

# In Search of Transcendent Order in A Violent World: A Theological Meditation on Augustine's de Trinitate and Laozi's Dao De Jing

Author: Chan Hiutung

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Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Theology

IN SEARCH OF TRANSCENDENT ORDER IN THE VIOLENT WORLD:  
A THEOLOGICAL MEDITATION OF LAOZI'S *DAODE JING* AND  
AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

a dissertation

by

Hiutung Chan

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A THEOLOGICAL MEDITATION OF LAOZI'S *DAODE JING* AND  
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Abstract

by

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This dissertation is a comparative study of spiritual cultivation in Early Daoism and the spiritual teaching of Augustine's Christianity. My goal is to examine how early Daoism's founder, Laozi, and the Christian bishop, Augustine of Hippo, characterize the fulfillment of humanity through religious transformation. My argument is that the metaphysical speculations that figure in their works---and which scholarly readers often emphasize---are offshoots of profound practical, soteriological concerns. These soteriological concerns reveal that the primary interest for both writers was to discover those spiritual and intellectual practices that could most effectively mediate between human experience and the manifestation of transcendent order.

This study takes its inspiration from pioneering instances of comparative theology (particularly works by Francis Clooney S.J. and Lee Yearly), and focuses on the cross-reading of texts. For Laozi, the basic text used in this study is. For Augustine, the primary text is *de Trinitate*, with some *Daode Jing* closely related writings. Both texts play similar formative roles in their respective religious traditions.

My methodology also makes heuristic use of Bernard Lonergan's study of the

fourfold operation of human consciousness as experience, understanding, judgment and decision. This general description of human consciousness is a useful framework to draw out similarities and differences in these texts. The primary thematic interest of the thesis is ethical. I explore how early Daoism and Augustine's Christianity were both animated by the concern to confront human violence through spiritual exercises and the renewal of authentic humanity. In comparing *Daode Jing* and *de Trinitate*, I consider the ways that each author's encounter with social violence shaped their intellectual projects. Laozi and Augustine's search for transcendent order was motivated by the hope of overcoming disordered human desires. This task required an understanding of human participation in transcendent order which could be realized in direct realms of experience, through knowledge of the operations of interior consciousness and the practice of daily spiritual exercises. Though both thinkers are often treated in dogmatic or philosophical terms, their primary interest was in practical spirituality, a way of living. Both Laozi and Augustine searched for "the Way" for disciples of their respective traditions to nurture personal life and to maintain hope as a religious community in a turbulent world.

These issues are dealt with in four chapters. In Chapter One I develop my theoretical framework and the categories of the hermeneutics of consciousness. In Chapter Two I reconstruct the political-religious context of Chinese culture that the

author of *Daode Jing* criticized. Against this context, I then explain in Chapter Three Laozi's major insights into the nature of transcendent order, particularly his understanding of its character as Three in One (Self-so, Nothing and Something), specified in *Daode Jing*. In Chapter Four I expound Augustine's development of the doctrine of the Trinity as the fundamental signature of divine reality, which is also reflected in the structure of human subjectivity. This leads to Chapter Five where I consider these two views as dialogical partners and advance the view that a juxtapositional reading of these two texts leads to new insights through the way that each can be said to develop a distinctive interpretation of the concept "effortless action."

## Chapter One:

### A Methodology of Comparative Theology

#### Introduction: Hermeneutics of Consciousness as a Method for Comparative Theology

1. This dissertation is a comparative study of spiritual cultivation in Early Daoism and the spiritual teaching of Augustine's Christianity. My goal is to examine how early Daoism's founder, Laozi, and the Christian bishop, Augustine of Hippo, characterize the fulfillment of humanity through religious transformation. My argument is that the metaphysical speculations that figure in their works---and which scholarly readers often emphasize---are offshoots of profound practical, soteriological concerns. These soteriological concerns reveal that the primary interest for both writers was to discover those spiritual and intellectual practices that could most effectively mediate between human experience and the manifestation of transcendent order.

2. My thesis is that any human experience can be referred to a transcendental ground, and that the reverse is also true: sound theoretical reflection on ultimate reality can be linked to its engendering context in the empirical world. Both Laozi's metaphysical discourse and Augustine's theological rhetoric can be traced back to their living experience in the common world, especially to their struggle with the mimetic

mechanisms of human violence. These two great theological minds developed their own unique approaches in the search for true peace and harmony.

3. Reading early Daoism and Augustine's theology together is an exercise in comparative theology, stimulated by recent developments in this young discipline. According to Francis Clooney, James Garden used the term "comparative theology" as early as the end of the 17th century in a book with that title. It has been used with various meanings since that time, and in recent decades has come to be identified with a distinct discipline that combines confessional religious interests with detailed, empathetic study of sources in multiple traditions

4. In this emerging new discipline, scholars have not reached any extensive agreement on methodology and there are exemplary works that reflect different approaches. Two examples have had significant influence on my own outlook. Lee Yearley's book, *Aquinas and Mencius*, has been a crucial inspiration for this study, particularly in its pioneering conversation between Chinese and Christian classics.<sup>1</sup> His careful scholarship enables readers to begin to read Mencius through Aquinas's eyes, and Aquinas through Mencius's eyes, and at the same time to come to a clearer understanding of virtue, a theme they hold in common. In my study I seek a clearer understanding of the different expressions of transcendent experience in early Daoism and Augustinian theology. On the basis of this interpretive reading of these two religious traditions, I will then make some tentative efforts to read early Daoism through Augustine's eyes, and especially to read Augustine through the eyes of early Daoism. Although I do not formally follow Yearley's own comparative format as the model in my work, it has been very suggestive in my thinking.

5. Francis Clooney is another source of inspiration for this study. I am particularly impressed by his emphasis on allowing different religious traditions to have their own theological voices and his skillful, detailed comparison of concrete texts. In the book *Hindu God, Christian God*, Clooney expresses a willingness to accept partial as opposed to definitive results. Clooney contends that comparative theology does not need to see its way to specific theological conclusions. Theologians from different traditions might use similar types of theological reasoning, while yet reaching contrary conclusions. This might be frustrating if one assumes that the most important goal is to reach a certain consensus between different religions. In Clooney's terms "since comparison is not reducible to an appreciation of similarities, noticing important differences—for example, different theologies of creation or of embodiment—need not indicate a break or end to theological conversation."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* New York: SUNY Press, 1990

<sup>2</sup> Francis Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001. 168

6. Francis Clooney admonishes students of comparative theology to attend carefully to the texts themselves before drawing any theological conclusions. He encourages scholars to cross religious boundaries with openness, and to stay with texts long enough to allow themes to emerge from the comparison itself. Patience is an intellectual virtue for doing comparative theology, resisting immature and untimely systematizations of religious experience. We cannot move too quickly even to specify the principles that are guiding our comparative study.<sup>3</sup>

7. As a Chinese Christian theologian, when I engage in comparative theology, I immediately encounter challenges about the problem of truth. In the Chinese context, a knot of mutual exclusivism often arises between Chinese traditions and Chinese churches, who insist on the uniqueness of Christian truth. Clooney points out that comparative theology does not compel us to give up any particular doctrines or embrace revisionist interpretations of traditional theological statements.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless when two truth claims on an equivalent level appear incompatible, it is difficult at times to remain a sympathetic interpreter of both while one is directly committed to the community constituted by one of them. This tension has its dangers, but it can also be creative.

8. One way that I deal with this tension is to focus special attention on the historical study of the specific texts I have chosen. This allows me to explore the substance of their outlooks without moving immediately to judgments of truth. This means also that I intentionally renounce prior adherence to a general conceptual scheme, such as exclusivism, inclusivism or pluralism as expounded in discussion by modern theologians.<sup>5</sup> I seek to allow each tradition to have its own voice, in a process that will gradually lead us to develop dialogue in depth.

9. I have chosen to explore conversation between early Daoism and Augustine's theology, with the particular intention of emphasizing the contribution of the Chinese voice in comparative theology. One reason for this emphasis is that the theological world knows too little about Daoism and its potential to contribute to our understanding of religious experience and thinking. A second reason is my desire to encourage an encounter between Christianity and Chinese traditions in China. While Christianity still occupies a marginal position in Chinese culture, its growth and the widespread interest in Christianity have created a new context for discussion. This context holds out the promise that Chinese Christian theologians might listen carefully to the original voice of Daoism and open a theological dialogue that can achieve enrichment for our neighbors in other religious traditions and Christian churches in

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<sup>3</sup> Francis Clooney, *Theology After Advaita Vedanta*. Albany: SUNY Press 1993. 188

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 190

<sup>5</sup> Alan Race, *Christians and religious pluralism: patterns in the Christian theology of religions* London: SCM Press, 1983



China alike. Considering the long history of religious pluralism in China, Christian theologians can no longer stay safely within a monological tradition, simply ignoring the 'God-talk' of religious neighbors in their villages or cities. Nor can Christian theologians escape such urgent questions as where the various religious traditions are to be located within in the divine plan of salvation, and how they are to be reconciled with the truth claims of Christianity on various levels of meaning. A pluralistic world requires different modes of faith seeking understanding within a reconstructed intellectual and spiritual framework.

10. How can I fulfill the goal of this comparative project? In this study, I try to use a hermeneutics of consciousness to bridge the different truth claims underlying early Daoism and Christianity. The strength of my method is that it stresses the self-transcendence of human beings, which depends on certain common kinds of differentiation in the realms of meaning. The compound of operating consciousness (experience, understanding, judgment and decision) is embodied in various patterns of human activity (biological, aesthetic, dramatic, intellectual, mystical, etc.), which produce the particularities in various historical situations.

11. I derive my method from Bernard Lonergan's Method in Theology.<sup>6</sup> This method emphasizes the most general operating consciousness of human beings. It may be questioned whether it is appropriate to apply one overarching approach to religious experiences of East and West, given how different they are in terms of history, culture, language and theological or philosophical content. My answer is that since comparative theology is an emerging discipline, it is valid to experiment with various methodologies and their contributions to the development of the discipline. My contention is that a hermeneutics of consciousness can provide a modest form of mediation that effectively promotes a fruitful dialogue between two very different traditions, unique and particular as they are. Hermeneutics of consciousness assumes that the impulse to search for transcendent order is constant across different human contexts, and that some mutual communication and understanding in relation to this search is possible. The desire to return to a primordial condition of wholeness and totality impels *homo religiosus* to quest after the real center of the world. Religious experience, language and symbols are capable of revealing a structure of the world that is not evident on the level of immediate experience, but can be expressed in a number of meaning schemes. The actions of religious persons in constructing these visions imply levels of human consciousness that can differentiate numerous kinds of meaning and constitute them in particular historical contexts.

12. My hermeneutics of consciousness is largely drawn from Bernard Lonergan's work. This thesis, however, is by no means intended as an exercise in Lonerganian

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd 1972

theory, in which early Daoism and Augustine are simply objects of analysis under his categories. Instead, I use Lonergan's intellectual framework and inspiration as suggestive points of departure in a wider comparative project to draw out relations between early Daoism and Christianity. Given the discussion above, I was seeking methodological tools that made space for confessional commitment and were also open to appreciate other religious traditions. I was also looking for a perspective that would be sensitive to the importance of the dimension of spiritual practice that I find in the writers being compared. On these counts, I find Lonergan's general differentiation of a fourfold operating consciousness in human beings can provide a mediating bridge to begin exchange between these very different spiritual traditions.

12. Louis Roy, in his book *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique*, classified Bernard Lonergan as belonging to the phenomenological trend in philosophy. His philosophy stresses that consciousness imbeds itself in all human activities. He seeks to understand the relations between these activities and says that it is natural for humans to pursue (whether formally or informally) some such understanding. Our commitment to the value of intentionality reflects this understanding.<sup>7</sup> In my opinion, hermeneutics of consciousness is very important for comparative theology because it takes the self as central, and considers knowledge not merely from an abstractive viewpoint but as found in concrete individuality and in the totality of aspects. It has been said that Lonergan's notion of self is a person who is seeking for insight and this insight is not an abstractive insight, but "a concretizing insight that grasps the whole in the parts, the one in the many, the perduring identity in the differences, the unity in the relations."<sup>8</sup>

13. Lonergan himself may never have considered how his study of human operating consciousness would be implemented in the field of comparative theology, but I suggest that my hermeneutics of consciousness derived from his insight can play a useful role in this emerging field. The notion of self described above is a case in point. It is easy to draw broad conclusions about differences between worldviews as formal intellectual entities. But it is not so easy to find your way to such conclusions when working from very particular sources, where questions of communicability and commensurability loom large. And if we take the underlying task in comparative theology to be faith seeking understanding through various religious traditions, then we have to find a functional foundation for this conviction that such understanding is possible. Louis Roy has argued that the new language employed in the interfaith dialogue today will put primary stress on the language of consciousness.<sup>9</sup> To bridge

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<sup>7</sup> Louis Roy, O.P. *Transcendent Experiences*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 132-137

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Flanagan, *Quest for Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Lonergan's Philosophy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, 116

<sup>9</sup> Louis Roy, O.P. *Mystical Consciousness*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 125

the difference between two worlds that have different kinds of interpretation of consciousness, we cannot start with a static, objectified view of consciousness. But Lonergan's notion of consciousness is by no means a notion of objectified consciousness. He starts with operating consciousness in the living, particular world and investigates the kind of operations by which ordinary people find their ordinary experiences pointing toward the transcendent. In this sense, it is helpful to take some more paragraphs to sketch the framework of a hermeneutics of consciousness and see how it could contribute to our understanding of early Daoism and Augustine's theology.

## 1.2. Patterns of Human Consciousness and Experience

14. Human consciousness is foundational for our understanding of human nature as polymorphic. To follow Bernard Lonergan's analysis, we could divide human consciousness into two categories: intentional and non-intentional. The intentional consciousness objectifies the stream of consciousness. As Bernard Lonergan states:

By seeing there becomes present what is seen, by hearing there becomes present what is heard, by imagining there becomes present what is imagined, and so on, where in each case the presence in question is a psychological event....<sup>10</sup>

When the operations of intentional consciousness occur, the presence of the subject also resides simultaneously in the operating consciousness as non-intentional consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

15. Intentional consciousness—what we call human knowing—can be seen as a compound of four levels of conscious operation: experience, understanding, judgment, and decision.<sup>12</sup> The first three levels are concerned with objectivity and truth; the fourth, with value and goodness. Human knowing is dynamic, Lonergan argues, because it “involves many distinct and irreducible activities: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, weighing the evidence, judging.”<sup>13</sup> Three basic questions constitute the operation of consciousness: (i) what am I doing when I am knowing? (ii) Why is doing that knowing? And (iii) What do I know when I do that?<sup>14</sup>

16. The first question (What am I doing when I am knowing?) is answered by a

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* London: Darton, Longman & Todd p.7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>12</sup> Lonergan developed his theory of consciousness in the book *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. A concise version of his theory is forward in his essay “Cognitional Structure,” in *Collected Works*, Vol. 4. Edited by F.E.Crowe and R.M.Doran, pp.205-222. See also “The Subject” in *A Second Collection* pp.69-86. cf. *Method in Theology*, Chap. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Lonergan, “Cognitional Structure,” p.206.

