, 10, 51). In other words, the sage-ruler is not a commander or a law-giver, but a keeper and an enforcer of the order of *Dao*. This anti-legislative aspect of the DDJ will be further illustrated in the following chapters.

In contrast, Nietzsche attempts to wake up dormant legislative autonomy in the modern world. To achieve this, Nietzsche suggests that we need to demoralize nature by stripping it of its (human-made) authority over us. This should help us recognize that nature itself holds no lawful order nor teleological goal – hence the idea of "chaos" – leaving the role of legislator to ourselves. In GS 109, for instance, Nietzsche points out that the qualities we see in nature are "aesthetic anthropomorphisms" (*ästhetischen Menschlichkeiten*) we project onto nature, rather than recognizing principles intrinsic to nature *per se* (GS 109 3.468). He then laments:

> But when will we be done with our caution and care! When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified [*entgöttlicht*] nature! When may we begin to *naturalize* [*vernatürlichen*] humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? (GS 109 3.468-469)

A demoralized nature implies the vanity of seeking moral (or any) authority out there in the world. Instead, we may only find authority in ourselves. The world at large is without binding rules or a teleological end, whereas we human beings are the ones who prescribe laws, and we need to face this nature of nature and our own nature. We ought to be good physicists, who reveal that previous

valuations and ideals have been ignorant or contradictory to nature (*qua* the ancient *physis-nomos* debate; GS 335 3.563-564).

Coutinho and Sigurdsson (2004) are right to suggest that both Nietzsche and early Daoists are "wanderers" beyond boundaries. The DDJ (and the *Zhuangzi*) criticized the prevalent humanist Confucian and Mohist cultures at their time, and Nietzsche attacked the humanist legacies of Western civilization. On account of their invoking "nature" for their critiques, Stambaugh's (1991) observation of their naturalism seems at first glance acceptable too. However, the significance of these similarities is questionable. The DDJ assumes a naturalistic stance to prescribe heteronomy, in order to discourage and limit existing human civilization, while Nietzsche affirms human legislative autonomy to encourage people to challenge traditions. Their notions of "nature" are drastically different, and their boundary-breaking movements head in opposite directions. This difference will be further illustrated in the next section which considers Nietzsche's model of the vital power of life.

2.2.2 "Chaos" and "Will to Power" in Nietzsche's Thought

With the death of God and a demoralized nature, the kind of life that Nietzsche valorizes requires certain preconditions and exhibits particular characteristics. These may be found in *Zarathustra*'s "Prologue" section 5, where Zarathustra urges human beings to avoid falling into becoming "the last man" and reminds them that they still have "chaos" in them, suggesting that such "chaos" is a precondition for self-overcoming, the main feature of Nietzsche's notion of life (Reginster 2006,124-147).

While the term "chaos" is never mentioned again in *Zarathustra*, the image recurs. It is described as a "ball of wild snakes that are seldom at peace with each other" (Z I Criminal 4.46), for example, or a "monster" with a thousand necks as the power behind our judgmental/legislative evaluations (Z I Goals 4.76). Another unpublished note of Nietzsche illustrates "chaos" more clearly. In 1885, between his two editions of *The Gay Science* and the same year of the publication of his second, completed edition of *Zarathustra*, he wrote:

> […] This world: a monster of forces, without beginning, without end […] forces everywhere, and as a play of forces one and "many" at the same time, accumulating here and at the same time decreasing there, an ocean of forces storming and streaming into themselves, eternally self-transforming, eternally rushing back […] flowing out from the simplest forms into the most manifold, from the stillest, most rigid, and coldest into the most incandescent, wildest, and most self-contradictory, and then again returning home from abundance to the simple, from the play of contradictions to the pleasure of harmony, […] this *Dionysian* world of mine, eternally creating itself anew,

> eternally destroying itself […] – *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides*! And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides! (KSA 38[12] 11.610-611)[13]

In other words, if Nietzsche is to describe the world and the nature of our lives, it is a movement of plural, spontaneous and effective forces, and such is the vital activity of "will to power."[14]

Although Nietzsche did not publish this 1885 note, several similarities could indeed be claimed to exist between this note and the DDJ, as Parkes (2014, 53) suggests. Section 2.1 above demonstrated that the DDJ also postulates an energy based cosmology with eternal productivity. *Dao* is constantly spontaneously "self-so" and self-becoming, with a sense of self-ordering. Furthermore, *Dao* also operates in cycles between creation and destruction that are the result of opposite forces, the famous *yin* and *yang* energy systems. Additionally, the DDJ also describes *Dao*'s motion as "returning,"[15] as well as the rhythmic operation between simplicity and abundance (e.g., DDJ 1, 42). Additionally, if focusing on the aspect of efficacy and the interplay between multiple forces in classical Chinese philosophies,[16], great resonance can indeed be found in this account of Nietzsche's. Furthermore, by proclaiming both the world and ourselves to be "will to power," Nietzsche seems to suggest that human beings and the world/nature as a whole follow the same principle, just as did the DDJ. Moreover, if we consider the times Nietzsche equates life with will to power in this period,[17] the issue of life and vitality is also implicated in this connection, reinforcing his resonance with the DDJ.

Upon closer inspection, however, there emerge critical contrasts that cannot be overlooked. The characteristics of Nietzsche's model of chaos are very different from that of the natural power of the DDJ. Unlike the tranquil and barely noticeable *Dao*, the world and human life of Nietzsche's "chaos" is not only non-teleological and intrinsically lawless but also awash in *dynamics* and full of action, movement, striving, sometimes contradictions and agony, as suggested by the images of entangled snakes or a thousand-necked beast. This model of nature at is core would be too violent, too cacophonous, and filled with too much "presence" (*you* 有) to correspond to the "nothing" of the DDJ's *Dao*. Assuredly, the DDJ's *Dao* and the world of nature are also constantly changing, but the style of *Dao*'s operation is empty, quiet, and effortless. While there are indeed forceful moments like violent winds and torrential rains in the world, the DDJ considers them as exceptional eruptions and not the norm, as we discussed earlier (DDJ 33). In contrast, dynamics and striving are significant features of Nietzsche's ontology of the world and life's vitality. He would likely criticize

[13] Quoting Parkes' (2014, 53) translation.
[14] See also Siemens (2018, 30-32, 32-35) for a better illustration of this character of will to power.
[15] E.g., DDJ 16, 25, 40, 65.
[16] For example, Parkes (1983), Ames (1991), Hall and Ames (1987) and Ames and Hall (2003).
[17] E.g., GS 349 3.585-586; BGE 13 5.27-28; AC 6 6.172.

the DDJ's model of nature to be "all too human" because exuberant phenomena are clearly in nature too, so to devalue them as exceptional indicates a bias. A good physicist would take everything into account, so even what we call violence, contradictions, and agony are all part of nature's movement too.

Fundamentally, the criteria of power, i.e., the conditions for the vitality of life, that the DDJ and Nietzsche employ are incompatible, and certainly so in the formulation of Zarathustra. In the section "On Self-Overcoming" (*Von der Selbst-Überwindung*), Zarathustra lays out three criteria of life:

(1) "All that is living is something that obeys."

(2) "[W]hoever cannot obey himself will be commanded."

(3) "[C]ommanding is harder than obeying [because] [a]n experiment and a risk appeared to me in all commanding; and always when it commands, the living puts its own self at risk. […] For its own law it must become judge and avenger and sacrificial victim." (Z II Self-Overcoming 4.147)

This should be considered together with the secret that the personified Life told Zarathustra:

> "*I am that which must always overcome itself*. […] I would rather go under than renounce this one thing: and verily, where there is going-under and the falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself – for power! That I must be struggle and Becoming and purpose and conflict of purposes – ah, whoever guesses my will also guesses along what *crooked* ways it has to walk! Whatever I create and however much I love it – soon I must oppose both it and my love: thus my will wills it. […] Only where Life is, there too is will: though not will to life, but – so I teach you – will to power! Much is valued by the living than life itself; but out of this very valuing there speaks – the will to power!" (Z II Self-Overcoming 4.148-149)

In addition to the resemblance between this account and the 1885 note as well as the model of chaos, here we see a more specific formulation of life. According to it, obedience and commanding are essential in life, and one either obeys oneself or an external authority.