<sup>14</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.25.

fourfold pattern of operations—experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. We could designate the first level of intentional consciousness as empirical consciousness. At this level, the conscious subject intends to receive “objects” as its data. Here we can distinguish between human sensitivity, which receives the data of sense, and human consciousness, which receives the data of consciousness. At the level of empirical consciousness, Lonergan explains, “We sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak and move.”<sup>15</sup> At this fundamental level, human beings begin the pursuit of knowledge, driven by an “unrestricted desire to know.” Since the number of questions that can be raised is limitless, it becomes exigent to sort out the relevant data. “The data of sense provoke inquiry, inquiry leads to understanding; understanding expresses itself in language.”<sup>16</sup>

17. Thus the second level of intentional consciousness is intellectual. At this level of consciousness, human intelligence acts in the form of understanding, insight, and the formulation of concepts. The basic question raised by the intellectual consciousness about the data is “What is it?” This question inquires into the nature of sensory data and attempts to make groups of data intelligible—a process that leads to further inquiry or critical reflection.<sup>17</sup> Whereas intellectual consciousness requires intelligibility, critical reflection is concerned with judgment. At this level the basic question is “Is it so?” It demands a positive or negative answer in response to our critical reflection on our existence. The operation of rational consciousness is based upon a grasp of the virtually unconditioned. It asks the subject to refrain from making a judgment if the necessary conditions have not been fulfilled. The so-called virtually unconditioned demands a comprehensive consideration before all necessary and sufficient conditions are fulfilled, since immature judgment can result in human bias permeating thoughts and action. The transcendental precept he prescribes is that subjects “be reasonable” and make deliberate judgments.<sup>18</sup> When the act of judgment is completed, further questions emerge concerning value. The subject asks, “Is it valuable?” or “What is to be done about it?” Lonergan calls this fourth level of intentional consciousness decision. In decision, one intends to do good by means of a judgment. One acts in accordance with what he affirms to be valuable.<sup>19</sup>

18. The second basic question (why is doing that knowing?) is an epistemological question: this is a question about the objectivity of reality. According to Lonergan’s analysis, there exist three types of objectivity, each of which corresponds to a level of intentional consciousness—experience, understanding, or judgment. Experiential objectivity manifests in the givenness of the data of sense and of the data of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>17</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, p.106.

<sup>18</sup> See *Insight*, Chap.9-10

<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.38.

consciousness. The drive of human inquiry introspects and embodies another type of objectivity through logical and rational reasoning, which corresponds to true understanding. Yet a third type of objectivity follows on this, corresponding to the act of judgment. This necessarily is a commitment, a moment, Lonergan writes, “when we distinguish sharply between what we feel, what we imagine, what we think, what seems to be so and, on the other hand, what is so.”<sup>20</sup> The act of judgment is a commitment because it recognizes that all the evidence is not yet available. In principle knowing occurs after one has grasped the evidence in a virtually unconditioned form. By “virtually unconditioned,” Lonergan means that all the conditions of inquiry have been fulfilled, all questions regarding that inquiry have been exhausted, and we attain absolute objectivity. The possibility of the virtually unconditioned is based on a formally unconditioned, God, the ground of truth, reality, necessity, and objectivity, in whom there are no conditions whatever.<sup>21</sup> Lonergan’s notion of judgment in its absolute objectivity implies twofold significance: (i) Subjectivity is transcended when judgment refers to reality as independent of the subject; and (ii) Because judgment implies objectivity, the subject should be accountable for his judgment. Lonergan puts it “good judgment is a personal commitment.”<sup>22</sup>

19. The third question (What do I know when I do that?) is a metaphysical question. It arises when one has grasped the virtually unconditioned in judgment.<sup>23</sup> To answer this question, Lonergan refers to that which is known through the compound of experiencing, understanding, and judgment, which he calls proportionate being.<sup>24</sup> Just as, in his epistemology, the ground of the virtually unconditioned is the formally unconditioned, in his metaphysical framework the ground of all other beings is the primary being, God.<sup>25</sup>

20. The multifaceted dimension of human consciousness is manifested within various patterns of experience: biological, aesthetic, dramatic, practical, intellectual and, finally, mystical.<sup>26</sup> Individual and cultural particularity emerges from the conflict and integration of these patterns. It is a consequence of development and dialectic. “Human consciousness is polymorphic... These patterns alternate; they blend or mix; they can interfere, conflict, lose their way, break down.”<sup>27</sup> The biological pattern of experience is always related to our bodily experience that links to sequences of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Lonergan, *Understanding and Being*, Collected Works, Vol.5. Edited by E.A. Morelli & M.D. Morelli p.118, 122-123.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>23</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, p.381.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.416.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.681-682.

<sup>26</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, pp.202-204. Regarding mystical experience, see p.410.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.410.

sensations, memories, images, conation, emotions and bodily movements.<sup>28</sup> The aesthetic pattern of experience refers to the stream of consciousness that directs our attention to what is liberating and joyful. This pattern of experience is “an expression of the human subject outside the limits of adequate intellectual formulation and appraisal.”<sup>29</sup> It describes our existence beyond the merely biological. It promotes creativity and spontaneity within the subject.

21. The dramatic patterns of experience have to do with human relationships and emotions, while the practical patterns have to do with craftsmanship, with human creativity and transformation of the material world. Human life mixes all of these patterns. Daily human life is “charged emotionally and conatively” in such a way that human beings are “capable of aesthetic liberation and artistic creativity.” Living is the first artwork of human beings: The different patterns take on a unique configuration in each individual. One creates meaning and form from the material of personal life in much the same way that an artist creates meaning and form through a work of art. Human beings create and write living dramas through their personal participation, and are dominated in turn by the drama of life.

22. The intellectual pattern of experience refers to the human spirit of curiosity with respect to the theoretical world. Human beings seeking to solve theoretical puzzles invoke imagination and memory; they experience joy in pursuing insight and the “passionless calm” of reflection before judgment.<sup>30</sup> Lonergan hinted, finally, at a mystical pattern of experience, referring, in one place, to a “mystical pattern of people who withdraw entirely from the imaginative world,”<sup>31</sup> to “mystics [who] describe a pattern of consciousness all their own, in which not much happens, or very enormous events happen.”<sup>32</sup>

23. In sum, polymorphic patterns of existence, biological, aesthetic, dramatic, practical, intellectual and mystical, call for our careful discernment in face of any supposed univocal meanings for human fulfillment. This is particularly relevant to religious questions. The real world is a complex sum of these patterns of experience, which produces many puzzles and labyrinths. A hermeneutics of consciousness argues that it is natural for human beings to differentiate various meanings in different realms. Sensitivity to this complexity is the only way for humans to fully appreciate their own structures of meaning and those of others.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp.206-207.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.208.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.209-210.

<sup>31</sup> Lonergan, *Topic in Education*, p.188.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Lonergan, Unpublished manuscript of Lectures in Existentialism, Boston College, July 1957 (Boston College, Massachusetts: Lonergan Center), p.20.

### 1.3. Differentiations of the Realms of Meaning

24. Consciousness manifests itself variably through patterns of experience. For example, if I wish to understand a mathematical theorem, my consciousness must operate in an intellectual pattern. Intellectual experience alone is not enough, however: it requires, in addition, education, habits, and skills to achieve the theoretical differentiation of consciousness that is mathematical understanding.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, if I wish to experience a mystical communion with God, my consciousness has to operate in a spiritual pattern. Merely to talk about experience is not adequate; it also requires a learning process, habits and skills and exercises. Our desire to know drives us to seek various kinds of meaning. In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan differentiated four realms of meaning, corresponding to four basic differentiations of consciousness: meaning mediated by common sense, by theory, by interiority, and by religion.<sup>34</sup> This is naturally found in human beings' quest for the meanings of life.

25. Hermeneutics of consciousness affirms that an undifferentiated or "primitive" common sense exists. In 19<sup>th</sup> century, German Philosopher Ernst Cassirer has already indicated that this "primitive" consciousness does not distinguish between "image and thing" or between "representation and real perception." Lonergan writes that the "relations between representations" make undifferentiated consciousness "largely tolerant of contradictions."<sup>35</sup> This undifferentiated consciousness is the basic mode of consciousness—one in which differentiation has not yet occurred, but which exists somewhere between the world of common sense and the world of theory.<sup>36</sup>

26. The realm of theory emerges as a result of a systematic exigency that "separates the realm of common sense from the realm of theory."<sup>37</sup> Common sense is concerned with objects in relation to the subject. The realm of theory, however, is concerned with objects in relation to each other. Scientific method is a modern paradigm that is often invoked to distinguish theoretical explanations from common sense descriptions.<sup>38</sup> Many methods, fields of specialization, technical languages, and professional communities compete with each other. As a result, competitive resolutions among various specific theories need a higher level of judgment to verify them. For example, a theoretical definition can acknowledge the difference between description (a thing related to subject) and explanation (a thing related to other objects), but it is unable to explain how the two fields are related and why. The inadequacy of theoretical differentiation to account for the relation between description and explanation is what leads to the philosophical quest. The need to give an adequate account of the relation

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<sup>33</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, p.87.

<sup>34</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.257.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.92-93

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.93.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>38</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, p.201.

between description and explanation provokes critical reflection.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, while a religious practitioner collects experiences, categorizes and explains scriptural texts from various perspectives, the need for critical reflection remains. This critical reflection when applied to spiritual cultivation manifests in an analysis of interior consciousness and leads to an experience of enlightenment.

27. At this point, critical reflection is applied not to objects in relation to the subject, or objects in relation with each other, but to the our own interior subjectivity itself, our means of reflection. In Lonergan's words, the realm of interiority "identifies in personal experience one's conscious and intentional acts and the dynamic relations that link them to one another."<sup>40</sup> According to his study, there are three basic questions belonging to the realm of interiority. Lonergan states:

With these questions one turns from the outer realms of common sense and theory to the appropriation of one's own interiority, one's subjectivity, one's operations, their structure, their norms, their potentialities. Such appropriation, in its technical expression, resembles theory. But in itself it is a heightening of intentional consciousness, an attending not merely to objects but also to the intending subject and his acts. And as this heightened consciousness constitutes the evidence for one's account of knowledge, such an account by the proximity of the evidence differs from all other expression.

The withdrawal into interiority is not an end in itself. From it one returns to the realms of common sense and theory with the ability to meet the methodological exigency. For self-appropriation of itself is a grasp of transcendental method, and that grasp provides one with the tools not only for an analysis of common sense procedures but also for the differentiation of the sciences and the construction of their method.<sup>41</sup>

28. From this level of critical reflection a specific awareness of transcendence arises. This is a realm "in which the subject is related to divinity in the language of prayer and of prayerful silence."<sup>42</sup> In other terms, the intelligibility of one's own knowing, the understanding of one's own subjectivity points to another level of experience. Religiously differentiated consciousness is rooted in this experience. This is the consciousness of certain people who have fallen in "love" with the divine. It signifies the emergence of the transcendent order as a differentiated realm.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp.107-109; *Method in Theology*, p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.305

<sup>41</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.83.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.257.

<sup>43</sup> Lonergan says: Religiously differentiated consciousness is approached by the ascetic and reached by the mystic. In the latter there are two quite different modes of apprehension, of being related, of consciously existing, namely, the commonsense mode operating in the world mediated by meaning and the mystical mode withdrawing from the world mediated by meaning into a silent and all absorbing self-surrender in response to God's attainment is manifold. There are many mansions within Theresa of



29. People who are able to differentiate the meaning of transcendent consciousness realize that common sense, intellectual formulations, metaphors and so on are insufficient to express human experience because the agent's conscious intending is oriented towards transcendence.<sup>44</sup> In search of a clarification of this transcendent order, one cultivates a spiritual life through prayer or self-cultivation. Spiritual life leads to a twofold effect: first, it leads the subject beyond the realm of common sense, theory and into a 'cloud of unknowing,' or 'mystery of mystery'. Second, one then returns to the realm of common sense or of theory or of non-religious interiority with a perspective transformed by the transcendent dimension.

### The Necessity of Transformation in Human Consciousness

30. A hermeneutics of consciousness argues that awareness of the transcendent order emerges from our awareness of meaning and value. Self-interpretation is an act of self-constitution. This understanding becomes basic to our approach to the study of Daoist and Christian spiritual theologies. But self-interpretation can be full of bias and prejudice, even though it seeks to be reasonable and responsible. Human nature carries its own norms, namely "fidelity to the project of questioning". Objectivity is the result of inquiry through the constitution of authentic subjectivity. Any appropriation of the normative pattern of authentic human experience leads to a cognitive "transposition" or intellectual growth. Commitment to the norms inherent in good intentionality leads to moral maturity. Openness to unconditional love of being leads to religious transformation. Attention to the engendering experience of symbolism leads to psychic change.<sup>45</sup> In each of these cases we can speak of a kind of conversion or maturation. Therefore, we can speak of a basic horizon of inquiry shared by humanity in every culture. To block any of these forms of authentic inquiry leads people to fall into various kinds of bias and disordered desires.

31. There is no normativity apart from concrete, particular and relative contexts. Human subjectivity is rooted in physical, biological, psychological and social existence and the drive toward inquiry is also conditioned by traditions, habits and probabilities. Thus we should recognize that the physical, cultural, and temporal *a priori* set a horizon-bound for humans. In reality there exists a tension between a basic horizon and cultural conditioned horizons. This tension is the tension between limitation and

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Avila's Interior Castle and, besides Christian mystics; there are the mystics of Judaism, Islam, India, and the Far East. Indeed, Mircea Eliade has a book on shamanism with the subtitle, "archaic techniques of ecstasy. *Method in Theology*, p.266.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp.277-278.

<sup>45</sup> On the norms of questioning, see *Insight*, pp.404-405; and *Method in Theology*, pp. 37-38, 55, 104, 231, 265, 288, 292.

transcendence.<sup>46</sup>

32. This tension can develop in either a destructive way or a creative way. In order to go beyond this tension, one should take neither the path of absolutism nor relativism but that of a “perspectivism” that recognizes the reality of both historical horizons and the common dynamics of meaning.<sup>47</sup> The struggle for human authenticity has consistent features, even though its conclusions vary in substance. The hermeneutics of consciousness recognizes that the drive of human nature toward knowledge moves to self-transcendence and finally to an unrestricted vision of the transcendence.

33. The underlying pattern described by the hermeneutic of consciousness is always set within the countless elements of human bias, ranging from personal neurosis, irresponsibility and alienation, not to mention historical and cultural conflicts and violence. Therefore the way forward can only go through personal conversion and transformation, through discrimination between true insights and distorted conventions. Hermeneutics of consciousness maintains that in historical development, human beings bear collective responsibility for the emergence of the new paradigm. What is most significant for historical development is not external development such as the advance of scientific technologies, economic systems, change of polity, but the emergence of new types of experience, understanding, judgment and action. Human community is constituted by the differentiation of four basic modes of human consciousness, and lives out its authenticity in them. Human beings only can overcome collective limitations through intellectual, moral, religious and psychic dialogue and transformation.

34. This is by no means to deny the reality of historical progress on many fronts, but it does mean that we must reject naïve optimism. We should recognize that the self-constitution of human reality co-exists with false starts, breakdowns, aberrations and corruptions as well as stability, emergence and sanity.<sup>48</sup> New paradigms cannot emerge without the possibility of transformation (intellectual, moral, religious and psychic).<sup>49</sup> And this possibility requires “radical re-thinking” of many assumptions we hold. The problem with human assumptions is that they constantly fail to distinguish between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, pp.497-499

<sup>47</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp.216-218.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8;234; 475.

<sup>49</sup> Lonergan suggests threefold transformation (or conversion) should be done in human life: intellectual, moral and religious conversion. His student Robert Doran argues for the fourth transformation namely psychic conversion, which Lonergan also affirms.

<sup>50</sup> Lonergan has explained that the world of immediacy is the sum of what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelt, felt. It conforms well enough to the myth’s view of reality, objectivity, and knowledge. But it is but a tiny fragment of the world mediated by meaning. The world mediated by meaning is a world known not by the sense experience of an individual but by the external and internal experience of a cultural community, and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of the community.

35. On the moral plane, the maturation process leads human beings to choose to be autonomous and at the same time to accept responsibility for decision. Maturity “changes the criterion of one’s decisions and choices from satisfactions to values.”<sup>51</sup> When moral maturity develops, a human being is able to choose the “truly good” instead of immediate gratification, or emotional satisfaction, especially when values and sensory gratification conflict. Religious transformation draws our attention to the state of being of the recipients of divine grace. Hermeneutics of Consciousness suggests that this desire to surrender and commitment to grace has content even without an apprehended object.<sup>52</sup>

36. Knowledge of history and the development of human religious experience are also essential for our understanding of the unfolding of the transcendent order. The relation between the horizon of the subject and the horizon of history is dialectical: in the differentiation of consciousness historical development and individual subjectivity are mutually conditioned. We can see that technological advancements, economic developments, political revolutions and cultural innovations provide the context wherein personal formation occurs through socialization, education and acculturation. But at the same time, any technological, economic, political, and theological breakthroughs also rely on the accumulated insights of the concrete, individual person.

37. A hermeneutics of consciousness sees a continuum that includes unconscious biological mechanism and the intelligent levels of cognitional, moral and transcendent operations. This structure of existence presents various degrees of reflective awareness, ranging from dimly non-thematic elemental experience to commonsense understanding, to theoretical construction, all fueled by the desire to go beyond existing human limitations. It is necessary to respect the organic and psychic operation of our being, as well as to respect the intentional demand of intellectual, moral and spiritual needs. The “conflict of interests” between various levels of consciousness, therefore, must be negotiated in order to promote self-transcendence.<sup>53</sup>

38. This is especially important for a comparative theologian when she or he

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Knowing accordingly is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compound criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief. See *Method in Theology* 238.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.240.

<sup>52</sup> Lonergan argues that religious transformation is being grasped by ultimate reality. It is “other-worldly” falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualification, reservations. But it is such a surrender, not as an act, but as a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent acts. It is revealed in retrospect as an under-tow of existential consciousness, as a fated acceptance of a vocation to holiness, as perhaps an increasing simplicity and passivity in prayer. It is interpreted differently in the context of different religious traditions. For Christian it is God’s flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given us. For Daoist, it is the self-causation of Dao circulating in the world and human life.

<sup>53</sup> Lonergan, *Insight*, pp.214-31, 499-503; *Method in Theology*, pp.34-35.

engages two different theological traditions, each of which represents a different way of organizing these operations. Each of them offers a solution to the problems of living, a way of resolving the tensions among lower manifolds of consciousness through personal transformation. A comparative theologian is interested precisely in the nature of these solutions, each of which requires an ongoing negotiation to balance the limitations of particularity with the transcendence of the universal.<sup>54</sup>

39. According to my opinion, comparative theology should deal concretely with the dialectic of trans-cultural norms and particular situations, transcendental standards and concrete exigencies. The drive toward knowing and will for goodness never exist by themselves in a pure state or “transcendental realm.” They always subsist in traditions, communities or texts that are concrete syntheses, where the *a priori* horizon of transcendent openness is met by the physical, geographical, communal, temporal or scriptural *a priori*. New paradigms occur because this tension in human existence is continually renegotiated. This necessity reflects the imperative drive toward self-transcendence and the fact that this drive is not always successfully fulfilled. The struggle to integrate this tension is a basic engine for human progress.<sup>55</sup> The realization of an authentic self implies a successful negotiation of the dialectics of difference. And the failure of human authenticity sets free the contraries in that dialectic to become forces of decline that foster psychoneurosis, egoism, collective narrowness, and practical shortsightedness.<sup>56</sup>

40. In the following study, I analyze the historical development of early Daoism and Augustinian theology to work out the operation of their theological consciousness. As I have explained above, the compound of operating consciousness (experience, understanding, judgment and decision) becomes embodied in the various patterns of human existence (biological, aesthetic, dramatic, intellectual, mystical etc.), which then are reflected in the particularities of various historical contexts. The search for a transcendent human order implies an intellectual quest as well as a spiritual meditation, both embedded in a particular historical background. Because this search cannot succeed without personal transformation, a practitioner makes a radical turn to the fundamental levels of human consciousness (psychic, moral, intellectual and religious) and strives to throw off the bondage of personal and collective bias. This radical transformation requires the person to be attentive, intelligible, reasonable and responsible, and a new horizon arises only through such a process of on going conversion. Through my study on early Daoism and Christianity, we will see how these two theological traditions each return to the fundamental levels of consciousness

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp.476-479

<sup>55</sup> The discussion about this issue see Ronald McKinney, S.J. “A Critique of ‘Lonergan’s Notion of Dialectic’ and Glenn Hughes, “A Reply to Ronald McKinney S.J.” in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 1:1 (1983): pp.60-67, 70-73.

<sup>56</sup> McPartland, pp.173-177.

and transform what it means to be attentive, intelligible, reasonable and responsible in the context of spiritual exercise.

### My Writing Plan

41. In this writing I contend that a comparison between Early Daoism and Augustinian Christianity can play a significant role in the development of a global theological dialogue. To follow the ancient maxim, *fides quaerens intellectum*, I argue that both spiritual and intellectual modes of human consciousness belong to our basic human nature. It is wrong to separate our faith from the intellectual quest or to suspend our theoretical reflection in the path of faith. The impetus for human intellectual reflection is set forth in Plato's parable of the cave: it is the pull of the divine light. This was recognized in the Daoist concept of returning (fan 反), in which we see that the pursuit of the greatest clarity of mind is a goal for the practice of spiritual cultivation. At the outset of the spiritual journey, the seeker may regard his search as a purely private one. Only as that search progresses does he come to realize that his act is a response to the divine appeal to turn from the mere creaturely aspects of life toward the higher transcendent order. The questions he is asking point him toward the emergence of a new foundation—in Augustine's term, a turning from *amor sui* to *amor Dei*. This turning, this act of transformation, inevitably draws him back to the realm of doctrinal truth and anticipates a final transcendence of historical horizons.

42. The focus of this study is a comparison and conversation about Chinese and Christian religious experience and their respective strategies for transformation. I argue that both early Daoism and Christianity focus on differentiating false transcendent orders from the truly transcendent order as the heart of their religious projects. I have chosen Laozi and Augustine because my particular comparative interest is in spiritual practice, and I understand both of them to have developed their theoretical thinking in the interests of concrete practice. Likewise, I have chosen a hermeneutics of consciousness as a basic method, because the method recognizes the profound integration of theoretical and practical knowledge. And to further focus my discussion, I have taken the problem of individual and social violence as a secondary focus, a representative example of the distortion or sin that both traditions see as obstacles to spiritual fulfillment.

43. These decisions have plainly affected how I read each of these two traditions. For example, I develop a perspective on Daoism primarily through the lens of its understanding of self-cultivation and the conformity of the self to the Dao of Self-so. This insight was developed by He-Shang Gong's commentary on the *Dao De Jing* in early China and later on elaborated in details by the medieval Daoist commentators. Since the study of Daoism is a vast field, I have focused on the basic text of the *Dao De Jing* to exemplify the way of Daoist understanding of self-transcendence. In this

connection, we cannot avoid consideration of the text's historical context. Many scholars will agree that early Daoism arose as a movement of spiritual resistance against ancient Chinese religious and political institutions. To understand the setting of early Daoism within Chinese culture it is necessary particularly to understand the structure of royal power at the time, which was symbolized under the heading of the Bright Hall (Ming Tang). Therefore, the next two chapters work out that background and then proceed to develop an understanding of the Daoist project in terms of ancient Chinese religion.

44. Similarly, the same consideration leads me to treat Augustine primarily as a spiritual teacher, not simply a dogmatic or doctrinal theologian. His supreme concern is to nurture the soul's conformity to the image and likeness of God in the Triune Love. Some theologians might reject this approach, but I argue that it is consistent with the work of many of Augustine's interpreters. Bernard McGinn, for instance, states that Augustine's meditation on the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, provided him with a gold mine of sense descriptions that he concluded were truly about the inner experience of God.<sup>57</sup> Christian theology in its classical expression concerns a way of life. Thus, when I chose Augustine's text *de Trinitate* as my focus, I did not read it through an understanding of Augustine as a dogmatic theologian, but as a bishop and preacher who cultivates his spiritual practice day by day. I will argue that his text is organized around a vision of the transformation of the self in the image of the Triune God.

45. In order to sharpen the discussion more clearly and concretely, I take the problem of violence as a common ground for dialogue. Both early Daoism and Augustine have analyses of the roots of violence, and these have points of similarity and dissimilarity, as we shall see. In human history, one fundamental source of conflict stems from the dynamic of mimetic desires. Rene Girard refers the term *mimesis*, or mimetic desire, to the biological and psychological mechanism that impels humans to form their inner desires on the model of other's desires.<sup>58</sup> I am not here doing a Girardian analysis, but I note that his empirical description resonates with both traditions and can be a useful entry for continuing discussion between them around this issue. According to Rene Girard, mimetic rivalry in a community will lead to conflict and disintegrating violence unless a common outlet for hostility is found. It is this need that prompts a community to unite against a scapegoat. Human history, therefore, is grounded in victimage (scapegoating), whereby the continued repetition of such sacrifices guarantees the regeneration of the community.

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<sup>57</sup> Bernard McGinn, "The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism" in *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*. Volume 1, Number 2, Fall 2001, 156-171, See also Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Norwich Land: The Canterbury Press, 1986

<sup>58</sup> William Schweiker, "Beyond Imitation: Mimetic Praxis in Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Derrida," *Journal of Religion* 68 (1988): 21-38

46. In his study of the human search for transcendent order, Lonergan indicates that the meaning of human existence is based on self-interpretation, but a person's horizon can be retarded by the mechanisms of bias and prejudice. Thus, the search for transcendent order always starts from an imperfect world, filled with the monstrous powers of violence, famine, war and injustice. A person called to be attentive to his experience, to be intelligent in his understanding, to be reasonable in his judgment and responsible to his decision would seem, in Girard's terms, to be condemned to a mimetic circle of evil.

47. Therefore, the human search for transcendent order implies an awakening from the negative complexity of mimesis in the human world. That is, mimetic conflict is one manifestation of human estrangement, one manifestation of what religion seeks to overcome. When one is alienated from one's social world, this estrangement can erupt in violent hatred. This is a disorder in human consciousness. As a negation of ethical value, it shows up in the loss of moral judgment. As a negation of religious value, it means that God no longer exists as the transcendent horizon and secularism reigns.<sup>59</sup> As a negation of social value, it leads to a "conjunction of dissatisfaction and hopelessness" represented by life inside the bureaucratic world. That world runs by a rigid system, without discretionary adaptation, and with little encouragement for creativity. Crafty egoism, group biases and shortsightedness result in a broad range of disasters.<sup>60</sup>

48. Since transcendent order in human life must emerge out of the complexity of mimetic dynamics (both positive and negative) in our empirical world, it is necessary for religious experience to distinguish between a false transcendent order and an authentic one. The salvific power of kenosis has been explored through the long history of Hebraic testimonies and embodied in the incarnate Word of the New Testament, as Augustine confessed. From a Christian perspective, the "salvation of the Cross" constitutes the only effective fulfillment of human desire and destiny. Early Daoism also developed this soteriological consciousness as well. For example, in the *Dao De Jing*, Laozi expresses his desire to overcome the destructive mimetic mechanism by virtue of the Motherly Dao, as he said, "I am different from other people, cherishing motherhood. (DDJ. 20) In another place, he said, "I really have three prized possessions that I cling to and treasure: The first of there is compassion, the second, frugality, and the third is my reluctance to try to become preminent in the world. (DDJ.67)

49. From a comparative viewpoint, the Christian "salvation of the Cross" makes an interesting parallel to what the *Dao De Jing* depicts as the "Compassion of the

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<sup>59</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*. pp.47-48.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Third Collections*. pp.60-63.

Motherly Dao,” marked by compassion, frugality and powerless power in the world. The kenotic principle finds a distinctive, nuanced expression in the Daoist spiritual cultivation of effortless action. So we see a common theme of hunger for non-violence can be found in early Daoism and Christianity. Both agree that to escape from the circle of the mimetic mechanism requires transformation and self-transcendence.

50. In both Daoism and Christianity, it is the efficacy of kenosis that provides the possibility for self-transcendence. Hermeneutics of consciousness asserts that self-transcendence is constituted by a fourfold conversion (psychic, intellectual, moral and religious), manifest in the actualization of authenticity in the individual, in cultural tradition and history, measured by the standards of cumulative attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. The transforming power of kenosis works like the reversal of a glove. For example, Rene Girard indicates that the Christic event can cancel the destructive mimetic cycle precisely by revealing it. As he states, “The divinity of Christ is fully revealed when he is the victim of the mimetic event of all against one, but it owes absolutely nothing to this phenomenon of violent contagion and scapegoating. To the contrary, he subverts it.”<sup>61</sup>

51. For early Daoism and Christianity, the quest for transcendent order is grounded in fidelity to, appropriation of, and implementation of radical self-emptiness. According to my analysis I will indicate that human religious life often falls into destructive mimetic patterns, and yet that in religious history we still discover virtue and grace that foster reconciliation. In the following chapters I will focus my textual study on *the Dao De Jing* and the *de Trinitate* and the *de civitate Dei*, showing how this transcendent dynamism manifests in early Daoist and Christian traditions, and how their followers seek practically to cultivate this transformation. My writing plan is as follows.

52. The present chapter focuses on methodological concerns and introductory material. I sketch the intellectual perspective from which I read the *Dao De Jing* and the *de Trinitate*. My focus is on the struggle to differentiate the truly transcendent order from false transcendent orders, a struggle found in both Daoist and Christian consciousness. Theological masters and practitioners always try to discern true lights from confusions and complexity, to say “no” and “yes” with discrimination to the human desire for transcendence. They agree that a “soteriologically differentiated consciousness” is necessary in facing the alienated situation of humanity. Not every stream of pietism should be fostered and not all forms of sacralization should be dropped. Our study of the *Dao De Jing* and the *de Trinitate* will explicate how both

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<sup>61</sup> Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* New York: Orbis Books, 2001 p.131



Laozi, the founder of early Daoism, and Augustine, a prominent Christian bishop, formulated this “soteriologically differentiated consciousness” in their search for transcendent order.

53. In chapter two, I provide an historical survey of ancient Chinese religion. As a part of that survey I point out that the problem of violence is a significant part of the context for the emergence of early Daoism. I argue that the transcendent order of ancient Chinese religion was maintained by the problematic mechanism of martial power (wu-de 武德). In forms of shamanism in ancient Chinese religion, the concept of sacred power/charisma (de 德) was not sharply differentiated from the concept of sacred violence. Bloody hunting and ancestral sacrifice were central features of the ancient Bright Hall complex, and the ancient ruling clans took sacrifice as a way of empowering ancestral spirits in order to gain magical power for their ruling authority. This shamanistic type of religion focused on sacrificial rituals, practices in which human victims were executed for hundreds of years.

54. My study of the Bright Hall sacred site explicates the violent mechanisms and religious beliefs associated with it. Benefitting from groundbreaking studies of some Sinologists, I pinpoint the nature of the Bright Hall religious world, explain the practical operation of its sacrificial calendar, and highlight the magical and martial beliefs related to the ruling class. This background knowledge provides a new perspective on reading the *Dao De Jing*. My argument is that only with an understanding of the Bright Hall religious world and its martial beliefs can we understand the significance of the *Dao De Jing* and the purpose behind its composition. This reconstruction of the Bright Hall religious experience leads to a nuanced understanding of the theological breakthrough in the *Dao De Jing*.