This set of criteria is simply incompatible with the DDJ. On the descriptive level, command and obedience are absent in the DDJ's conception of nature and vitality. The DDJ does not characterize its model of nature in any such manner. A key problem here is striving. Overcoming, struggling, working with contradictions, etc., are considered by Nietzsche to be characteristic of life, but these would be characterized as an overexertion of effort compared to the DDJ's ideal

conception of effortlessness. We will revisit this contrast in the following chapters.

It is not helpful either to reformulate the DDJ's *Dao* as the most powerful entity that everything else obeys in its unfolding, because difficulties still arise on the more critical, prescriptive level. With his account of life, the morality Zarathustra is "getting at" (appropriating BGE 6 5.20) is one of dynamics, action, movement, striving, and agony. This ideal of life contradicts the DDJ's preference of tranquility. Through Zarathustra, Nietzsche attempts to inspire his reader to *command*, to embody the "will to power" and enact legislative autonomy, whereas the DDJ prescribes that people ought to surrender their autonomy and *emulate Dao*, remaining observant of the latter's principle of operation. For Nietzsche, emulating *Dao* would just be another variety of "herd" mentality. People who accept the DDJ's teaching would never command but follow instead, following the DDJ's description of nature and therefore following the will of the thinkers behind the DDJ. Such human beings would be again attributing moral authority to a hetero-human authority, i.e., to the text of DDJ itself and to its *Dao* and nature. Neither would they be good physicists either, for they fail to see the "all-too-human" pseudo-natural science in the DDJ.

This contrast on the issue of human autonomy is critical. Ames and Parkes observe that Nietzsche's Zarathustra claims to have found no greater power than good and evil (Z I Goals), and construe Nietzsche's notion of will to power as ultimately about autonomous interpretation. With this, they conclude that this "will to power as interpretation" is comparable to the individual's *de* (德) or "virtuosity" as thematized in classical Chinese philosophy.[18] This is a hasty connection, however. As mentioned above, the status of human autonomy in early Chinese philosophy is different from Western formulations. Furthermore, Ames and Parkes also fail to account for the peculiar *legislative and evaluative* character of Nietzschean interpretation. Such legislative power is acknowledged by early Chinese thinkers as part of our human capacity, but is devalued by the DDJ and does not exert the same normative power as in Nietzsche's thought.

Consequently, through the above analysis, we should recognize the fundamental contradictions between the overall projects of the DDJ and Nietzsche. With regard to the issue of authority, the former worries about the over-development of human civilization and advocates a naturalistic heteronomy which asks human beings to emulate *Dao*, whereas the latter frets about the nihilist suppression of natural legislative power in humans and encourages their autonomy. Their criteria of power and models of natural and life's vitality are also drastically different. The DDJ favors tranquility, while Nietzsche velorizes dynamics.

The implications of these fundamental contradictions are extensive. The following chapters will focus on the issue of legislation and evaluation, where the problem of human autonomy exerts

[18] See, for example, Ames (1991) and Parkes (1983, 2015a, 2015b).

its immediate influence. We will explore how the above-illustrated fundamental philosophical contradictions result in their opposite attitudes towards the human phenomena surrounding legislation and evaluation.

Chapter 3
The Un/healthy Legislation

> "When the great *Dao* is abandoned, there then appear benevolence and appropriateness."
>
> – The *Daodejing*, 18

> "The human being first put values into things, in order to preserve itself – it creates a meaning for things, a human meaning!"
>
> – Zarathustra, "On the Thousand Goals and One"

In Chapter 2, we saw how the overarching reconstructed projects of the DDJ and Nietzsche exhibit significant incompatibilities with each other. One key aspect of this incompatibility concerns authority, specifically *legislation* as the exertion of law-giving authority. As mentioned, Nietzsche aims to inspire people to "command" as creative self-legislators; for him, legislation is an essential part of the vitality of life. This chapter aims to demonstrate how the different ideals of the DDJ's and Nietzsche's result in their opposite evaluations of legislation as a human phenomenon. The following discussions will show how the DDJ's devaluation of human faculties and desires results in its rejection of human legislation and evaluation, which it considers as harmful. In contrast, Nietzsche's human-centered project affirms the ontological benefits and necessity of legislative activity.

3.1 Legislation and Cultural Sickness

3.1.1 The Anti-Legislation Project of the *Daodejing*

Here, "legislation" and the relevant notions of law do not just concern legal codes, but envelope the broader sense of passing judgments, making evaluations, and setting social standards in all areas from resources, knowledge, aesthetics and morality – in the broadest sense, legislation concerns the establishment of values for a society and culture. In this regard, both Nietzsche and the DDJ would agree that values, as the results of our legislative evaluations, are human constructions. As previously mentioned, Nietzsche infers that the qualities we project onto the natural order are really aesthetic anthropomorphisms that we have created instead of being intrinsic features discovered in it (GS 109 3.468). In *Zarathustra*, the protagonist further affirms that it is human

beings who give values, including the values of good and evil. "[T]hey did not take it, they did not find it nor did it come down to them as a voice from Heaven" (Z I Goals 4.75). Similarly, the DDJ suggests that values are constructed in opposition to undesirable behaviors in a relative manner, and they are therefore not absolute but products of human imagination and purposeful norm-establishment (DDJ 2). The thin similarity ends here, however.

Human constructions are products of various human faculties – cognitive, aesthetic, moral, etc. Fundamentally, the DDJ is skeptical of human faculties in regard to our relationship with *Dao*. "The *Dao* that can be put into words is not really the *Dao*; naming (名 *ming*) that can assign fixed reference to things is not really naming" (DDJ 1). The *Dao* is itself unfathomable and our idealistic and linguistic attempts to fixedly define it or anything in the world are futile. This ontological limit of our faculties renders their products – knowledge, taste, social-moral norms, and values in general – only relative and not absolute. This relative and non-absolute nature of values makes them both unstable and conducive to giving rise to their opposites:

> As soon as everyone in the world knows that the beautiful are beautiful, there is already ugliness. As soon as everyone knows that the good are good, there is the bad. Therefore, presence and emptiness give rise to each other, difficulty and ease form each other, longness and shortness compare with each other, height and lowness lean against each other, refined notes and raw sounds respond to each other,[19] preceding and following are in sequence with each other. (DDJ 2)

Because declaring one thing of value over another ensures the opposition of the opposite value, designating values portends failure. The sage-ruler, therefore, ought to refrain from and discourage the judgmental and legislative exercise of human faculties (Hoeller, 2006: 65-66).

Furthermore, regarding morality, the DDJ diagnoses that legislation and values are symptoms of a sick civilization, because the existence of values, especially in the form of morals, is a sign of our failure to emulate the natural way of *Dao*:

> When the great *Dao* is abandoned, there then appear benevolence (仁 *ren*) and appropriateness (義 *yi*); when the intellect and erudition grow, there then appears great artificiality (偽 *wei*); when the six family relationships lose harmony, there then appear filiality (孝 *xiao*) and parental affection (慈 *ci*); when the state falls into obscurity and disorder, there then appear upright ministers. (DDJ 18)[20]

[19] *He* (和) as a verb is often understood as "to harmonize," which is adopted by Ames and Hall (2003, 80). However, according to Xu Shen's (許慎, c. 58-c. 148 CE) classical dictionary *Shuowen Jiezhi* (Xu 2001, 74; hereafter SW), it only means "to respond," which suggests difference (only multiple different speakers could respond to each other) and correlation but not necessarily harmony.

[20] This is a fierce criticism of Confucianism, the major school advocating the morals and virtues mentioned here from benevolence to societal order.

For the DDJ, establishing and upholding values signals a deviation from the right and natural path of *Dao*. Recall how the DDJ praises effortlessness and tranquility, and lauds the benefits of "teaching without words." To think explicitly about virtues, to endeavor to uphold morals, to strive to combat disorder in the government, all of these explicit efforts reflect the fact that people have lost the right way to live. If we were following *Dao* properly, none of these norm-producing activities would be needed.