55. In chapter three, I study the manifestation of a truly transcendent order in the *Dao De Jing* and provide textual analysis. My main argument is that the prevailing power of violence in ancient Chinese religion prompted the *Dao De Jing*'s author urgently to seek an alternative interpretation of the transcendent order. Laozi criticized the archaic religious belief and proposed a new understanding of the order of transcendence, the *Dao*(道). A triadic order emerges from Laozi's existential criticism of the violent world, an order represented by the notion of the Way of Self-so (自然之道). His vision of human destiny and his ontological breakthrough describe a triadic structure of ultimate reality as Nothing-Something-Self-so. And he embodies this metaphysical speculation in the spiritual exercise that produces “effortless action” (無為).

56. In chapter four, I will study Augustine's appropriation of transcendent order in his two books (*de civitate Dei* and *de Trinitate*). Since the contents of these two books are very rich, I can only focus on some portions that are relevant to this study. Starting

from his Christological reading of the Hebrew Scripture, Augustine's figurative exegesis of biblical texts supports his critical analysis of the mimetic mechanism of violence in human consciousness. He maintains that the salvation of the cross is part of the rule of faith and that this implies spiritual resistance to the demonic power of violence. Emergence of transcendent order in the world is based on the restoration of the *Imago Dei* in the human soul. His well-known analysis of human consciousness as memory, understanding and will stem from his painstaking exploration of the destiny of human beings. This theological investigation goes in partnership with the practical formation of the soul to achieve the beatific vision. Augustine's notion of *exercitationes animi*, "exercise of the soul," is investigated in this chapter.

57. My comparative reflections on early Daoism and Augustinian Christianity are found in chapter five. Some thoughts can be outlined here in anticipation. I have already pointed out that a higher integration of the operations of human consciousness plays itself out on different levels of meaning. I see this process happening in the *Dao De Jing* and the *de Trinitate* (and the *de Civitate Dei*) as follows: first, the *DDJ* and the *DT/CD* share a common concern in taming the prevailing power of violence. Both Laozi and Augustine develop spiritual strategies to restrict the power of violence. This restriction can be achieved first by a new understanding of sacred order and second, through practices of spiritual cultivation.

58. Second, the project of taming violence leads them to understand that human intellectual conversion is based on a painstaking theoretical/contemplative meditation. For Laozi this contemplation is constructed in a metaphysical reflection on the nature of ultimate reality as "the Way of Self-so in Chaotic Unity." Augustine based his theoretical thinking about Trinitarian faith on a soteriological principle, in which the kenotic presence of the resurrected Christ is the key element.

59. Third, though Laozi and Augustine share some similar approaches, they each utilize their own methods, employ different language and finally develop different intellectual frameworks. For Laozi, the order of the Way (道) manifests itself in the triadic structure of the 'spontaneously so' (*Ziran*) in Nothing (無) and Something (有). Daoist thinking proceeds through Laozi's meditation on the relationship between the notions of Emptiness, of Tranquility and of the inner dynamism of the Divine nature (*Ziran*). The author of *Dao De Jing* intentionally diminishes the significance of the anthropomorphic approach to understand the nature of Divine. For Daoism, the analogical model of the "fool's mind" is emphasized, comprehending ultimate reality paradoxically as Chaotic Unity.

60. Augustine's theological consciousness is disclosed in his exposition of the sacrificial love of the cross. Following the early church's traditions and drawing on biblical sources, he stresses the personal dimension of the Triune God. He puts great

emphasis on the equality of three divine persons. The order of grace, for Augustine, is the eternal mutual indwelling of the Holy Father, Holy Son and the Holy Spirit in three “persons” as one “substance.” In his analysis of human interior consciousness, Augustine discovers an image of this order of grace, in that the human stream of consciousness co-exists spontaneously as a tri-unity of memory, understanding and will. This “psychological analogy” can be used to reflect the divine nature.

61. Reading Laozi and Augustine’s ontological speculation side-by-side challenges and enriches our understanding of the divine nature. On the one hand, we should take their difference seriously and give careful consideration to the reasons for this difference. On the other hand, we should also ask if it is possible to transform/transpose their ontological judgments into a new integrated level. For example, can we conceive the Christian God and Daoist Emptiness as dual revelations of the divine nature? Are the personal dimensions of God and the impersonal qualities of Emptiness necessarily mutually exclusive? Or can we say that the Triune Nature of the Im/personal God is inclusively revealed through these two traditions? We can further ask whether or how a higher level of integration of these ontological judgments can serve the same aim to uproot the mimetic rivalry of violence on the intellectual level. We cannot give comprehensive answers to all of these questions, but our conclusions will provide a clearer sense of the field in which they must be framed.

63. Fourth, both Laozi and Augustine have developed various types of spiritual practices based on their ontological speculations about the divine order. For Laozi, the characteristic spiritual practice is named “Keeping Three Ones” (守一). For Augustine, the characteristic practice is called *exercitationes animi* “exercise of the soul.” These can both be read as practical ways to restrict the operation of the mechanism of violence and also as concrete paths toward the verification of religious faith in realization of the divine nature through obedience and imitation.

64. The relations between these very different theological traditions are complex. My method begins with a very formal hermeneutic of consciousness, that looks for the manifestation of structural features of human consciousness in concrete historical contexts and particular religious texts. The stress falls on the differentiation of meanings of common experiences in the world, of theoretical explanation, of interior evaluation and commitment and of character formation in the particularities of early Daoism and Augustinian Christianity. This thick historical and textual study does not yield crisp general conclusions, but it sheds light on the comparative theologian’s own theological tradition, expands his faith and theological understanding, and promises to undergird the continuing work of interfaith dialogue and learning.

## Chapter 2: A Historical Investigation of the Bright Hall Religious Worldview in Ancient China

### **Introduction**

1. In this chapter, I will study the archaic cosmological thinking and religious reality of ancient Chinese religion as historical background to the rise of early Daoism. I will highlight a few aspects of this ancient religious reality: (i) its idea of sacred space, (ii) its ritual practice, (iii) its conception of the High powers, and (iv) the nature of this religious system. Here the term “religious reality” refers to Peter Berger’s study of the social construction of humanity. Berger’s statement that humanity nurtures itself in no way implies some Promethean vision of the solitary individual. Human self-production is always, and of necessity, a process of socialization (in ancient China, ritualization). Ritualization means that human beings together produce a human environment, a totality of socio-religious, cultural and psychological formations. As Berger points out, none of these formations may be understood as products of the biological constitution of human being, which provides only the outer limits for human productive activity. Just as it is impossible for human beings to develop as human in isolation, so it is impossible for humans in isolation to produce a human environment. To observe specifically human phenomena is to enter the realm of the social. The human being’s

specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined.<sup>62</sup>

2. My contention is that in ancient China, religious order was a social construction of religious imagination. It was a product of the ongoing externalization of the human internal consciousness. However, while the social products of human externalization have a character *sui generis* distinct from biological physiology and the natural environment, it is also important to stress that the externalization of human religious consciousness as such is not simply an anthropological necessity. The human being must also continue to internalize and arrive at transcendent meaning through his own agency. This is a painstaking process, especially as the progress occurs in an imperfect world full of bias and conflicts of interests. But human religious belief, a *fide quaerens intellectum*, finds its way to historical expression in the expressive of “falling in love with God,” the experience describes in hermeneutics of consciousness which was discussed in chapter one.

3. In this dissertation, the term ancient Chinese religion refers to the religious system and belief practiced in the period of early Shang to the decline of the Western Zhou dynasty in 771 B.C.E. the Shang dynasty of China, ruled, according to traditional dates, from c.1766 B.C.E to c.1122 B.C.E or, according to some modern scholars, from c.1523 B.C.E to c.1027 B.C.E. The Shang dynasty is the first historic dynasty of China; its legendary founder, Tang 湯, is said to have defeated the last Xia ruler. His successors ruled over a city-state in modern Henan province, and may have controlled other smaller clans on the North China Plain. They warred against the other ‘barbarians’ and against the Zhou clan, who finally defeated the last Shang king and founded the new Zhou dynasty. Archaeological remains at one of the Shang capitals, near modern Anyang 安陽, suggest (along with later records) that the Shang had a complex religious system, with a priestly class, nobles, and a king, who was also the chief shaman. Ancient Chinese religion was characterized by sacrifices to the ancestral spirits and nature deities, and divination and belief in the providence of the High God. Stylized inscriptions on bone and bronze artifacts probably reveal the earliest examples of Chinese writing. Bronze casting under the Shang reached a height of artistic achievement rarely equaled anywhere in the world.

4. To understand ancient Chinese religion, one must bear in mind that as many other great civilizations, religious, political and social customs and institutions were largely undifferentiated in this society.<sup>63</sup> The religious worldview of the Chinese ruling classes was essentially inherited from the Shang and Zhou shamanistic worldview in which social reality was ritualized in religious practices. In the sacred complex know as the Bright Hall (Ming-tang), which symbolized an *axis mundi* of the

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<sup>62</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise its the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 51-55, 59-61.

<sup>63</sup> David N. Keightley, “The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture” *History of Religions* 17 (1978) 211-224.

world, no organizational distinctions were made among ritual, music and songs, ancestor worship, divinization, political and military activities.<sup>64</sup> Following the methodology I developed in the previous chapter, I will argue that this religious world can be understood by studying the symbolism constituting its sacred space and time. It also can be known through the study of its ritual practices. Religious belief was constituted by the externalization of human consciousness. I will also argue, furthermore, that this process of externalization of the religious reality does not differentiate clearly the concept of violence from the idea of the sacred. Indeed, the sacred and violence were identical in the ancient Chinese religion and warfare, hunting and human sacrifice were integral parts of their religious practices. This martial belief could only be differentiated and partly tamed by the spiritual effort of Early Daoism in later development. We will see that taming violence is always one of the major concerns in the history of Chinese religious thought. The rise of Early Daoism and the composition of the *Dao De Jing* contributed tremendously to the birth of a new transcendent order in Chinese history. This spiritual influence still shapes the modern Chinese mind.

### 2.1. The Cosmological Symbolism of the Bright Hall (Ming-tang 明堂)

5. In this section I limit my study to some key elements of ancient Chinese sacred site and their religious and political implications: the Ya 亞-shaped cosmos and its Four quadrates (Si-fang 四方), the Four cosmic trees (Si-mu 四木), and the Ring-shaped pool (Pi-Yong 辟雍) are my major concerns. My purpose is to demonstrate how the Bright Hall-Four Quadrants (Ming-tang Si-fang 明堂四方) functions as the sacred center of the ancient Chinese religious world, which structured the archaic cosmological thinking of the ancient Shang and Zhou Chinese. This archaic belief was inherited, tamed and transformed by the Daoist genius Laozi and his circle.

6. The term Bright Hall is a generic term referring to a particular type of sacred geography and its associated cosmology. In order to understand the ancient Chinese religious experience in its ritual and cosmological context, and the departure represented by early Daoist theological imagination, it is necessary to begin with the archaic worldview of the Bright Hall and the four quadrants on which it is based. As we shall see the early Daoist theological vision of returning to the triadic reality (Something, Nothing, and the Spontaneity of Self-so) by effortless action, came into conflict with, and ultimately prevailed over, this ancient hegemonic worldview.

7. The complex of the Bright Hall was a sacred site intended to imitate the structure of the cosmos.<sup>65</sup> According to a study by Paul Wheatley, the complex

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<sup>64</sup> David N. Keightley, "The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy" in *Religion and Chinese Society* Edited by John Lagerwey Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, pp. 11-34.

<sup>65</sup> The English translations of the term are various: Bright Hall, Luminous Hall, Hall of Distinction,

provided a miniature model of the cosmos, where one could communicate with Heaven. The Bright Hall complex was also the site of sacrificial rituals associated with political power.<sup>66</sup> Although modern scholarship has shown that the term “*Ming-tang*” was in use no earlier than the fourth century B.C.E,<sup>67</sup> it is clear that such buildings were already in use as sacred sites by hundreds (or thousands) of clans, under a variety of other names.<sup>68</sup> They acquired the fixed name of Bright Hall (*Ming-tang*) in the late Han dynasty, when traditional Chinese scholars accepted it as a generic term referring to the great Temple of the ruling clans.

8. Religious reflection on human beings and the universe in which they live often leads to an intuitive sense of rapport between sacred rites and the order and harmony of nature. The Bright Hall is a set of conceptions related to classical religious thinking in ancient China. It comprises three dimensions: a spatial structure called the Bright Hall, a temporal cycle referred as the monthly ordinance, and a social-political dimension known as the emperor’s assemblage. The Bright Hall was constructed to symbolize the spatial structure of the cosmos. It incorporated a Ya-shaped earth, with four cosmic trees at the four corners holding up the vault of the sky, a Ring-shaped pool surrounding the earth in the gap between earth and sky, and a vertical axis with three existential zones. Temporal elements such as cosmogony, monthly ordinances, and memories of historical events were incorporated by rituals into this architectural complex. At the assemblages of the emperor that took place here, each noble found his place according to his social-political status. Thus, the symbol of the Bright Hall has two meanings in our analysis. It can represent the architecture itself as well as the religious-political model behind the architecture.<sup>69</sup>

9. The center of the Bright Hall was the sacred Celestial Chamber (*Tianshi* 天室), a circular space for communicating directly with Heaven. This was the *axis mundi* where the king, as the son of Heaven, communicated with the high powers that granted him his ruling authority. In fact, the Bright Hall was the “symbolic center” of the central Kingdom, it functioned to host assemblies called by the emperor known as grand assemblages of the tribes of the four quadrates (*Si fang ming da hui* 四方民大會). In these sacred assemblages, feudal lords and rulers of neighboring clans bound themselves in holy alliance. Thus meetings in the Bright Hall were the most significant religious-political events of early Chinese religious and political life. Only the son of

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Brilliant Hall, or Hall of Light. I prefer the term Bright Hall but I like to highlight the meaning of “Ming” implies a concept of luminosity.

<sup>66</sup> Wheatley, Paul *The Pivot of the Four Quarters* pp.429-451

<sup>67</sup> Gao Ming 高明, *Guwenzi-Leibian* <<古文字類編 >>1980, p.423

<sup>68</sup> For example, the classical texts such as the *ZL Kaogongji* 周禮考工記 said: Xiahou Shi had the chamber of generations (*Shishi* 世室), Yin(Shang) people had the Layered House (*Chongwu* 重屋)... Zhou people had the Bright Hall (*Mingtang* 明堂). See Sun Yirang 孫詒囊, *Punctuated by Wang Wenjin and Chen Yuxia*, 1987, *Zhouli Zhengyi*.

<sup>69</sup> 明堂與中國上古之宇宙觀, 《城市與設計》4 (1998), 頁 133-195。

Heaven who was authorized by the Mandate of the High God/Heaven was entitled to build such a temple or call such assemblies.

### 2.1.1. Ya 亞-shaped Bright Hall and Four Quadrates (Si-fang 四方) Cosmo

10. The Ya-shaped Bright Hall was the most important structure in the ancient Chinese religious world. Mircea Eliade has written extensively on the topic of the symbolism of the center in the ritual of archaic religions. He suggests that the center is “preeminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality.” The Ya-shaped temple was this center in the ancient Chinese religious world. According to scholars, the Ya 亞-shape is the shape of a stone chamber in the ancestral temples, or the shape of the temple building itself.<sup>70</sup>

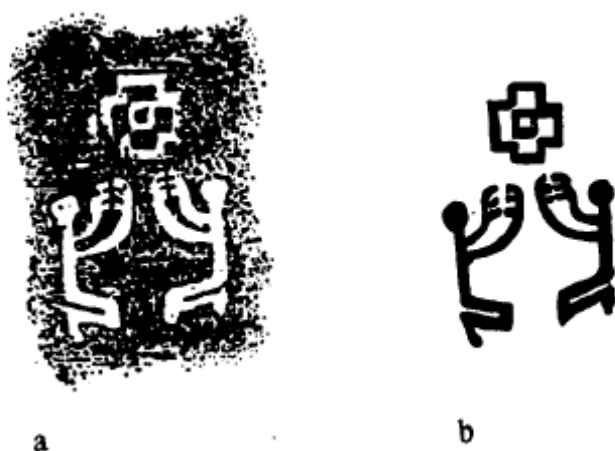


Fig. 2.1. A rubbing of bronze inscription; (a) rubbings, (b) hand drawing of the same emblem (From Yu, Xingwu, 1957, No. 322.)