To clarify, the DDJ does not categorically condemn all activities of human faculties, only when they defy *Dao*. Ross (2008) is right to question why "will" in the ordinary sense would be an impediment to true virtue for the DDJ. The answer is that it is not. Human will is only an impediment when it contradicts *Dao* and *wuwei*. DDJ 33, for example, appears to compliment "acting resolutely" (強行 *qiangxing*) for its "having purpose/aspiration" (有志 *youzhi*).[21] It even praises the "strength" (強 *qiang*) of "self-overcoming" (自勝 *zisheng*) over "overcoming others" (勝人 *shengren*). These comments seem to affirm explicit and intentional human effort, contradicting our reconstructions so far. However, such examples only exist in the context of accommodating oneself to the way of *wuwei* and *Dao*. Similarly, when criticizing those who delight in killing, DDJ 31 foresees that they will not be able to "fulfill their aspiration" (得志 *dezhi*) in the world, suggesting that the DDJ does allow certain aspirations for a kind of success. Again, the context is to rule in the right way.

As a moral-political guidebook, the DDJ is advising its readers to become sage-kings who can appropriately rule the world and act in the correct way. The DDJ itself is a product of its intention to teach, to respond to the question "What ought a ruler do?", and a sense of goal and discipline is needed in the process of training. But *Dao* and its being emulated is *the* legitimate goal for the DDJ, not our willful intentions. As the DDJ famously advises those who inspire to "rule the world" (取天下 *qu tianxia*):

> To study is to increase daily, while to understand *Dao* is to decrease daily. Decrease and decrease again, until one arrives at *wuwei*. Enact *wuwei* and nothing is undone. (DDJ 48)

To decrease is certainly an action. The goal is to "*wei*" and do something, and the question is what and how. *Wuwei* then guarantees the accomplishment of everything, namely everything that matters. Discipline, will, intention, and a "goal" are all present, except that they are all directed towards and measured by *Dao* and the principle of *wuwei*. The latter are the guidance we human beings ought to emulate whereas our wills are to be curbed, and so such effort is therefore justified.

[21] To say the least, this is the generally accepted interpretation among various translations. I suspect this is the only possible reading, but could not afford to elaborate my suspicion at the moment with the lack of archaeological evidence and the scope of this thesis.

3.1.2 Legislative Vitality According to Nietzsche

While Nietzsche does not assume a conventional ontology of human nature, he nevertheless affirms our legislative capacity in that legislation is what humans do, or come to do. According to Zarathustra, "[t]he human being first put values into things, in order to preserve itself – it creates a meaning for things, a human's meaning (*Menschen-Sinn*)!" Legislation and meaning-creation are construed as critical features of human beings as evaluators (*Schätzende*). Evaluation, the creation of standards and norms for conduct, is placed at the core of human existence, without which "the kernel of existence would be hollow" (Z I Goals 4.75).

In light of this account, Nietzsche thinks that the *lack* of a legislative spirit signals a sickness in human civilization, which directly contradicts the DDJ's convictions. The previous chapter established that Zarathustra proposes an account of life as will to power which either commands or obeys. Following this notion, he warns about the crisis of "the last human," who no longer exhibits the desire to change or create. An elaboration of this idea can be found in *The Gay Science*. Through a contrast between faith and (legislative) will, Nietzsche suggests that "will, as the effect of command, is the decisive mark of sovereignty and strength." Where such a will is lacking, people long for faith, i.e., faith in another authority that could command them. The need for such faith therefore indicates weakness in a person, for such a person lacks the strength of will to command. Any doctrine that caters to such a need in people and installs faith in them – either their faith in religious authority or scientific positivism – is doing so through a "sickening of the will" (*Erkrankung des Willens*)(GS 347 3.581-583). Society is failing if people do not encourage the legislative spirit. As Zarathustra warns, "the best shall rule, the best also *wills* to rule! And where the teaching is different, there – the best is *lacking*" (Z III Tablet 21 4.263).

One might argue that Nietzsche nevertheless resonates with the DDJ with his ideal of "the child." The first lecture by Zarathustra describes three transformations between four images: the spirit, the camel, the lion, and the child. The lion is defiant in spirit and asserts "I will" by Nay-saying to duties imposed by external authorities, but not enough to create new values despite being able to seize the right to value-creation. The spirit in the child, instead, is the value-creating one:

> Innocent the child is and forgetting, a beginning anew, a play, a self-propelling wheel, a first movement, a sacred Yea-saying. Yes, for the play of creating, my brothers, a sacred Yea-saying is needed: the spirit now wills *its own* will, the one who had lost the world attains *its own* world. (Z I Transformations 4.31)

This image has puzzled scholars for decades.[22] Many believe that this "selfless" and playful child implies a renunciation of the ego and therefore finds resonance in Eastern thoughts such as

[22] For a brief summary of previous interpretations, see Van der Braak (2011, 128).

Buddhism and Daoism.[23] The problem, however, lies in *what and how* this selfless child plays.

Again, the child is creating new values. It is "for the play of creating" (*zum Spiele des Schaffens*), as the spirit is now "willing *its own* will" (*seinen Willen will nun der Geist*), by which it attains or wins a world for *itself* (*seine Welt gewinnt sich*). Nietzsche himself later explains that the ideal which animates Zarathustra's story is

> the ideal of a spirit that plays naïvely, i.e., not deliberately but from an overflowing abundance and power, with everything that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; a spirit which has gone so far that the highest thing which the common people quite understandably accepts as its measure of value would signify for it danger, decay, debasement, or at any rate recreation, blindness, temporary self-oblivion: the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often enough appear *inhuman* […] and in spite of all this, it is perhaps only with it that *the great seriousness* really emerges […] (EH (Z) 2 6.338-339)

Immediately, there arises a series of contrasts against the DDJ's model of *Dao*, such as "overflowing abundance and power" versus "empty and weak." Even if this account constitutes a dissolution of the substantial self and an emphasis not on the self but merely the act of willing,[24] there is nevertheless a strong sense of *autonomous agency* in this naive play of overflowing power. It is not clear why Nietzsche's supposed Eastern counterparts would approve such an ideal. As demonstrated, the DDJ sidelines human autonomy and discourages human willful intention and legislative creativity. One needs not to create one's world either, but to embody the tranquility and simplicity of *Dao*'s model. Even the sage-ruler – or, *especially* the sage-ruler should refrain from autonomy and enact *wuwei* by emptying himself and catering for the nature of all things. About the child as a metaphor, in all the places where the DDJ invoke this image, it is praised for its *pre-judgmental* and *pre-discriminatory* model. "A child that has yet to smile" is a state to which one shall return should he retain his genuine virtue or potency (常德, *changde*)(DDJ 20, 28). This pre-judgmental state of the child is worth praising because it represents the perfect retention of one's *qi* or vital energy which is not yet lost by growing old and indulging in the pursuits of human desires such as sexual ones (DDJ 10, 55). The child in the DDJ is, again, anti-legislative that does no engage in evaluation nor value-creation, opposite to the playful value-creator Nietzsche conceives.

Furthermore, Nietzsche valorizes *active and intentional affirmation* of reality, an explicit yea-saying. Denying and attempting to escape from our reality and nature are of course unhealthy

[23] For example, Shang (2006); Van der Braak (2011, 83-101); Parkes (2015a; 2015b). For reconstructions of the influential thinker of the Kyoto School, Nishitani Keiji's high level of agreement with Nietzsche, see Van der Braak (2001, 127-157) and Parkes (1993; 2020). See Nishitani (1990) for his own engagement with Nietzsche.

[24] For example, Van der Braak (2011, 128) concurs with Robert Gooding-Williams (2002) on this point.

behaviors of a poor student of physics, but simply acknowledging the reality is not enough either. Zarathustra urges people to *will* that this reality is what we want. This stronger, affirmative sense of will can also be found in Nietzsche's first formulation of the idea of eternal recurrence in GS. Appropriating the Cartesian thought experiment of a deceiving demon, Nietzsche imagines another monster. It tells us about the eternal recurring nature of our lives, that we will live it numerous times and nothing will be different. Nietzsche then challenges us to be well disposed enough to face our life and ourselves that we are willing "*to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal" (GS 341 3.570). As Nietzsche explains later in *Ecce Homo*:

> Zarathustra rigorously [*mit Strenge*] determines his task – it is mine as well –, and there can be no mistake about what he *means*: he is *affirmative* to the point of justification, to the point of salvation, even for everything past. (EH (Z) 8 6.348)

Such is the active, intentional, even rigorous affirmation of our reality and nature by our will that Nietzsche attempts to demonstrate.

In contrast, the DDJ does not demand such an affirmative attitude in human beings, nor does it endorse this active affirmation. *Dao* has its way of operating. Our intentional willing against *Dao* is definitely harmful, but we need not intentionally affirm *Dao* either, for explicit affirmation violates *wuwei*. And certainly, any sense of rigor is unnecessary; the ocean makes no effort to attract rivers. One needs only live along with *Dao* as rivers flow towards the ocean. Any agreement from Nietzsche is unimaginable. He would consider the DDJ as its authors' covert will to power, their commanding of obedience, and so we ought to break the DDJ's tablets too.

3.2 The Effects of Legislation

3.2.1 The Harm of Legislation According to the *Daodejing*

As mentioned, the DDJ claims that values are products of human faculties. The implications of this, in the context of the broader worldview of *Dao*, is that not only is the pursuit of human values in vain, but values themselves are also harmful:

> The five colors blind the eye. The five notes impair the ear. The five flavors destroy the palate. Riding and hunting addle the heart and mind. Rare and valuable goods subvert proper conduct. (DDJ 12)

What underlies the danger of inculcating values is desires (欲 *yu*). The DDJ's polemic against human desires targets not only sensual pleasures but our broader ambitions in general. According to the DDJ, any development of human ambitions beyond the boundaries of our needs for survival that *Dao* has conferred on us represents an overdevelopment. As seen above in DDJ 18, human intellect

(智 *zhi*) and erudition (慧 *hui*) are criticized for inciting anti-natural artificiality. In relation to politics, the DDJ also suggests that a great difficulty is posed for governance that comes exactly from the scheming and cleverness of the people (DDJ 65). The world is in turmoil precisely because we pursue desires beyond the ends of mere survival and simple living, as "there is no crime more onerous than greed, no misfortune more devastating than avarice" (DDJ 46). Upholding certain values means encouraging desires that exceed what we need, and affirming evaluative actions excites the pursuit of such excess desires further. Therefore, the discouragement of human desires leads to the rejection of values and legislative evaluations in the broad senses we are discussing them here.

Furthermore, while values as products of legislative desires are poisonous, combating such an epidemic with legislative conduct "from above," on the basis of political authority, is doomed to be counterproductive:

> The more prohibitions and taboos there are in the world, the poorer the people become. The more profitable means there are in people's hands, the darker the days for the state. The more ideas and techniques people have, the more that perverse things proliferate. The more prominently the laws and statutes are displayed, the more widespread the brigands and thieves. (DDJ 57)

Imagine how measures trigger counter-measures, rules attract rule-breakers, and making plans invites the cunning of those who would outsmart the plans. For the DDJ, explicit efforts only aggravate the problem of inciting human ambitions and its social consequences. Legislation simply contradicts the principle of *wuwei* and cannot be beneficial even in crisis management. As DDJ 38 construes it, "the superior does not strive to excel in virtuous efficacy, therefore they embody the highest virtuous efficacy (德 *de*). The inferior strives to keep virtuous efficacy, therefore they do not embody virtuous efficacy." Legislative effort is not superior and cannot induce the proper effect, and "to govern with intellect is a betrayal to the state" (DDJ 65).

To combat the cultural disease being diagnosed here, the DDJ consistently calls for the enactment of *wuwei* on the part of the leader in order to effortlessly draw people back to the natural course of *Dao*. Valuable goods are not to be prized, intellects are to be dulled, causes for desires are not to be put on display (DDJ 3). Eventually,

> Reject sagacity and abandon intellect, the benefit to the people will be a hundredfold. Reject authoritative conduct and abandon appropriateness, the people will return to filiality and parental affection. Reject cleverness and abandon personal profit, brigands and thieves shall be no more. (DDJ 19)

The key is to embrace a natural simplicity and "reduce desires as well as the concern with our own selfish benefits" (DDJ 19). These measures are employed out of a confidence that:

> I [the Sage] enact *wuwei*, and people will themselves be transformed. I favor tranquil equilibrium, and people will themselves be corrected and decent. I do not interfere in governance, and people will themselves prosper. I remain without desire, and people will themselves embrace simplicity (璞 *pu*). (DDJ 57)

By enacting *wuwei*, the ruler will create the right environment which enables people to live in accordance with *Dao*. Endeavoring to raise a mountain would only obstruct the flow of nourishing streams and rivers. It is, therefore, wiser to remain low and empty so all things naturally come to where they belong, effortlessly.

Ultimately, the DDJ favors a radical indifference to and the abandonment of discrimination and differentiation altogether:

> Cut off learning and there will be nothing more to worry about. How much difference is there really between a polite "yes" and an emphatic "no!"? How much difference is there between what is deemed beautiful and ugly? …… The common lot see things so clearly while I [the Sage] alone seem to be in the dark. The common lot are so discriminating while I alone am so obtuse. So vague and hazy, like the rolling seas; so indeterminate, as though virtually endless. The common lot all have their purposes while I alone am a dull-witted yokel. My needs alone are different from other people, cherishing the Mother that feeds me (食母 *shimu*).[25] (DDJ 20)

Differentiation, discrimination, and decision on intellectual, aesthetic, and moral levels is deemed unnecessary. The products of these human faculties are "trivial and decorative flowers" (末飾之華 *moshi zhi hua*) in contrast to the vital root of life represented by *shimu*, the nourishing mother, according to the commentator Wang Bi (2008, 48). This interpretation finds support in DDJ 38, which suggests that a person of consequence shall "reside at the [substantial] fruits [or seeds] rather than with the flower." Granted, the DDJ acknowledges the existence of desires in the common people and does not advocate a total eradication of all desires in the world. But, as an ideal, the DDJ allows a sage to understand desires directed to survival and simplicity, but not to actively multiply them. As the famous DDJ 1 advises, "to be really objectless in one's desires is how one observes the mysteries of all things, while really having desires is how one observes their fulfilling of

[25] Ames and Hall (2003) translate *shimu* as "my mother's milk," following a metaphor of an infant which is indeed a recurring image in the DDJ (106-107). However, the morphological structure, i.e., *shi* precedes *mu*, suggests that *shi* (related to food or feeding) is a qualifier for *mu* (mother). Therefore, "the Mother that feeds me" is a superior translation morphologically and metaphorically.

purpose (徼 *jiao*)."[26] A sage-ruler is a human being after all, but the key is to acknowledge the existence and effects of desires which nurture natural life while being able to liberate oneself from excess desires instead of craving and being possessed by them. Ultimately, "knowing enough" (知足 *zhizu*) is the ultimate fulfillment (DDJ 46).