11. A transmitted text mentions that “Ya 亞 symbolized the rooms and surrounding walls of a temple Therefore [they] used this kind of image to express their reverence to [the High God and ancestors]. The Ya 亞 is the four 口-shapes of a building, it was the image of temple.”<sup>71</sup> In the Oracle bone inscriptions (OBI hereafter), the character Ya 亞 usually referred to a sacred site. For example, Heji 合集 30297 records an event from the day of jia-wu in which a diviner is called upon to decide whether a sacrifice

<sup>70</sup> In the Boguto of the Song dynasty (960-1279), the author explained the inscription of the “Shang Ya Hu Fu Ding ding, it states “the inscription has four characters, within the Ya-shape, there is a portrait of the tiger. All such drawing symbolized a Ya-chamber. The Ya-chamber is the chamber of ancestral temples. A temple has chambers which are what the Zuoshi (i.e. the Zuozhuan) describe as zongshi and Du Yu said to be the stone chamber to store tablets in the ancestral temple.”

<sup>71</sup> Xu Tongbo 徐博古, Conggutang Kuanshixue 考工堂款式學. Wang Guowie enforced this theory by suggesting that temples, Ming-tang and other ceremonial buildings in early China were ya-shaped. See “Mingtang Miaoqin Tongkao” in Guantang-Jilin, Vol.3.pp.123-144. Contemporary Chinese scholars discussions see Jian Liangfu, “Yu Miaotang Xiangguan de Huihua Wenzhi” Gu Wenzixue, 1979. pp.24-30. Gao Honjin, “Ya” Zhongguo Zili, p.116. Zhao Cheng, JiaguwenJianming-Cidian, p.213. Xu Zhongshu, et al., Jiaguwen-Zidian, p.1525.



ritual should be practiced in the Ya 亞 building of the ancestor, because a royal horse had recently died. (The answer was affirmative.) A second example can be found in Heji 22226,1, in which a diviner inquires whether the shaman should practice a sacrifice ritual to an ancestor, and where. The answer was given: in a Ya 亞 building. These two examples clearly indicate that the Ya 亞 was a sacred site for rituals and sacrifice.

12. How important, though, was this Ya-shaped building in the ancient Chinese religious world? How did it relate to ancient Chinese religious thinking? Conventional scholarship, viewing ancient Chinese thought through the lens of Confucian humanism, has tended to underestimate the Bright Hall's religious significance, preferring to emphasize its social-political function. In her book *the Shape of the Turtle*, Sarah Allan breaks new ground, attempting to reconstruct the symbolic meanings of the Ya-shaped building in its religious context. Allan argues that the Bright Hall and Four Quadrates cosmos was shaped by the image of the turtle plastron (underside). The ancient Chinese world viewed itself as a central square, other tribal clans were organized into four directions, or quadrants (Si-Fang 四方). Its self-designation in the middle of the world represented order in the midst of disorder. Since the character 'fang' 方 can be written as a character like [], by combining the self-designation of the central state and attaching four squares, a Ya-shaped cosmos was formed.<sup>72</sup> This theory can be supported by considerable textual evidence and by numerous bronze inscriptions. Observing that the Ya-shaped building complex created a symbolic center, an *axis mundi* from which to offer different rituals to the High God and to ancestors, Allan points out that "the plastron of the turtle which was used in Shang divination was also ya-shaped and... functioned as a model of the Shang cosmos."<sup>73</sup> In support of her argument, Allan quotes the story in the HNZ 淮南子, in which the female deity Nue Wa patches the sky and cuts off the four legs of a huge sea turtle to support the four poles of the earth after a cosmic disaster.

13. Archeologist K.C.Chang argues that the religious meaning of this four-cornered Bright Hall complex was prominent no later than the ancient Shang dynasty. Agreeing that the complex of the Bright Hall functioned as an *axis mundi* in a shamanistic sense,<sup>74</sup> Chang relates this Ya-shaped complex and its four corners to two earth god icons of the Olmec culture discovered at the site of Chalcatzingo. In a famous hypothesis, Chang posits that civilizations in Pre-Columbian America and ancient China may have originated from the same region of East Asia more than ten thousand years ago. If this theory is correct, similar shamanistic cultural traits shared

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<sup>72</sup> Sarah, Allan. *The Shape of Turtle: Myth, Art and Cosmos in Early China*, Albany, NY: SUNY press, 1991. pp.74-111; and 1991b, pp.34-47. Sarah Allan's theory is supported by the coherent usage of Si-fang to indicate the Shang's world and its neighboring tribal states in bronze inscription, the classic of Ode, the classic of Documents, New excavation of the Linzi lid etc.

<sup>73</sup> Sarah Allan, 1991, p.75.

<sup>74</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, 1990, pp.25-34.

by the two civilizations could be explained as having been shaped before the ancestors of ancient Americans departed from north east Asia across the Bering Straits to the New world.<sup>75</sup> K.C. Chang's hypothesis still remains to be tested by further archaeological excavations, but his observation of the Ya-shaped mouth of the Olmec earth god may shed light on the meaning of the Ya-shaped cosmic worldview in ancient China. In the Olmec culture, the stone sculpture of the earth god has an animal face with a huge opened Ya-shaped mouth. At each corner of this mouth is a tree. This pattern is similar to those found in the Chu Silk Manuscripts (CSM 楚絲卷).

14. A Ya-shaped cosmos implies a four-quadrant worldview (Si-fang). Although most scholars translate Si-fang as "four directions," its true meaning is not clear. Paul Wheatley translates the term as "four quarters," interpreting the "fang" as cardinal orientations.<sup>76</sup> Sarah Allan understands it to refer to a square space or cube, rather than to linear directions.<sup>77</sup> Wang Aihe points out further that the term refers to a concept of political geography; she suggests that the concept of four quadrates is both a cosmological structure for classifying political and spiritual powers in the ancient Chinese worldview, and also a ritual structure for communication with the spiritual world.<sup>78</sup> According to Wang's study, Fang held dual meaning for ancient Chinese minds, one political and the other religious. The two were usually intermingled and undifferentiated. The original meaning of Fang implies a concept of differentiation whereby certain people were identified as aliens or heterogeneous forces. The relationship between the ruling clan and these "barbarians" was limited to invasion, domination, blessing or cursing, or the giving of tribute in the form of shells or treasures. The religious implication of Fang, on the other hand, is embodied in the di 禘-sacrifice which was performed almost exclusively to the deities of the four quadrates (Si-fang). "Sifang (four quadrates) as four directions and a classification structure included alien people living on the periphery and the gods of Si-fang, who had spiritual influence over the actions of alien polities in the same way that they influenced rain and wind coming from the four directions."<sup>79</sup>

15. In short, the concept of four quadrates embedded within the Ya-shaped architecture of the Bright Hall contained both religious and political dimensions. As a system of classification, its purpose was to order diversified forces, spiritually and politically, within a controllable cosmological framework. This notion of four quadrates and the building of the Bright Hall (Ming-tang) created a unified structure, a three-dimensional cosmology. Its center was delineated in every dimension by the four quadrates, with a political center defined by the differentiation of *us* from *others*. The

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<sup>75</sup> C.K.Chang, *Archaeology of Ancient China*, 1986, pp.414-422. 1990, pp.25-34.

<sup>76</sup> A. Wheatley, 1971, pp.423-427.

<sup>77</sup> S. Allen, 1991, pp.75-77.

<sup>78</sup> Wang, Aihe, 2000, pp.25-26.

<sup>79</sup> Wang, Aihe. 2000, p.30.

Bright Hall thus represented the ancestral capital surrounded by four lands. In this cosmic center, the king exercised exclusive control over communication between Heaven and Earth, mediated by his royal ancestral line and assisted by his court shamans (Wu 巫), who facilitated exchanges of wealth and sacrificial rites. The parallel concepts of “high” and “low” (shang 上 and xia 下) were also frequently used in the ritual practices of the Shaman-king, in relation to the high God and low lords (ancestors). The meeting point of Heaven and Earth in this layered universe was symbolized in complex ways in the sacrificial rites.

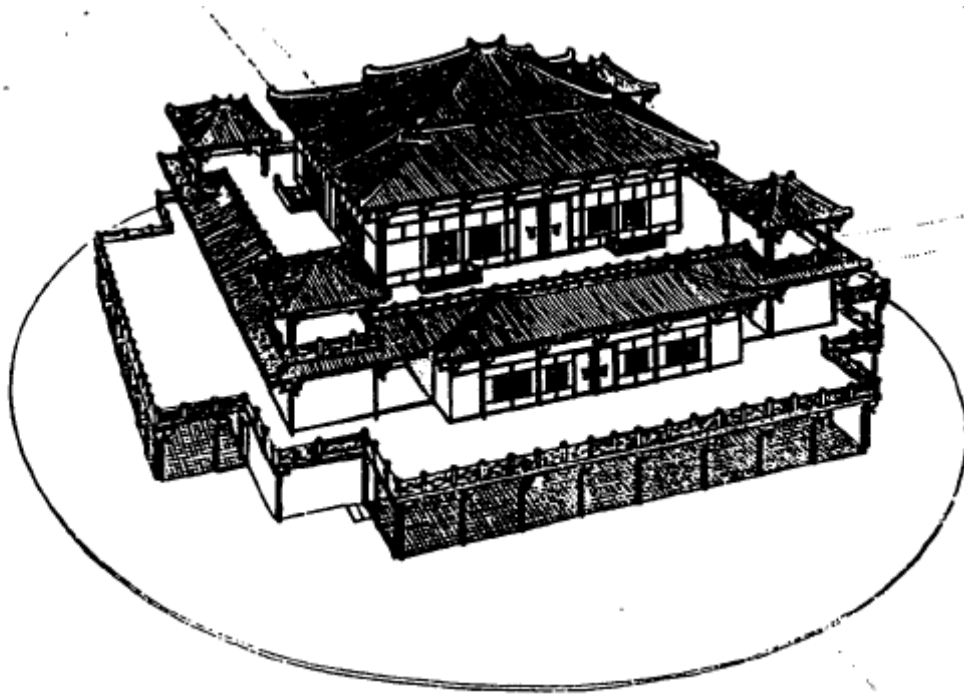


Fig. 2.2. A reconstruction of the early Han's Bright Hall in perspective. It was reconstructed by Wang Shiren. (Wang Shiren, 1963, *KG 考古*. 1963.9. Fig.20.)

#### 2.1.2. The Four Cosmic Trees (Si-mu 四木)

16. The four cosmic trees are thought to have been an important element in the sacred rites of the Bright Hall. These trees stand as four pillars to support the vault. Later, planting four groves around the complex of the Bright Hall became a part of ritual. A sinologist, Hu Houxuan, argues that the archaic word *She* 社 inscribed in the OBI was formed by the descendants of a very ancient Chinese civilization (the legendary Xia dynasty). The character *She* in all likelihood represented a sacred altar whose structure of four cosmic trees was later incorporated into the Bright Halls of the Shang and the Zhou dynasties. C.K.Chang theorizes that the four corners were four ladders which shamans ascended and descended as they communicated between heaven and earth.<sup>80</sup> Since the Bright Hall was viewed as a microcosm, with four

<sup>80</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, 1990, pp.25-34.

pillars supporting the sky, when an old state was conquered by new power, its temple would be incorporated into a system of cults of the new ruling clan and its god added to the list of the expanded state pantheon.<sup>81</sup>

17. One well known story is about a daemonic rebellion that happened in the second stage of the cosmogony after the primeval creation-making by deistic figures Fu Xi 伏羲 and Nue Huang 女媧. Observing the cosmic chaos caused by the birth of suns and moons, the Fiery Emperor commands Zhu Rong, the legendary ancestor of the state of Chu, to set things right. Here we find the image of four cosmic trees playing a prominent role as the four cardinal pillars of the vault of heavens, ensuring the stability of the cosmos. Turning to the classical texts, we find no record of the four cosmic trees of the earth altars (*She*) in the received texts of the Classic of Documents (Shang Shu 尚書 hereafter SS). However, a document—now lost—referred to the relation between the four cosmic trees and earth altars (*She*)<sup>82</sup>. This lost chapter of the SS described the five sacred sites of the earth altar as follows:

The sole tree of the Great *She* is a pine, for the Eastern *She* a cedar tree, for the Southern *She* a catalpa, for the Western *She* a Chestnut tree, and for the Northern *She* a locust tree.

18. Without the original context of this lost chapter of the SS (even the date is unknown), we can have no idea of whether it is describing one sacred site with five altars or five different sites, each with its own altar. We do not know whether these trees were planted in the cardinal directions or at the four corners, or whether the character for wood (*Mu*) indicates one tree for each altar or a forest. That Ban Gu quoted this written material from a reliable ancient source is fairly certain, however, given a corresponding fragment of text from the oracle bone inscriptions (Heji 36975,1). The text reads:

On the sixth day (*Jisi*), the king practiced the crack marking, he divined: “Whether this year the Shang will receive the (harvest)?” The king, after reading the cracks, said, “It will be auspicious!”

Will the Eastern *She* receive the good harvest? (.....)

Will the Southern *She* receive the good harvest? It is auspicious.

Will the Western *She* receive the good harvest? It is auspicious.

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<sup>81</sup> The four cosmic trees as cosmographic elements still survive in some textual records. The most important of these is the Four Seasons (*Sishi* 四時) chapter of the CSM.<sup>81</sup> Here is my translation: The first tree is named green trunk, the second crimson-headed creature, the third X-yellow-nan?, and the fourth x-black trunk. Thousands and hundreds of years had passed; the suns and moons were borne by Jun (Yun?), the nine territories were turmoil, and the mountains and hills were rolling and trembling. The four gods began to revolt and turn the heavens and earth upside-down. They shook the essences (roots?) of the green tree, the crimson tree, yellow tree, the white tree, and the black tree. Fiery Emperor, therefore, commanded Zhu Rong to descend with the four deities, they rectified the three heavens, to ... (obscured sentence), and to solidify the four pillars. The Emperor said: “If not for the grand expanding of the nine heavens, then I dare not communicate to the celestial spirits. (By his command), the Di Jun regulated the orbits of suns and moons.

<sup>82</sup> Ban Gu (323-392 A.D). *Sheji* of Baihu-Tongde-Lun 白虎通德論

Will the Northern She receive the good harvest? It is auspicious. (Heji 36975,1)

19. When we read of the order of the earth altars in the lost chapter of SS, we find that it is clockwise, the same pattern as that of the oracle bone inscription of the Heji 36975. In the divination setting of Heji 36975, the character “Shang” referred to a significant architectural complex with Ya-shaped ground plan and four directional quadrates (Si-Fang). The original meaning of Fang means a state, tribe, or clan. This ‘Shang’ sacred site suggests that these five divinations happened at the same day in a central square with four squares, and further, that the four states of ancient Chinese earth altars were integrated into the architectural structure of the Shang people’s Bright Hall. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the Bright Hall of ancient times included four earth altars in four corners.