3.2.2 The Necessity and Benefit of Legislation According to Nietzsche

"Pious and silent he passes over carpets of stars: – but I do not like soft-stepping men's feet on which not even a spur jingles" (Z II Perception 4.156). This could be Zarathustra's castigation of a quiet Daoist ruler of *wuwei*. The type of people Zarathustra describes as too "soft-stepping" believe that the highest possible achievement is:

> To look upon life without desire and not like a god with its tongue hanging out: To be happy in looking with a will that has died, without the grasping or greed of selfishness. […] To love the earth as the moon loves her, and to touch her beauty with the eye alone. And let this be for me the *immaculate* perception of all things: that I want nothing from things, except that I may lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes. (Z II Perception 4.157)

If a Daoist sage-ruler would assume a hands-off attitude in governance and merely contemplate the dynamics of *Dao*, this would match the above profile of a self-proclaimed "pure perceiver" without desires. Zarathustra finds such people "repugnant" (*widerlich*), however, and calls them "sentimental hypocrites" and "lechers" (*Lüsterne*). The reason is that, for Zarathustra, these pure perceivers nevertheless love the earth and all earthly things, but they feel ashamed of such love and have allowed their spirit to be persuaded to despise the earthly. Their will is not pure but contaminated with contempt for the earthly and by jealousy of the joys of creators. What is at stake is indeed the power to create. Without desires, without love and contempt, there is no drive for new creations and higher standards – desire is the condition for legislation (Z II Perception 4.156-158).[27] The notion of law (*Gesetz*) in Nietzsche's thought is certainly not simple or straightforward.[28] With its rigid and fixating character, law contradicts with Nietzsche's dynamic and pluralistic sense of life as will to power, of chaos and self-overcoming, posing both ontological and ethical challenges (Siemens, 2010: 190-192). Therefore, even when both Nietzsche and the DDJ reject law and

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[26] Ames and Hall (2003) translate *jiao* as "boundary," which can be more specific. A philological discussion exceeds the scope of this thesis. But it should be noted that, by consulting the SW (Xu 2001, 105 & 507) and Wang Bi's interpretation (Wang 2008, 1), *jiao* refers to "returning to an end" (歸終 *guizhong*) or the fulfillment and completion of a teleological movement. The sense of boundary comes from the teleological part, which implies a designated course for something to fulfill its end. Therefore, "fulfilling of purpose" is more accurate.

[27] A discussion of "desire" in Nietzsche's philosophy exceeds the scope of this thesis, which must focus on the DDJ's and Nietzsche's different approaches to, and evaluations of, legislation.

[28] See Siemens (2010) for a concise discussion. I am heavily indebted to Siemens for both the overall understanding of Nietzsche and the particular issue regarding law and life.

legislation in the name of the vitality of life, they are employing entirely different reasons because, as discussed earlier, their conceptions of life are incompatible.

Moreover, Zarathustra asserts that law-giving as commanding is essential to life. There are several reasons for this. On the ontological level, Nietzsche acknowledges that legislation by human faculties is both natural and necessary. While Nietzsche might agree with the DDJ that truths and values are human constructions, he nevertheless affirms the necessity of such constructions, contrary to the DDJ's denial of them. Zarathustra announces that our supposed "will to truth" is indeed a manifestation of will to power. Through our will to truth, we transformed everything into what is humanly conceivable, effectively creating the world we can live with (Z II Isles 4.109-110; Z II Self-Overcoming 4.146). Nietzsche further elucidates that, by positing truth in a truth-less world, we gain a sense of vital power. He explicitly affirms an idea that appears to resonate with the DDJ's criteria of power:

> Life is grounded on the presupposition of a belief [*Glaubens*] in what endures and recurs with regularity; the more powerful the life, the broader must be the world that can be divined [*erratbare*] and *made to be* as it were [*gleichsam seiend gemachte*]. Logicization, rationalization, systematization as resources of life. […] The human's need as a creator conjures [*erdichtet*] up the world on which it works, anticipates it: this anticipation [*Vorwegnahme*] ("this belief" in the truth) is its support [*Stütze*]. (KSA 9[91] 12.385)

Compared to the DDJ's notion of accepting all things as they are, a critical difference with Nietzsche here is the human epistemic element, i.e., believing in endurance and regular recurrence and making the world out to exhibit these characteristics. Nietzsche is thinking about *human* life as it is, in contrast to the DDJ's hetero-human critique of the human from the perspective of *Dao*. For him, human constructions as products of legislation are both ontologically natural and practically needed for human beings. Considering again Nietzsche's emphasis on human autonomy and the DDJ's heteronomy, Nietzsche would likely criticize the DDJ's exclusion of this epistemic aspect as an inherent bias against humans.

There is also an ethical reason for Nietzsche's affirmation of the human legislative faculty. As mentioned, life for Nietzsche is self-overcoming. This overcoming involves a "yearning" for a higher, more valuable goal for oneself. Such self-perfection is what a living being ought to strive for, otherwise one exhibits no vital power. To reach new heights and to enable ourselves to attain them, legislation and lawfulness are necessary, because they provide the disciplinary power crucial for perfection. As Nietzsche points out in BGE 188, new and great creations, including the invention of morality, do not come from total freedom. Instead, compulsion, dedication, and

determination are indispensable, so much so that what seems to be essential "in heaven and on earth" is

> *obedience* in one direction for a prolonged time [*lange und Einer Richtung gehorcht werde*]. In the long term, this always brings and has brought about something that makes life on earth worth living [*dessentwillen es sich lohnt, auf Erden zu leben*] – for instance, art, music, dance, reason, intellect – something that transfigures, something refined, fantastic, and divine. (BGE 188 5.108-109)

Recall how Zarathustra declares that life is what obeys, either obeying oneself or others. Only with compulsive dedication can refinement and great creations come to be, without which life on earth would not be worth its struggles. In fact, Nietzsche would consider the DDJ's minimalist approach to life, rather to be taken at face value, to be little more than a veiled construal of its own conception of how to exert power and not a revelation of truth. Thus, if Nietzsche does affirm the value of cultural creations such as art, he would not agree with the DDJ's criticism of blinding colors and ear-impairing notes either.

Now, we have considered the implications of legislation for both the DDJ and Nietzsche. Due to their different positions on the issue of human autonomy, their evaluations of human faculties are in like manner opposite, resulting in their contrasting attitudes towards human legislative activity. In addition to the ontological issues that inform it, legislation is not independent but often accompanied by, or give rise to, other social-cultural phenomena, especially resistance, struggle, and conflict. These topics will be pursued in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
The Complex of Legislation: Resistance, Struggle, and Conflict

> "The way of the sages is to do without contending."
>
> – The *Daodejing*, 81

> "Assured and beautiful as these, let us be enemies too, my friends! Divinely we want to strive against each other!"
>
> – Zarathustra, "On the Tarantulas"

Following the previous chapter, we will now further investigate the complex of phenomena surrounding human legislative activities, more specifically resistance, struggle, and conflict that often accompany laws and values. Structurally, with regard to the DDJ's and Nietzsche's positions on legislation, this chapter will show that they also differ drastically on their evaluations of these phenomena. For the DDJ, meeting resistance suggests weakness and wrongdoing, and struggle and conflict are harmful, over which the DDJ favors an all-loving non-engagement. Nietzsche, in contrast, considers resistance a means to great health and believes that the healthy kind of love must involve agonistic relationship that pushes us toward mastery and perfection.

4.1 Resistance

Legislation is not an independent activity, but comes with a complex of phenomena. One important aspect of the complications that are entailed by our legislative impulses is that of the resistance, struggle, and conflict that legislation often provokes, which both the DDJ and Nietzsche address. Their evaluations of these subjects are, again, irreconcilable.

Resistance is involved in legislative actions in several ways. For example, resistance could be provoked by the enforcement of a law, or in the process of striving for a higher, better standard. The DDJ does not endorse any outbreak of resistance in light of the principle of *wuwei* and the model of effortless natural power. Favoring emptiness (無 *wu*) over presence (有 *you*), a sage should distance himself from any situation where resistance might arise, for resistance implies an encounter between multiple "present" forces, and this encounter will always be destructive of life rather than generative of it. As the most powerful existent, water "moves unhindered" through even the hardest

things (DDJ 43 & 78). Ideal governance is done in such a subtle and invisible manner that people consider it *ziran* or the spontaneity of what naturally is, or of what they naturally are (DDJ 17), implying the absence of resistance. As long as the ruler respects and enacts the principle of *Dao*, all things would "defer or submit of their own accord" (自賓 *zibin*) and people would distribute resources among themselves equally (自均 *zijun*) without any compulsion (DDJ 32).

In this framework, any sign of resistance suggests wrongdoing and a deviation from *Dao*. In fact, in the DDJ, resistance only occurs as a reaction to and a *consequence* of mishandling. Recall the discussion above about how explicit policies only aggravate a situation they intended to resolve (DDJ 57). Engaging in legislative actions to struggle with an opponent only leads to escalation instead of resolution. True resolution must be sought in the manner of *wuwei*. As Zhang and Berger (forthcoming 2022) specify, when we enact *wuwei*, either we handle a problem in its early stages, use discretion and restraint to guide developments, or make things thrive in a non-dominant and therefore non-commanding manner. So long as one follows the way of *Dao*, the true and right vital power will operate in a manner that provokes no resistance.

Resistance holds a very different position in Nietzsche's philosophy. The ontological theory of the world and all the lives within it as wills to power implies that all (living) entities exhibit efficacy and induce effects on both themselves and each other.[29] Influence from one life to another creates the texture of the world and our experience of it. The strength and health of a life, then, is measured by its ability to resist influences from other entities (Siemens, 2018: 36-37). Furthermore, resistance is also considered by Nietzsche an important stimulant for productivity and strengthening. Life, as a constant (self-)overcoming will to power, needs resistance to increase its power and overcome itself (Siemens, 2018: 23-30).

Zarathustra uses several metaphors to express this idea. He describes himself as a strong wind that challenges people whom he wishes to inspire in self-overcoming (Z II Rabble 4.126-127). He also threatens to be the lightning that blinds people from praising and imitating him, for they must become creators themselves (Z IV Higher Human 7 4.360). For him, creators must be hard as a diamond rather than like kitchen-coal that does not strive to become hardened (Z Tablet 29 4.268). He also asserts that human beings have beaten the wildest beasts in their process of overcoming, and now the flying birds will be their new challenge (Z III Tablet 22 4.263). The passage through which human beings walk towards their future will be a stormy sea and not peaceful and easy (Z III Tablet 28 4.267-268). After all, as Nietzsche confirms, Zarathustra to the human is like a hammer to

[29] Some pioneers such as Ames (1991) understood the idea of *De* (德) in the *Daodejing* as "efficacy," which might be the cause of another mistaken connection between Nietzsche and Daoism. In the DDJ, while *De* is related to efficacy, (e.g., DDJ 51, 54), this is just the one aspect of it. A more comprehensive understanding of this concept is "quality" or "virtue," and it is measured by the standard of *Dao* (e.g., DDJ 10, 21). In contrast, the idea of "efficacy" in Nietzsche is more morally neutral.

the stone (Z II Isles 4.111; EH (Z) 8 6.348-349).

Now, Nietzsche does critique resistance in certain places in his writings, and there is a non-coercive aspect of his ontology of life's power. In his notes, he separates "passive" and "active" forms of agency and opposes one to the other, while considering reaching out for power as active and resisting and reacting as only passive (KSA 5[64] 12.209). However, as Siemens (2018) rightly points out, this critique of Nietzsche's is directed at a *reactive* notion of resistance in a mechanistic worldview of cause and effect (32-35). Specifically, causal mechanism, with its entirely passive and reactive notion of force, cannot explain the formation of entities that cause other entities to resist or change. Therefore, Nietzsche suggests an active, spontaneous conception of ordering and connecting force that forms an entity and precedes its ability to cause and resist, and this active, prior force is "not-thrust/push" (*Nicht-Stoß*) and therefore non-coercive (KSA 11[264] 9.542). Clearly, this notion of a non-coercive ontological principle of force is meant to establish the autonomous agency of a living entity, and resistance is still a critical process for this entity's health and enhancement (Siemens 2018, 36-41). The power to resist may not be the primary vital force in Nietzsche's ontology of life, it is nevertheless indispensable in his philosophy.

While the DDJ is also concerned with power, its idea of strength is neither straightforward nor does it involve the ability to resist – if anything, it seeks *irresistible* power, or power that meets no resistance. Recall the criterion of "effortless" power and the model of water discussed earlier: Meeting resistance indicates insufficient or non-ideal power, since the powerful can induce effects with little if any effort. Also, consider how the text suggests that those who are living are weak and supple while the dead are hard (DDJ 76). The fundamental concern here is that being forceful and exerting overt strength will exhaust oneself, and therefore indicates a foolish decadence (DDJ 30 & 55),[30] since the genuinely most powerful beings in the world are precisely those that do not exhaust their *qi* or natural energy in over-exertion (DDJ 5, 6, 25). Even in military conduct, the DDJ praises not the martial celebration of victory, but compassion (慈 *ci*) for the vanquished and dead, frugality (儉 *jian*), and humility (不敢為天下先 *bugan wei tianxia xian*).[31] The powerful can exert influence on other entities and not be harmed themselves, but the DDJ does not credit such invincibility to the ability to resist or overcome the resistance of others. If overt conflict and resistance are present, it is already a failure, no matter how well one fares in these efforts.

In contrast, Nietzsche does not find the notion of irresistibility interesting. No such ideal is

[30] Ames and Hall (2003) translate both instances of the description "物壯則老" (*wu zhuang ze lao*) as "for something to be old while in its prime" (123, 163), which is questionable. There are only two instances of this description in the DDJ, and both follow a criticism of arbitrary force (強 *qiang*). I thereby appropriate the more context-sensitive interpretation of Wang Bi's (2008), that "壯" (*zhuang*) refers to the violent deployment of (military) forces (78).

[31] See DDJ 67, 68, 69; Ames & Hall (2003, 182-187)

ever enunciated in Zarathustra's teaching. As Reginster (2006) correctly observes, Nietzsche's notion of power "designates a process of overcoming resistance, and not simply a state in which our will encounters no resistance" (143). While this by no means necessitates cruelty to others, it does not entail overwhelming power either. Another reason for this observation can be found in one of Nietzsche's earlier essays where he suggests the vitality of contest/struggle by invoking ancient Greek cases of ostracization. Back then, one was expelled from the community were he to become too skillful to compete with. Such an absolutely indominable spirit would render tournaments obsolete, and the culture that would enhance health through competition would be lost (HC). The DDJ's sage-ruler, then, would be ostracized in a Nietzschean community, since their embodiment of *wuwei* would make their influence incontestable to the subjects. Nietzsche's interest in a limited, agonal, and therefore life-affirming contest endures until the end of his philosophical productivity.[32]

4.2 Struggle and Conflict

Considering their contradictory evaluations of resistance, the incompatibility between the DDJ and Nietzsche's positions on struggle and conflict should be predictable. Again, the DDJ's ontological preference for emptiness over presence informs its rejection of struggle and conflict, which take place between multiple forces with explicit presences. More specifically, conflicting forces usually intend to possess or dominate a certain object or space, whether that space be physical or abstract. Dominance and possession are what the DDJ rejects for their "presence" (*you*) contradicts the principle of emptiness. The DDJ praises water because it "benefits everything" yet stays where people loath to be, underneath, at the lowlands, in the environs and not at the center of things (DDJ 8), acting like a sage ruler who makes himself absent so that his subjects to thrive (DDJ. 22 & 24). It is one's "non-contention" (不爭 *buzheng*) that makes him immune to others' contentions (DDJ 22 & 66).

Another reason for the DDJ to devalue struggle and conflict is that the latter tend to induce harm. For the DDJ, the health and vitality of life are contrasted with harm, misfortune, and death. Those who are good at living would not be harmed by violent beasts and need no armor in war, for they exhibit no vulnerability (DDJ 50). Such invulnerability is not credited to hardness or strength in any naive sense, in light of the exemplary ways in which water is exalted in addition to the immunity of non-contention mentioned above.