20. The question is how the architecture of earth altars connected to the four cosmic trees. It is conjectured that these sacred sites were incorporated into the state cult of ancient Chinese dynasties (e.g., Shang and Zhou) and symbolized different tribes in alliances with the central tribe, represented by four cosmic trees at the four corners of the Bright Hall. It is known that the kings of the Zhou dynasty established an office called *Dasitu* to manage four earthly altars. In the ZL Diguan Dasitu << 地官. 大司徒>>, we read:

Building the walls of the altar (社) and the Ji was the duty of the Dasitu, He established the tablet of the lord in the tilled land and planted the appropriate trees by its locality. He also named the altars and farmlands.<sup>83</sup>

21. Here we get a picture of different clans settled around the royal city of the ruling clan, with the religious and political significance of each clan embodied in their tree plantings, symbolizing the people from four directions forming a new religious-political alliance. The Airs of Yong 50, the Book of Poetry, contains a striking allusion to the four cosmic trees.<sup>84</sup>

22. From the poem we know that it is about the construction and use of a sacred site. Indeed, the poem contains valuable information on ancient Chinese religious experience and the practices employed in the construction of the Bright Hall, including selection of date and layout, the planting of four comic trees, ritual, music, divination, and the offering of virgins to the High God. The poem begins with the chosen date and

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Wen Yi-duo, 1947, pp.81-116.

<sup>84</sup> My translation, modified from Arthur Waley’s version, is as follows: “The Ding-star is in the middle of the square construction site; we begin to build the palace at Chu. Orienting them by the rays of sun, we set to work on the chambers at Chu. By the side of them we plant hazels and chestnut-trees, paulownias, lacquer-trees, that we may make zithers great and small [after the construction is finished]. He [the high God] ascended to the top of the hill, to look down at Chu, to look upon Chu and the [great] temple, upon the Jing Hills and the high building [Jing, i.e., the Bright Hall]. Will he go down and inspect the Mulberry orchard? The divination states that it is auspicious; at last he [the high God] agrees to come. The magical rain is falling; the [lord] orders our virgins, by starlight, early, to yoke our steeds; [The High God] is pleased in the Mulberry Field. Oh, men, [the High God] is real, He holds hearts that are staunch and true. He has given us three thousand mares.

time, suggesting a religious context. Its ritual meaning comes through in the planting of four species of trees and in ritual celebrations with music played by shamans when the temple construction is finished. In the second stanza, the poem shifts from the builders to the High God who ascends to the top of a hill by a ritual procession. The poem says that he inspects the palace and temple and is pleased. Then the diviner asks whether he will descend to accept the offerings, and eventually he agrees to come. The third stanza focuses on the preparation of ritual offerings, their process, and their reward. Here we see the ‘magical’ rain, the ritual offering of virgins in the mulberry field (the sacred site of the Shang people), the reward: an increase of three thousand mares in the coming year. It is clear that even after the decline of the western Zhou dynasty, the planting of four cosmic trees remained an important part of the construction of a sacred site.

23. The four cosmic trees were thus basic components of the ancient cosmological scheme of the Bright Hall. Although the influence of this ancient worldview waned with the decline of the western Zhou dynasty, it was never entirely lost. At an unconscious level, it remained a basic Chinese belief. It thus represents an important piece of background for understanding the early Daoist spiritual resistance this shamanistic practice.

### 2.1.3. Ring-shaped pool (Pi-yong 辟雍)

24. Unlike the term Bright Hall (Ming-tang) that cannot be traced back any earlier than the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-256 B.C.), textual evidence for the term *Pi-yong* goes back to the Western Zhou period (before 771 B.C.). A commentator on the Book of Poetry states: “Water in the shape of a circle surrounds a mound named *Pi-yong*. It is designed to keep away spectators.”<sup>85</sup> The character Yong 雍 in its archaic form was written various ways. Originally it probably indicated a complex of buildings surrounded on four sides by ponds, on which the spirits of ancestors would descend in the form of raven or swallow.

25. The Pi-yong is a ring-shaped body of water that surrounded the Bright Hall, symbolizing the presence of Heaven and the spirits of Ancestors. A few examples from the classical texts will illustrate its significance for ancient Chinese religious and political life.

The ZSJN 竹書紀年 records:

In the thirty-second year (of the King Di-xin), five stars met at the Fang star, and the crimson birds gathered at the earth altars of the Zhou state. The Mi people invaded the Ruan area; the Lord of the West (later the king Wen of the Zhou dynasty) led his troops to attack Mi people. In the thirty-third year, The Mi people surrendered to the Zhou troops. Thereafter, [the Zhou state] moved

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<sup>85</sup> Ma Ruichen, 1989, p.861.

to the Cheng area, and the [Shang] King gave the lord of the West the power to conquer the barbarian states. [...]. In the thirty-sixth year, during the first month of the spring, after the feudal lords assembled to the Zhou state, the Zhou alliance army attacked the Kun barbarians. The lord of the West ordered his crown prince Fa to construct Hao (the Bright Hall). In the Thirty-seventh year, the Zhou state finished Pi-yong.

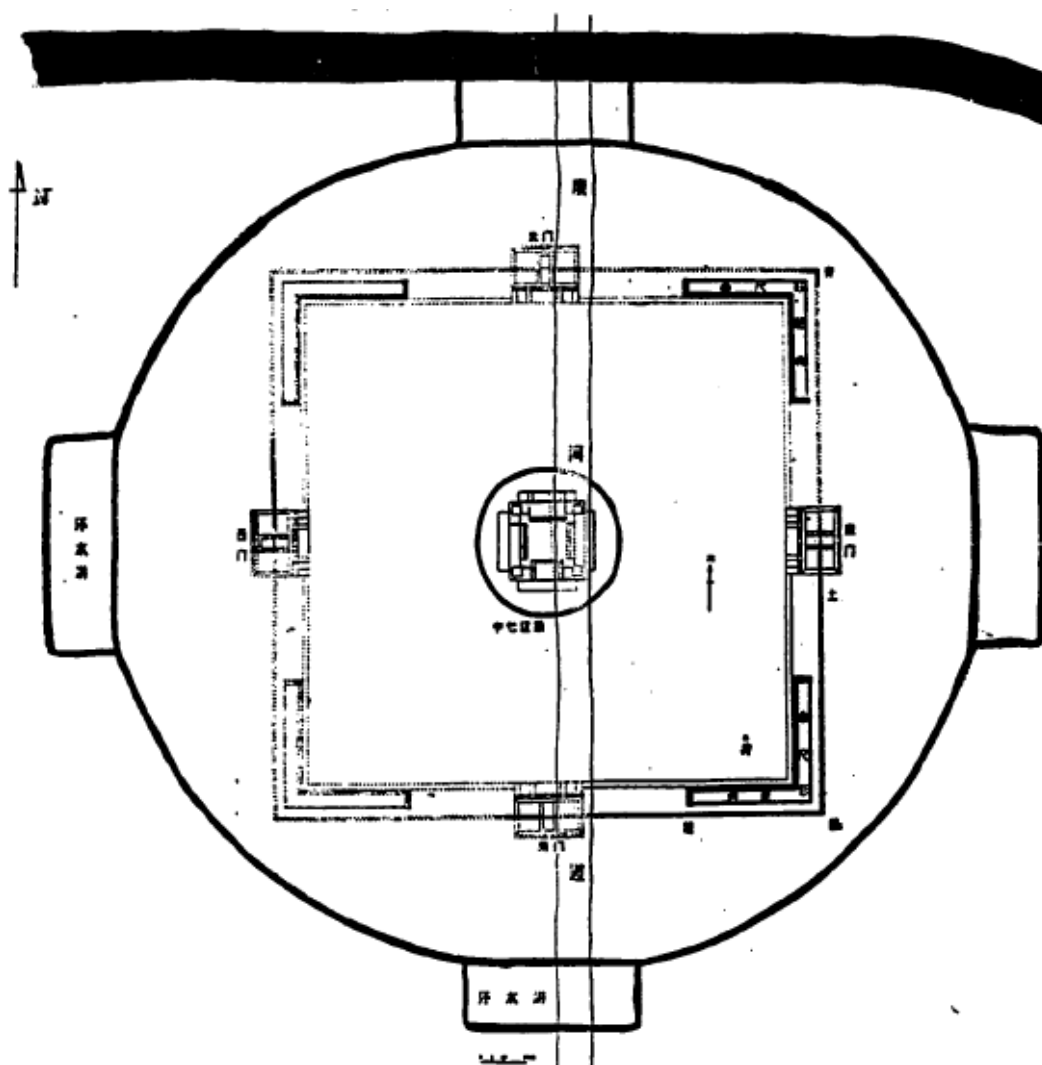
26. As we have seen, the Bright Hall-four quadrangle was a religiously and politically significant site that symbolized the center of the cosmos. In this text, the construction of the Pi-yong symbolizes the rise of new power. Having conquered several barbarian states, King Wen of Zhou is proclaimed to have received the Mandate of Heaven. His symbolic action is to construct a new Bright Hall and the Pi-yong. The text should be read in the context of the power struggle between the Shang and Zhou clans at the end of the late Shang dynasty, during which the Zhou gradually gained the ascendancy, culminating in a transfer of power in 1045 B.C.E.<sup>86</sup> The alliance described in this text represented a decisive moment for the rise of Zhou dynasty. In that same year, the Zhou state began construction of a new Bright Hall, Hao 蒿; in the next year the Ring-shaped-lake named Pi-yong was finished. The significance is obvious. The Zhou state was symbolically declaring its independence from the old Shang regime, and establishing itself as the new center of the world.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The precise date of the Zhou conquest of Shang dynasty is extremely complex and controversial. For we need to tackle the incoherence of the vastly diverse materials. Here I adopt Shaughnessy's date of 1045 B.C.E. see Shaughnessy, 1991, pp.217-236.

<sup>87</sup> In the Major Odes of the book of Poetry (SJ), a poem entitled *Renowned Was King Wen* hails this event: "The Feng River flowed to the East, in the course made for it by [Great] Yu where the King's assemblage of the four quadrates was held. A model was our great king.....To the [Bright Hall] Hao, to the [Ring-shaped pool] Pi-yong, from west, from east, from south, from north; there were none that did not surrender. The Oracle bone cracking he consulted, our king, before the building of the [Bright Hall] Hao; the tortoise directed it; King Wu perfected it.

27. According to the record, when King Wen has built the new city, Feng, he immediately holds an assemblage of the four quadrates to pronounce the birth of a new order. The event is dated by the ZSJN in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of last king Xin of Shang. For his enthronement, King Wen's diviners consult a tortoise shell in order to determine the location for the Bright Hall and Pi-yong. Again, we see the centrality of religious and political symbolism in ancient China.<sup>88</sup> The regulations of the King in the Records of Rite ( Liji Wangzhi 禮記王制) provide clues showing how the Pi-yong functioned in the ancient Chinese religious world. According to these records, the king would offer up a portion of his plunder in the academy (Pi-yong) before and after his warfare. This was a ritual in military campaigns. The location of the royal academy is located near the ring-shaped pond.<sup>89</sup> According to the regulations of king in the Records of Rite, the academy or the grand academy (Daxue 大學) was



<sup>88</sup> Fig.2.4. An archaeological plan of the early Han Bright Hall. The extended area shows the ring-shaped pool called Pi-yong. (Tang Jinyu, KGXB 1959.2.)

<sup>89</sup> The regulations of the King said "When the son of Heaven appointed teachers, thereafter, he proceeded to plan his palace of learning. The primary school of learning (Xiao-xue) was located on the left-hand side of the south of the Duke's palace. The academy of advanced learning (Daxue) was in the suburb zone. For the son of Heaven, his Daxue called Pi-yong and for the feudal lords, theirs called Pangong."



named as the Pi-yong for the King. Indeed, it is a complex of buildings located near the pond. According to the record, when the king prepared to go forth for a battle, he offered *lei* sacrifice to the High God and *yi* sacrifice to the altars of the earth. The king also reported his plan to his ancestors and offered *ma* sacrifice to the god of war. He “received his mandate from the ancestors and got the omen of victory from his Xue.” When he returned from battle, the Records of Rite continue: “he imprisoned those taken captive in the expedition, and in gratitude delivered offerings in the academy, where he reported how he interrogated the captives and cut off the ears of the slain.”<sup>90</sup>

28. The construction of a Pi-yong, as a part of the complex of the Bright Hall, then, held significant political and religious meaning. It symbolized the birth of a new power, a place for the king to commune with and learn from the spirits of ancestors.<sup>91</sup> It served as the focal point for sacrificial rituals. It was also the site of rituals associated with military training such as fishing, hunting, archery, liquor offerings, cleansing, and so on.<sup>92</sup> In short, it was a military training school surrounded by a ring-shaped pool, and the young warriors received their various trainings in the location.<sup>93</sup>

29. In conclusion, every part of the Bright Hall religious world: its layout, shape, pavement, measurement, window, door, column, wall painting and roof tile symbolized spatial and temporal dimensions of this ancient religious universe. The transmitted text in the Han dynasty shows that the shaman king practiced ritual followed by the monthly ordinance. The king proceeds through the twelve sections of the Bright Hall (symbols of the twelve branches of the Earth) like an arm of a clock and performs various religious rituals in accordance to the cycle of a year. The progression of sacred time was marked through music, dance and various patterns of ritual.

## **2.2. Religious Reality Expressed Through Music and Ritual in the Bright Hall complex.**

30. Ancient Chinese religion stressed the interaction of the shamanistic powers of the king, a host of ancestral spirits, natural deities and the High God. It constituted a symbolic and comprehensive worldview that functioned as a powerful vehicle for social and political imagination. Indeed, there were no distinctions between these two realms. Religion provided a significant reason for the existence of the ancient community. The ancient Chinese religion believed that both human beings and spirits participated in the world. Shamans (wu 巫) were that special group of elites who held

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<sup>90</sup> Sun Xidan, 1990, Liji-Jijie, p.333.

<sup>91</sup> Liu Yu, 1989, pp.495-522. Zhang Zhenglang, 1989, pp.551-552. Guo Moruo, 1930/1954, “The Rhymed Reading of the Inscriptions of the “Dafeng yui” Yinzhou-Qingtongqi-Mingwen-Yanjiu, pp.17-32.

<sup>92</sup> We can find these records in the Book of Poetry Xiaoya Yuzao; the inscription of the “Mai-zun; the inscription of Tian Wang gui; Bo Tangfu ding.

<sup>93</sup> Yang Kuan, A History of western Zhou dynasty 西周史. pp.667-676

the leading role in the Bright Hall religious world. They took responsibility in interacting with all they encountered there. The shamanistic nature of ancient Chinese religion has been recognized in the scholarship of the early twentieth century. The Chinese term *wu* 巫 is usually translated as “shaman,” for the role it described is comparable to that of Siberian and Tunguz shamans.<sup>94</sup> J.J. M. de Groot in his six volume masterpiece *The Religious System of China* (1892-1910) mentioned that shamanism (“wu-ism” in de Groot’s term) shaped ancient Chinese religious reality.<sup>95</sup>

31. de Groot’s classification of ancient Chinese religion as “animism” is debatable, but his identification of the priesthood in this religious world with the *wu* 巫 has become a contemporary scholarly consensus. Today many scholars agree that shamanism played a central part in the ancient Chinese religious-political reality.<sup>96</sup> As C.K.Chang notes, shamans played a crucial role in every court, and the king himself presided as head shaman.<sup>97</sup> In my study, I will explore shamanistic experience in relation to music, rituals and the cult of ancient worship in the symbolic world of the Bright Hall in which, I argue; the ancient Chinese religious consciousness manifested its martial nature.<sup>98</sup>

32. Following Eliade, many scholars stress that the role of shaman basically is that of a religious expert specializing in the technique of ecstasy.<sup>99</sup> However, S.M. Shirokogoroff in his pioneering study of Siberian shamanism underscores that shamans can manipulate spirits by which these shamans can effect spirit possession.<sup>100</sup> Based on Shirokogoroff’s study, I.M. Lewis concludes “a shaman is an inspired prophet and

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<sup>94</sup> L.C.Hopkins, “The Shaman or Chinese Wu: His Inspired Dancing and Versatile Character”; Arthur Waley, *the Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China*; K.C.Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*.