These concerns with dominance and possession are reflected by the DDJ's ideal of interpersonal relationships that behave according to the principle of *wuwei*. A sage-ruler does not project their own willful ideas onto others. Instead, he must rule or command *according* to *the*

[32] Most notably EH Wise 7. For an account of Nietzsche's war-praxis and its significance in his philosophy, see Siemens (2009).

nature of the ruled or the obedient. Recall the double, ontological-ethical sense of the DDJ's cosmology of *Dao* mentioned previously in Chapter 2. If it is the biological nature of a plant to require water in order to live and grow, a plant ought to be watered if it is to survive and thrive. A good gardener, therefore, needs to understand the nature of the plant and its relationships with nature. In this way, a good gardener places the nature of the plant *before* his own willful ideas. Should the gardener hold any arbitrary ideas that are incompatible with the nature of the plant, and intend to "own" (*you*) the fruits of his willful imposition, this would be "competing" (爭 *zheng*) with it and its natural way of life. Therefore, the DDJ believes that only when the ruler is not competing with his subjects could complaints be eliminated (DDJ 8), and the greatest virtue is always to grow but not possess, and to make thrive but not dominate (DDJ 2, 10, 52). Again, how *Dao* affects heaven and earth is as natural as how small creeks and valleys flow towards rivers and oceans (DDJ 32). *Dao* does not intentionally move heaven and earth according to its will; it but makes all things move naturally as they are and ought to.

Ultimately, the DDJ is arguably advocating a minimalist ideal life of non-engagement, and the duty of the ruler is to make such a life possible for all people. DDJ 80 depicts a utopian world of "small states with minimal populations" (小邦[國]寡民 *xiao bang* [*guo*] *gua min*), where people enjoy a simple life without the harm of war, nor do they desire the glory of victory. The folks are happy and safe with their own customary food, clothing, culture, and homes. Neighboring peoples with different cultures may hear one other's dogs and cocks across the border, but would "grow old and die without ever contacting one another." In politics, only with an all-accepting governance with no arbitrary law-giving from the ruler could such a world be realized.

Such a life would seem too comfortable for Nietzsche who criticizes people's contentment with their current way of life. We might be tempted to draw connection between a Daoist sage-ruler and Zarathustra for their "love" for people (as Parkes, 2015a: 58-59). However, we must consider the agonistic connotations of Nietzschean "love." Nietzsche might tolerate the DDJ's non-engagement utopia as an attempt to overcome the dark eras of battle and domineering political rulers, but not as a universal norm. Each people's culture and their set of values are for him always expressions of their will to power. "[O]nce you have recognized a people's need and land and sky and neighbor, you can surely guess the law of its overcomings, and why it climbs on this ladder up to its own hope" (Z I Goals 4.74). Instead of letting different cultures simple exist without interference, however, Zarathustra implores human beings as a whole to engage and overcome all that has gone before them:

> A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the shackles for the thousand necks are still lacking: there is lacking the one goal.

> Humanity still has no goal. But say to me, now, my brothers: if humanity still lacks a goal, does it not also still lack – itself? (Z I Goals 4.76)

This resonates with Nietzsche's criticism of contemporary German culture. It is not enough to simply know about the past and different cultures, nor is it sufficient to simply borrow elements from different cultures. A genuine law-giving spirit, either found in an individual person or a whole people, must exhibit personality and a central style that unifies those cultural elements. Without such organizing and commanding efforts, a people's culture is simply stagnant (UM II 10 1.324-334).

On account of this, Nietzsche insists that struggle and conflict are indispensable; they are implied in the very idea of overcoming. One must struggle with oneself and with others, in order to become a better self and make others more refined and noble. It is for the sake of one's own and others' thriving that one strives, expressing contempt in the name of love and love in the form of contempt. As Zarathustra encourages his audience:

> You shall be such for me that your eye is always seeking an enemy – *your* enemy. […] You shall seek your enemy, you shall wage your war – and for your own thoughts! And should your thought be defeated, your honesty shall still proclaim its triumph in that! […] I do not counsel work, but rather battle. For you I do not counsel peace, but rather victory. May your work be a battle, may your peace be a victory! (Z I War 4.58-60)

This kind of war is not designed to conquer, but aims for the mastery and refinement of skills.

Although the DDJ certainly would not endorse any war of conquest, the DDJ would also not approve the desire to develop human skills that result from and prepare one for more conflict. The DDJ idealizes a kind of equanimity that Nietzsche explicitly decries. As Zarathustra comments, even the "tarantulas" who preach equality and justice know, however implicitly,

> that struggle and inequality are present even in beauty, and war for power and over-power: this he teaches us here in the clearest allegory. How divinely vaults and arches break through each other here, as if in a wrestling-ring: how they strive against each other with light and shadow, these divine strivers – Assured and beautiful as these, let us be enemies too, my friends! Divinely we want to strive *against* each other! (Z II Tarantula 4.131)

Being loved and cared for is not enough for a life to thrive, in Nietzsche's eyes; a contended life only subjects people to dominance or makes them flabby. True love must entail a sense of enmity and agonistic relationship, for this is how people may exceed themselves and each other. Regarding the DDJ's problem with harm, Zarathustra might reply, rhetorically: "So live your life of obedience

and war! What matters living long! Which warrior wants to be spared" (Z I War 4.60)! If one does not engage in such an agonistic friendship for perfection and seeks shelter in the love of neighbor (*Nächstenliebe*), it is "bad love of yourselves" for "in your friend shall you love the Overhuman as your own cause" (Z I Love 4.77-79). If one knows only love, he is not ready to be a true friend, for "in one's friend one should have one's best enemy" (Z I Friend 4.71-73). It is only when we have no way to extend such an agonistic and perfectionist love that we may refrain from engaging and "pass by" (Z III Passing By 4.222-225).

Chapter 5
Conclusion

5.1 Mutual Disapproval

Given the discussions of the previous chapters, the strong contrasts and fundamental incompatibility between Nietzsche's philosophy and that of the DDJ should now be clear. The DDJ proposes a heteronomy that is centered on *Dao* and advocates a lifestyle consistent with the tranquil characters of *Dao*'s model. Nietzsche envisions a dynamic chaos of plural wills to power and encourages human creative, legislative autonomy. Legislation, along with other human faculties including desires, are considered harmful by the DDJ for their ontological and practical implications – i.e., inducing resistance and conflict – which are to be avoided with the principle of *wuwei*. For Nietzsche, legislation is natural for human beings, and certain kinds of resistance and conflict are necessary for the enhancement of life and the mastery of skills.

These differences constitute a high level of incompatibility, if not clear opposition, between the two parties. The DDJ would consider Nietzsche an advocate of a kind of life that ultimately leads to infinite escalation and endless conflict, deviating from the right path of *Dao*. Nietzsche, on the other hand, would not approve of the DDJ's suppression of human creative powers. For him, tranquility with no dynamism and engagement cannot exhibit the vital power of life as he perceives it. In other words, the DDJ and Nietzsche would appear to be as "nihilists" to each other, as each of them presents a way of life that the other considers worthless and even harmful. With these contrasts in sight, the significance of the similarities between their philosophies appear to be extremely limited.

The interpretations provided by previous studies are not sufficient to account for such levels of incompatibility. For example, Ames (1991) believes that Nietzsche's "will to power" and classical Chinese philosophies of "*de*" are only different sides and emphases of the same ontology (146-148). Parkes (1983; 2015a) further suggests that both Nietzsche and early Daoism (more specifically the *Zhuangzi*) combat individualistic egoism, and their apparent differences were only caused by the severity of this problem in Nietzsche's time, which necessitated his more forceful tone, whereas the problem was not as serious in early China. Parkes' explanation presupposes a universal human psychology against which Nietzsche and early Daoism can be measured. This is itself a problem that needs addressing. However, conceding to both this assumption and the possibility that they hold the same ontology and share the same target (though the current study has demonstrated that they do not), there are still other difficulties. Firstly, as shown in previous chapters, there are different, substantial philosophical reasons for Nietzsche and early Daoists to choose different

emphases and tones, and such reasons are central and should not be marginalized. Furthermore, by employing different philosophical reasons and emphasizing different aspects of the world and human existence, they clearly advocate different ways of life, as this study has illustrated. Their differences, therefore, are fundamental and not only circumstantial or a matter of emphasis.

Subsequently, this provides a response to Parkes' curiosity about why Nietzsche keeps presenting ideas of life that are similar to Eastern ideas. The current thesis hopes to have demonstrated that Nietzsche exhibits no "Eastern" values, at least not in his comparison with the DDJ, a text of fundamental importance in the Daoist tradition. The resonating moments are barely existent, and those that can be found are quite superficial. Once their deeper philosophical concerns and ideals are considered, the similarities become highly unstable, if sustainable. The significance of those resonating moments is, therefore, questionable.