<sup>95</sup> In the beginning of Part V, entitled “The Priesthood of Animism”, de Groot stated: “From very early times, or even since the night of time in which China’s Animistic Religion was born, this religion may have had a priesthood, that is to say, persons of both sexes who wielded, with respect to the world of spirits, capacities and powers which were not possessed by the rest of men. A study of ancient books leads us to the conclusion that these priests, either in the main or exclusively, must have been the *wu* 巫 whom we have mentioned in this work many times. See. J.J.M.de Groot, *The Religious System of China* Leiden: Brill, 1892-1910, vol.6, part 5. 1,p.1187.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. K.C.Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual* ch.3-5; Jordan Paper, *The Spirit are Drunk*, ch.4; Chow Tse-tung, *Gu wu-yi yu liu shi kao: Zhong-guo lang-man wen-xue tan-yuan* Taipei: Linking Books, 1986; Lin Fu-shih, *Han-dai de wu-zhe* Taipei: Linking Books, 1988.

<sup>97</sup> K.C.Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual* p.45.

<sup>98</sup> To begin to understand the ancient Chinese shamanistic worldview, we should begin with a definition of shamanism. People agree that this is a religious phenomenon that can be found in Siberia and Central Asia. As Mircea Eliade says: “The word comes to us through Russian, from the Tungusic *saman*... throughout the immense comprising Central and North Asia, the magico-religious life of society centers on the shaman ... through this whole region in which the ecstatic experience is considered the religious experience par excellence, the shaman, and he alone, is the great master of ecstasy... the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld.” See. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, pp.4-5.

<sup>99</sup> E.g. R.Gilber, “How to Recognize a Shaman among Other Religious Specialists?” in Mihaly Hoppal, ed., *Shamanism in Eurasia*, pp.21-27. See also A.Hultkrantz, “Shamanism and Soul Ideology,” p.32; Anna-Leena Siikala, *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman*.p.18

<sup>100</sup> S.M.Shirokogoroff, *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1935, p.269.

healer, a charismatic religious figure, with the power to control the spirits, usually by incarnating them. Eliade's monistic definition attempts to establish a paradigm for the understanding of shamanism and its related constituents. Many anthropologists have preferred his Siberian model, however, his approach implies that other forms of shamanism were considered as more or less hybridized, decadent or impure, combined with non-shamanistic forms of folk religions. The purity of shamanism was contaminated by contact with one or another of the major world religions. In contrast to Eliade's monistic definition, some anthropologists incline to agree with Lewis's notion. They argue that "a shaman is a person of either sex who has mastered spirits and who can at will introduce them into his own body."<sup>101</sup>

33. My approach to Chinese shamanism in the Bright Hall religious world is different from Eliade's emphasis on spontaneous experience. I would not deny the shamans in ancient China would reach ecstatic experience by music, dance and wine. I argue, however, that the characteristic task of this elite group was, as Lewis stresses, to encounter the sacred power by bureaucratic manipulation. David Keightley has recognized this characteristic of Chinese shamanism. He reminds us that behind the dramatic experience of the Bright Hall world, ancient Chinese shamans were bureaucratic experts and lovers of the administration and patterns. These shamans were not a kind of naturalist merely imitating the natural phenomena but they were stylists, able to display a "psychical distance" between religious performance and reality. The obvious evidence was shown by lack of any visual information about the images of the king, or the appearance of the ancestors in ancient Chinese religion. All religious objects, e.g. vessels, were stylistic. Their capacity to confront the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the ancestral spirits depended on their administrative and bureaucratic gifts. This shamanic experience was rooted in their commitment to the concept of generationalism and contractual control of religious meaning through ancestor worship.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> I.M.Lewis, "What is a Shaman?" in Mihaly Hoppal, ed., *Shamanism in Eurasia*, p.9.

<sup>102</sup> David N. Keightley, *The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture*. pp.222-223.

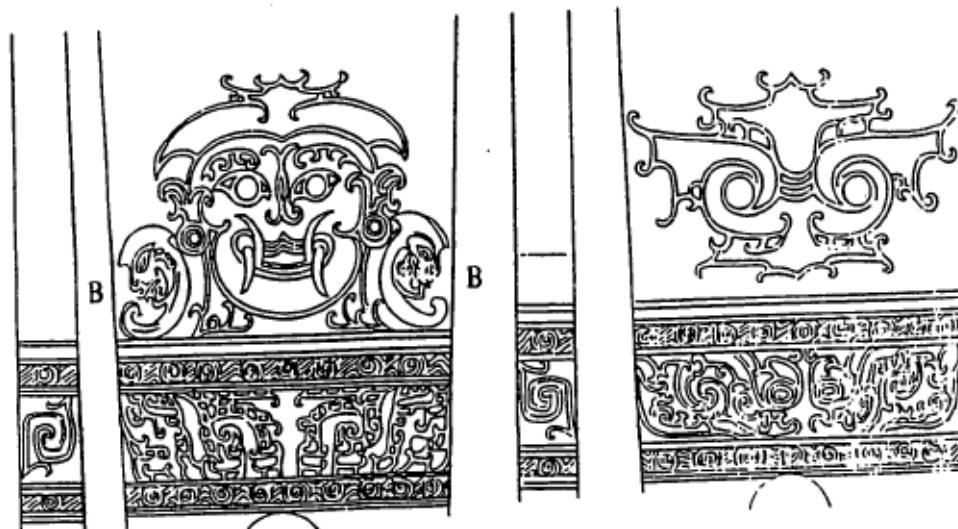


Figure.2.2.1. Line drawing of the decorations of a jade vessel plaque in the collection of the Palace Museum (Taipei). (Teng Shu-p'ing, 1986)

34. In the Bright Hall religious world, the ruling clan was formed by a group of shaman elites who cultivated their religious practices in guiding the direction of a community against the alien world. They are usually named as wu 巫 or xi 覡 or wu-xi 巫覡.<sup>103</sup> Wu-xi 巫覡 would be a group of male and female elites who possessed abundant knowledge and possessed the skill to reach higher level of concentration through music, dance and wine. They were acutely insightful and single-minded to perform their roles. They had the capability to examine and compare different things, to consult the divine oracles, to run the ritual details, to judge the conflicts of the community, to protect the community from the alien forces. They were probably custodians of the community's sole tradition of knowledge. Their right to conduct religious ceremonies and rituals indicated that they belonged to the ruling clan. The Records of Rite writes that the visible part of a ceremony in the temple is rites and music, while the corresponding invisible part is the presence of the spirits of the ancestors.(Yueji). Wang Chung (26-99 A.D), a philosopher of the first century A.D. exclaimed that music was an inseparable part of ritual and the musicians were shamans (巫扣玄絃). Some later Daoist scriptures still maintain that beating drums is to assemble the spirits (kougu jishen 叩鼓集神) or the performance of the music in the

<sup>103</sup> As a forth-century B.C. text recalled: "anciently, men (min 民) and spirits (shen 神) did not intermingle. At that time there were certain persons who were so perspicacious, single-minded, and reverential that their understanding enabled them to make meaningful collation of what lies above and below, and their insight to illumine what is distant and profound. Therefore the spirits would descend into them. The possessors of such powers were, if men, called hsi 覡 (xi) (shamans), and if women, wu 巫 (shamanesses). It is they who supervised the positions of the spirits at the ceremonies, sacrificed to them, and otherwise handled religious matters. The spirits sent down blessings on the people, and accepted from them their offerings. See, Guo yue, punctuated edition Shanghai: Shang-hai gu-ji chu-ban-she. 1978, chuan 18, p.559; English translation is followed by Derk Bodde, "Myths of Ancient China," in idem, *Essays on Chinese Civilization*, edited and introduced by Charles Le Blanc and Dorothy Borei Princeton: Princeton University, 1981, pp.66-67.

temple is not only to admonish the congregation but also move the spirits.

### 2.2.1. The Ancient Music in the Bright Hall Religious World

35. Many pieces of yue 樂(music, song and dance) were mentioned in the Zhou texts. It has been said that after the conquest of the Shang clan, the second ruler of the Zhou, the King Martial, or his brother, the Duke of Zhou, composed the martial dance (武舞).<sup>104</sup> This martial dance consists of six sections, performed by a group of warriors holding weapons. The practice of martial dance in the Bright Hall could be traced back to the Neolithic era. After the decline of the ancient Chinese religious world (774 B.C.E), Confucians in the late Zhou period have mourned the collapse of the ritual system and the impairment of temple music. The mourning indirectly reflected the reality that music and ritual constituted two major features of the ancient Chinese religion. In the ancient Bright Hall world, music (yue 樂) did not only refer to musical instruments, but also referred to dance and song. For the ruling elites, the musical instruments, song and dance were exclusively used for religious rituals as well as political and military ceremonies.

36. According to Kin-Woon Tong, the ancient Chinese musical world was composed of various beating instruments,<sup>105</sup> wind instruments,<sup>106</sup> stringed instruments,<sup>107</sup> and other wooden instruments<sup>108</sup>. Von Falkenhausen writes that bells served primarily in the ancestral temple, and belonged to a part of an orchestra that made music in accompaniment to ritual dances and singing.<sup>109</sup> Since music instruments are not a main focus of my study, I focus on the religious nature of this musical performance and argue that musicians in the Bright Hall complex were shaman musicians, led by the shaman king. Scholars point out that our knowledge of ancient music is rarely complete and we primarily reconstruct musical activities by oracle bone inscriptions, archaeological excavation, and the transmitted texts. Therefore, our research is still tentative and waiting for the progress of further discoveries and interpretations.

37. As far as we can determine from the transmitted texts, musicians (Ling 伶) served as court officials in the ancient world. A text mentions that their opinions and personalities had an influence on the kings.<sup>110</sup> Some musicians were blind and many of them were women.<sup>111</sup> Archaeological excavations found that the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

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<sup>104</sup> The Records of Music 樂記. Bin Mou Gu 賈牟賓

<sup>105</sup> the Qing, drums 鼓, bells 鐘,

<sup>106</sup> the Chinese ocarina (Xun 埙), vertical flue (Xia, Di, Chi), double pipe (Guan 管), the mouth organ (Sheng 笙, Yu 竽),

<sup>107</sup> the zither (Qin 琴 and Se 瑟)

<sup>108</sup> the Zhu 柷 and the Yu 盂 which stuck to mark the beginning and ending of a piece of ensemble music

<sup>109</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, p.25.

<sup>110</sup> Zuo Zhuan, 15<sup>th</sup> year of the Duke Xiang

<sup>111</sup> Zuo Zhuan, 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Duke Cheng

tomb of the Marquis Zeng Yi contained twenty-one young women, believed by archaeologists to be the musicians who played instruments for the ruler buried in the same tomb.<sup>112</sup> Evidence discovered in a large Shang tomb unearthed at Wu Guan Cun 武官屯 near Xiao Tun 小屯 shows twenty four female musicians were buried with musical instruments and miniature ge-halberds.<sup>113</sup> In the OBI, the graph “performer” is in an image of a dancing person, its derived meaning in the *Dao De Jing* means “ten thousand”, but scholars now can tell the original meaning of the graph was dancer, musician or performer.<sup>114</sup> The ancient king was musician and dancer. Kin-woon Tong writes that many OBI show that the king performed on bells to worship ancestors. Some evidence indicates that the king performed the rain dance; they agree that the ruling clan held a monopoly on music and dance, because it was believed that musicians and dancers were able to communicate with spirits.<sup>115</sup>

38. In the OBI, the dancer graph *wan* (萬) can be either used as a verb or a noun. The function of dancers was almost exclusively for ritual use. For example, the diviner asked “should we perform (*wan*) to ancestor Father Jia?” (OBI 129, Jing 4055). In most cases, the graph symbolizes a performer. E.g. should performers (*wan*) do the rain dance in at the Yu-field and will there be rain? (OBI 130, Ning 1.115). OBI shows that the performers were also playing instruments. For example the diviner asked “should the performers play the pole drum?” (OBI 132, Jing 4352) There are some evidences showing that the ancient kings danced personally. One OBI mentions that the king danced with bell for an ancestral spirit. Ancient rulers regarded the dancing and music as having a religious purpose. It did nothing to degrade their dignity. The first ruler of the Shang dynasty, the king of Tang, who danced for rain during a serious drought, is a famous example.<sup>116</sup>

39. The performers received ritual training at school. As a piece of bone mentioned the sacrifice took place at the grand academy (*da xue* 大學), another name for the king’s Ring-shaped pool (*Pi-yong* 辟雍).<sup>117</sup> The transmitted texts also write that there were schools to train dancer and musicians in the ancient Chinese world.<sup>118</sup> Historians believe that one major function of the *Pi-yong*, the Ring-shaped pool, was for training young shaman musicians and dancers. In certain cases, the elected shamans were sacrificed and buried with a dead king. This indicates a belief that they belonged

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<sup>112</sup> Wen Wu 文物 1979.7:14.

<sup>113</sup> KGXB 考古學報 1951, 5:1-61.

<sup>114</sup> Qu Wan-li 屈萬里, 1961; Kin-woon Tong, *Shang Musical Instruments*, Part 3. p.86.

<sup>115</sup> A famous case recorded in the transmitted text mentions that during a severe drought, the first king of Shang, King Tang danced personally to beg for rain. Mo Zi, “Jian Ai” Lothar von Falkenhausen. *Suspended Music: Chime Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China*. pp.25-32.

<sup>116</sup> Sarah Allen, “Drought, Human Sacrifice and the Mandate of Heaven in a Lost Text from the “Shang shu”*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. University of London. Vol. 47. No.3. 1984. pp.523-539. See also *Mo Zi*, “Jian Ai”

<sup>117</sup> OBI 133a, Tun Nan 60.

<sup>118</sup> *The Rite of Zhou* (Zhou Li) Chapter Musician

to a communal group and would even share the dead world together.<sup>119</sup> At school, the young performers were asked to practice music and dance, According to Kin-woon Tong, the shaman dancers played various dances in different ritual contexts: e.g. to welcome ancestral spirits by dancing (*bin* 賓), the rain dance (*wu* 舞), and the feather dance (*mei* 美). They also danced with flute and ge-halberd in the military ceremony (*zhi* 戣) and the exorcism dance (*qu* 驅 and *nuo* 儺).<sup>120</sup>



Figure 2.2.2 Drum decorations showing some dancers with feathers on heads. A cow tied to a long pole for sacrifice. (Ca. Fifth century B.C.E. at Guang Nan, Yunnan Province, Wenwu 1974.1:53). The detail shows a warrior in the dancing team with a Ge-halberd on the right hand. (Wenwu 1974.1:54)

40. The *bin*-dance was performed by drums, ocarinas and *hu*-music. Wine and human sacrifices were offered. The rain dance was offered to the High God, sometimes it was offered to natural deities such as rivers and mountains. When it was performed in the Bright Hall, many instruments were used. For other spirits, only song and dance was used. The feather dance means the performer danced with decorative feathers on the head. The dance might be used for exorcism or military actions. The *zhi* 戣 dance showed it was a dance for military purposes. The musical instruments used were vertical flute (音) and ge-halberd (戈). In ancient China, people believed that evil spirits lurked in buildings and by new graves. It was necessary to perform exorcisms several times a year. Exorcism dances were very influential; they are still practiced by

<sup>119</sup> The Record of the Zhou Rites writes: “(The senior warriors/teachers) are responsible for the administration of the school and teach the young beginners to dance: ribbon-dance, feather-dances, yak-tail-dance, martial dance, and gesture-dance. To train them match with music and ritual…… On occasions, let them practice the bells and drums…… In spring the young boys should go to the school… and practice group-dance. In fall, examine their accomplishment, and let them practice singing. (The senior warriors/teachers) should supervise the dancers and beat those who are lazy.” (周禮 春官 樂師) The school day started on the fourth day of the ten-day week (the Ding day), the Records of the Rite continue: “In the first month of Spring,… order the music officials to enter the school to practice dances. .. In the second month of Spring, ... on the first Ding day, order the music officials to practice dances ... On the second Ding day, again order the music officials to enter the school to practice music. See. The Records of the Rite, Chapter “Yue Ling” translated by Kin-woon Tong quoted in Shang Musical Instrument, Part 3. p.91.