One criticism of this thesis might be launched on the basis of a kind of perspectivism, which would posit that my interpretations of Nietzsche, the DDJ, and their contrasts have only resulted from one possible perspective. This possibility can of course not be ruled out, as made explicit in the introductory chapter. However, this general criticism would have to be buttressed by textual and hermeneutic evidence. What this study has attempted to show is that, if philosophical affinities between Nietzsche and his early Daoist counterparts are to be established, they must be established despite the apparent irreconcilability of their philosophical projects that this thesis has revealed.

5.2 Revisiting the Approach from Similarity

While this study seems highly critical of what it calls "the approach from similarity" of previous studies, the nature of this criticism must be carefully articulated. Cross-cultural dialogue and understanding must be hermeneutically and historically contextualized. Every judgment meets very concrete challenges and carries implicit assumptions and connotations. Anything "true" is always "true to the strength of certain challenges and connotations" and never "true as such." Although the impossibility of perfect understanding should not excuse us from striving for appropriate interpretations, the appropriateness must be measured in terms of gradation and taste instead of any simple reduction to corresponding ideas. So, the "critique" of this investigation regarding the approach from similarity employed by the previous studies is *hermeneutic* instead of objective.

The previous studies which have adopted an approach-from-similarity are therefore not wrong *per se*, and certainly not unfruitful. In fact, their efforts were understandable and admirable, especially when considering the challenges they were designed to confront. Facing the problematic legacy of modernity and the post-colonial world, scholars like Roger Ames, Graham Parkes, and

others of their generation continued a Chinese-Western philosophical dialogue that was set in motion by the earlier generation of researchers. Charles Moore, Wing-Tsit Chan (陳榮捷), D. C. Lau (劉殿爵), and the Kyoto School, in particular, Nishitani Keiji (西谷啓治) in the case of Nietzsche-Eastern thought comparison were all participants in these efforts. Along with these pioneers, they faced (and we still do) challenges such as pre-judgments that *a priori* deny the possibility of cross-cultural philosophical dialogue (if not the very existence of "non-Western philosophies").[33] To combat such deeply entrenched barriers, it is natural and arguably necessary to invoke comparability and compatibility. When antagonism seemed insurmountable, resonances signaled comradeship. When fundamental incommensurability is assumed, similarities arouse curiosity and demand explanations. Approaches from similarity, in other words, were (and still can be) justified considering these challenges.

Additionally, progress and evolution are not always made by what is "right." Misunderstanding and appropriation are everywhere in all kinds of interpretation and reinterpretation, and can indeed be productive and fruitful to the degree that they prompt, engage and incentivize conversation and dialogue, even if they are not right *per se*.[34] Great ideas could also be inspired by misreading.[35] Ultimately, for any student that is willing to be inspired by Nietzsche, we ought to challenge ourselves with affirmative Yes-saying to even the past. Our task, then, is to chart our way forward better, to overcome what has become, and to hope for our "going under."

5.3 Implications for Cross-cultural Philosophical Studies

In a project that has upended similarity with non-comparability and incommensurability, where do we go from here? A Nietzschean response could be that we must learn to renounce what makes us rely on similarity. We have come to think that the use of comparative study is to bring out certain aspects of the parties in question that would not be as visible without this comparison. The parties are *in the service of* each other, so to speak, such that their similarities help illustrate certain aspects and differences provide a critique. For instance, Ames (1991) suggests that realizing the comparability of Nietzsche's "will to power" and the Chinese notion of "*de*" (德) could help us understand the extent of Nietzsche's originality n the Western tradition itself (132). On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Parkes (2015a) hopes that a connection between Nietzsche and Asian traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism could correct the distorted impression of Nietzsche's affinity with Nazism and illustrate the compassionate aspect of his philosophy (58). Could we renounce this "service" model?

[33] For a discussion of such pre-judgments, see Mohanty (1993) for example.

[34] For an interesting argument for the unavoidability, even necessity, of cultural appropriation, see Eze (2018).

[35] A good example of this phenomenon can be found in Berger's (2004) study of how Schopenhauer's appropriation of certain ideas in Indian philosophy informed the formation of his *magnum opus*, *The World as Will and Representation*.

A potential danger of this model of comparative study is that it either relies on or reinforces certain stereotypes, however understandable the latter might be. For example, while hoping to rescue Nietzsche from his Nazist distortion through a compassion connection with Buddhism, Parkes probably did not consider the fact that Buddhism (and Shinto) did not prevent the military expansion and massacres in Asia committed by Imperial Japan, an ally of the Third Reich.[36] Daoism is not innocent either, if we recall the Yellow Turban Rebellion in the late 2nd-century that foreshadowed the fall of the Han Dynasty. Similarly, for Ames' project to be effective in reminding us of Nietzsche's drastic foreignness within the Western tradition, the exotic nature in the concept of "*de*" as virtuality is a precondition. Nietzsche would not appear as foreign for someone to whom the Chinese concepts are not so exotic. While the intentions are noble, the efficacy and implications of this model of comparative study remain problematic. In the DDJ's terms, Ames and Parkes are clouded by human intentions that prevent them from emptying their minds and seeing the different natures of the parties they are comparing.

Maybe a little *wuwei* can help indeed. Let us act in accordance with the "nature" of the parties in question, like farmers to crops in the DDJ, by first observing them as they are before making connections and comparisons. While this should not make us naive about the extent of our own hermeneutic intervention, we should best restrain ourselves from overreach so that the unique characteristics of each party would less likely escape us. Assuredly, as Ames (1991) suggests with his account of field-focus theory, uniqueness can only be so in a common field. Otherwise, things would just be irrelevant to each other. For a philosopher to be unique with respect to others, or for two thinkers or traditions to be distinctively different or incompatible, common themes of concerns are to be thematized about which those traditions are in fact unique. By considering the parties as a whole – by considering their overall projects and structural characteristics, mistakes can be better avoided when determining which themes for them to enter into a dialogue and comparison.

Arguably, differences are more "powerful" than similarities, especially for Nietzschean students. Plurality provides a better variety of nutrition, while less external support offers a tougher challenge toward a higher standard. By seeing the uniqueness of parties that we formerly thought to be philosophical allies, we might better understand the reality that we are working with and the difficulties that need to be overcome for intercultural philosophical dialogue to take place. Maybe there is no salvation nor allies in the human world, not from the other-worldly Heaven nor from other continents. Nietzsche in particular does not need a foreign rescuer, nor could he be rescued as such. Neither does he require a foreign concept to demonstrate his originality. His compassion and

[36] Victoria (2006), for example, documents some Zen Buddhists' support for Japanese militarism in the early and mid-20th century. Since such Buddhism-militarism affinity is more substantial than the service of a distorted Nietzsche for the Nazi Germany, it is debatable whether Buddhism is a proper rescue at all.

kindness can exist between him and us, and no other mediation or catalyst is needed. Truly, it is *our* hermeneutic intervention, *our* perception – recall Zarathustra's understanding of this notion! – of Buddhism and Daoism, not Buddhism or Daoism as such, that arranges Nietzsche's rescue and determines his exotic status. It is also up to us to show – or rather, in a Nietzschean sense, to *establish* that he is fully capable of surviving on his own. This is particularly important when we consider that, for him, preserving oneself is only a result of the will to power of a living entity. This will to power defines and redefines life and existence at every moment by appropriating others for its own nourishment *in an agonistic manner* or overcoming its own self. What good are Buddhism and Daoism for Nietzsche's vital power if resistance is not present? "Let us be enemies too, my friends!"

The mission of inter-cultural and comparative philosophy, then, could aim at a new goal, or try to *go beyond similarity and difference.* Conclusions that are only variants of the expression "same but different and vice versa" should no longer satisfy us. The value of such a conclusion – and the methods that induce it – ought to be reexamined. Instead, *making uniqueness comprehensible* is noble enough, and *recognizing uniqueness* should suffice to keep us open to alternatives and dialogue.

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