<sup>120</sup> Kin-woon Tong, Shang Musical Instruments, Part 3. pp.94-109

Daoist priest nowadays. In this dance, drums, dancings, and weapons were used.

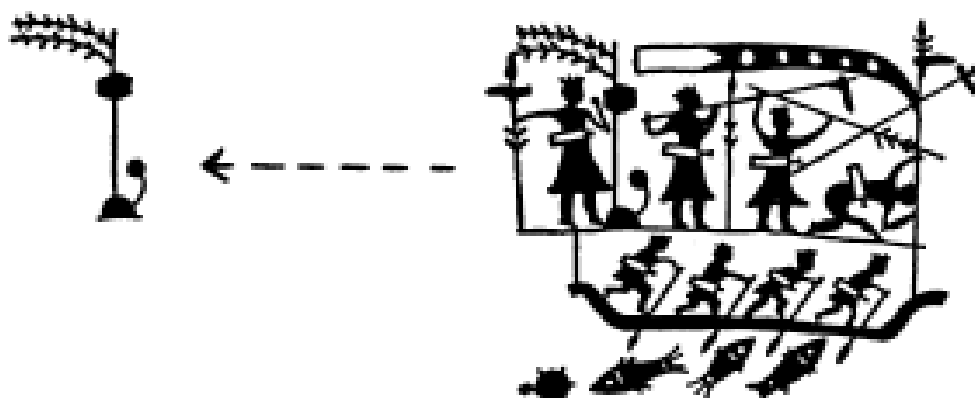


Figure 2.2.3. Part of a picture on a Zhou bronze vessel shows a pole drum and a bell used on a warship. Ca. fifth century B.C.E. (Wenwu 文物 1979.3: 77)

41. In ancient times, the mask and the bearskin symbolized the furious battles between the Yellow emperor, whose clan name was “the Bear”, and the monstrous tribe, Chi-you (尤). A dancing representing this conflict emphasized the use of drums. As Zhang Jun-fang 張君房, a Daoist priest, explained in 10 century A.D., the drums represent something bright and powerful, the power of the drum can control evil spirits like the snake which hides in dark and dirty corner.<sup>121</sup> The grand performance in the Bright Hall complex was always accompanied by four sounds such as metal, stone, stringed instruments and bamboo.<sup>122</sup> As a stanza in the Book of Poetry describes:

They strike the bells solemnly,  
They play their se and *qin* zithers,  
The reed-organs and the musical stones blend their sounds;  
Accompanied by them they perform the Ya and Nan [dances],  
They wield their flutes without error.<sup>123</sup>

42. What was the purpose for shamanistic music and dance? A passage from the Zhou’s transmitted text *Records of Rites* might explain this. The music, the text states, represents the accomplishment of warfare such as to erect the shields and stand like a row of hills. It represents the eruption and marching of the army and the governance of the dukes. Music represents “martial” activities and symbolizes the conquest of rivals and the destruction of enemies. It celebrates returning from the battle, domination of various states, division of the lands and rejoining and acknowledging the supremacy of

<sup>121</sup> Zhang, Jun-fang. 張君房 Yu Ji Qi Qian 雲笈七籤

<sup>122</sup> Kenneth J. DeWoskin. *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*. p.52.

<sup>123</sup> Ode 208, the Book of Poetry translated by Bernhard Karlgren



the ruler, the “Son of Heaven”.<sup>124</sup>

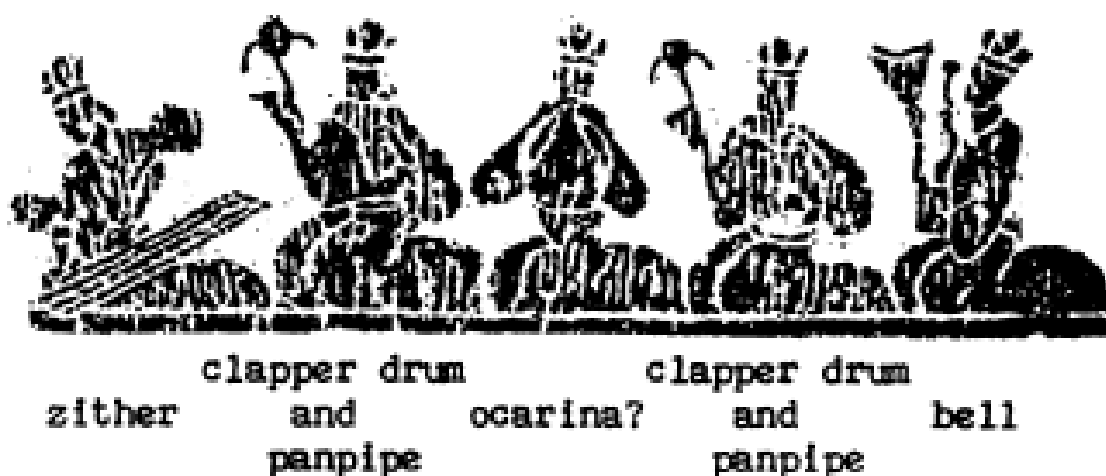


Figure 2.2.4. Rubbing of a tomb picture showing the playing musical instruments in the first or second century A.D. (Wenwu 文物 1973.6)

43. Music is a phenomenon present in all cultures. Music, dance and sacrifice constituted the basic rituals in the Bright Hall complex. In primitive societies, music plays a far more important role than in modern society. Most primitive music serves a particular purpose other than providing entertainment or aesthetic enjoyment. Bruno Nettl maintains that the most important and most frequent use of music is assisting in religious rituals. Songs are interspersed throughout tribal collective memory and carry religious significance. In a great many primitive religious rites, music is also accompanied by dancing. Many shamanistic dancings and songs are basically religious in function.<sup>125</sup> In the Bright Hall religious world, music usually establishes connection between the sacred center and other religious services. For shamanic musician; music represents a sacred language other than ordinary speech from communication with the Divine powers. And this communication might be used at gathering before or after warfare or hunting. As scholars point out that for tribal experience, music is functional for war. War songs can be found in connection with religion in many cultures.

### 2.2.2. Rituals as Mediation of the Divine Power

44. The rites were an essential part of the Bright Hall religious world. They played an indispensable role in structuring of the time, ordering community life in a temporal sequence. Indeed, most ancient terms in China for measurements of time were derived

<sup>124</sup> Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics*. P.168-169.

<sup>125</sup> Bruno Nettl, *Music in Primitive Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1956. pp.6-7.

from the ritual names. By structuring the time, ritual reorganizes human experience and provides a learning experience through which.<sup>126</sup> Since 1940, a Chinese scholar, Dong Zhuobin 董作賓 has extensively studied temporal order in the sacrificial rites. He concluded that the most important rituals for ancestor worship were the “five-ritual cycle.” Ancestors received five kinds of sacrifices following a complicated order.<sup>127</sup> Recently, another Chinese scholar, Chang Yuzhi, has modified earlier studies and linked up the concept of time with ancient rituals. According to Chang, the temporal structure in the ancient Chinese religious world was expressed in the order of rituals. Rituals should be read as actualizing the conception of sacred time. Here I summarize her ideas as follows:<sup>128</sup>

- a. The ancient Chinese divided a day into six or eight units. The mid-point of the day was called *zhong ri* 中日. It was the time at which the most important religious rituals or public services (*da shi* 大事), were undertaken.
- b. The ancient Chinese took ten days as a week (*xu* 旬), indicated by ten day-signs (*gan* 干, stems). Indeed, numerous ancestors were grouped and named within ten-day categories. E.g. the founding ancestor *Shang Jia* 上甲 was given *jia*, the first day of the week. The word *jia* 甲 also became a part of his temple name. Not only the deceased kings, but also their deceased affiliates, e.g. his wife, were classified by the ten stems. Each day of a ten-day week, a sacrifice was offered to ancestors whose temple name matched to the stem of that day. Therefore, on the first day food offerings were made to the ancestors with the name *jia* 甲, the second day to those with the name *yi* 乙 and so on. The ten-day week, therefore, formed a system to classify ancestors and was extremely important for sacrifices, succession of kingship and marriage.<sup>129</sup>
- c. Since the ten-day week was named *Xun* 旬, a *Xun* was to repeat a cycle of sacrifices. The king offered the first sacrifice in each circle in the first day of its beginning.
- d. The ten day-stems also combined with the twelve other signs named “branches” (*Zhi* 支) by which a larger cycle of sixty days was formed. This sixty-day calendar was firmly established as the timing framework in ancient Chinese religion. Keightley argued that this calendar was little used by the peasantry. It is a sacred calendar used for ritual purpose and confers the

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<sup>126</sup> “The world is simplified for the individual: the complex world of experience is transformed [through ritual] into an orderly world of symbols. At the same time, there is also a transformation of the individual, who acquires new understanding, or “new cognitive structures,” and a new transformed identity.” See, Erika Bourguignon, *Psychological Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Nature and Cultural Differences*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979. p.243.

<sup>127</sup> Dong, Zuobin, *Yin li pu*, Li Zhuang: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1945.

<sup>128</sup> Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zhouji zhidu*, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan chubanshe. 1987.

<sup>129</sup> Detail study see Keightley, 1991, alternative study of the temple names see also Kwang-chih Chang, 1963a; 1973.

authority of sacred time.<sup>130</sup>

- e. The new moon marked the beginning of the cycle of a month, in which the moon rites were conducted. Eclipses of the moon were viewed as inauspicious omens and sacrificial rituals were offered.
- f. The concept of a year was essentially important for ancestor worship. Dong Zhuobin has recognized the five most important rituals for the ancestors.<sup>131</sup> They were conducted in the cycle of a year. Following this cycle, all thirty-one former kings in the Shang period received five rites in the order of the succession to kingship, accompanied by twenty selected ancestress.

45. In the ancient Chinese religious world, ruling elites carried out the weekly ritual cycle. The ritual symbolized monarchic power in communication with the Divine. In this religious world, the shaman king took the major responsibility for sacrifice to ancestors and he, with the assistance of his male and female shamans, received in return the power of the High God through intercession of ancestors. His decision making, military campaign and hunting exclusively rely on the “mandate of the High God/Heaven.”

46. David N. Keightley observed that in ancient China religious, political and social idioms and institutions were largely undifferentiated.<sup>132</sup> Our understanding of ancient Chinese ancestor worship is enhanced by contemporary anthropological study. For example, Chinese ancestor worship is similar to that of the ancient Maya.<sup>133</sup> In Patricia McNany’s study, ancestral veneration was “living with the ancestors.” Ancient Chinese and Maya shared a similar belief. The key to understanding the Bright Hall rituals is the concept “empowered.” The anthropologist Meyer Fortes who has studied the ancestral veneration in West Africa argued that ancestor worship should be viewed as an extension of the jural authority in the relations of successive generations. From this perspective, the Bright Hall ancestor worship by no means should be classified as a memorial service.<sup>134</sup> Fortes’s study, based on the Tallensi in West Africa

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<sup>130</sup> Keightley, David N., *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China* (ca. 1200-1045 B.C.), Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000.

<sup>131</sup> .They were called yi 翌, ji 祭, zi , xie 絜 and yong 兪 .

<sup>132</sup> Keightley, David N., “The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture,” *History of Religions* 17 (1978): p.212.

<sup>133</sup> As Patricia A. McNany has written: “Communing with deceased progenitors was not a religious experience divorced from political and economic realities...; rather, it was a practice grounded in pragmatism that drew power from the past, legitimized the current state of affairs (including all the inequities in rights and privileges), and charted a course for the future, Ancestors resided at the critical nexus between past and future, and their presence both materially and symbolically lent weight to the claims of their mere mortal descendants.” Patricia A. McNany, *Living With the Ancestors: Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. p.1.

<sup>134</sup> As Fortes explains: “It is not the whole man, but only his jural status as the parent ...vested with authority that is transmuted into ancestorhood. Ancestorhood is fatherhood made immortal... Death palpably removes fathers; but it is not assumed to extinguish fatherhood.” Fatherhood is an everlasting resource of authority. Meyer Fortes, “Pietas in Ancestor Worship,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 91.2. 1962:p.182,184,185.

(Ghana), might well fit for the Bright Hall religious belief. David N. Keightley, has described the religion of the Shang civilization. He states:

Shang religion (or ancient Chinese religion in my term) was inextricably involved in the genesis and legitimacy of the Shang state. It was believed the Ti (Di 帝), the high god, conferred fruitful harvest and divine assistance in battle, that the king's ancestors were about to intercede with Ti, and that the king would communicate with his fore-fathers. Worship of the Shang ancestors, therefore, provided powerful psychological and ideological support for the political dominance of the kings. The king's ability to determine through divination, and influence through prayer and sacrifice, the will of the ancestral spirits legitimized the concentration of political power in his person. All power emanated from the theocrat because he was the channel, "the one man", who could appeal for ancestral blessings, or dissipate the ancestral curse, ... It was the king who made fruitful harvest and victories possible by the sacrifices he offered, the rituals he performed, and the divination's he made. If, as seems likely, the divination's involved some degree of magic making, of spell casting, the king's ability to actually create a good harvest or a victory by divining about it rendered him still more potent politically."<sup>135</sup> (quoted in Chang's *Shang Civilization* p.202. check origin)

47. In Keightley's description, the theocratic characteristic of this ancient religion was highlighted. In his article *The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture*, he argues that ancient Chinese religion constructed its theocratic belief through two important factors: (i) its genius for a logic of bureaucratic control of religious meaning, (ii) a commitment to the notion of generationalism. Borrowing from Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy, Keightley underscores how the concept of bureaucracy worked in this ancient religious system. He writes that Chinese religious practice rested upon the concept of exchange as *do ut des* ("I give, in order that thou shouldst give"). A contractual bargaining took place between the ruling clan and the High powers. The ruling elites believed that correct ritual procedure by correct person would result in favors conferred by the High God. For academic purposes, modern scholars categorize six groups of powers in the Bright Hall world: (1) the High God; (2) Nature powers, e.g. the River or the Mountain, the Sun etc. (3) Former Lords e.g. Wang Hai 王亥; (4) pre-dynastic ancestors; (5) the dynastic ancestors; (6) the dynastic ancestresses, the consorts of those kings from the mainline descendents. These six categories can be simplified in my terms as the twofold belief in the High God and the Mediating Powers. The ruling family knew that in a hierarchy of divine communication, the High God is non-negotiable. He was remote but powerful. But the mediating powers, such as ancestors, were negotiable; the

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<sup>135</sup> *The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture*

close ancestors and ancestresses of the pantheon were especially open to bargaining.

48. In the Bright Hall universe, the High God stood at the top of the spiritual hierarchy, the ancestors played as a group of mediators interceding with the High God. The king at the bottom had a contractual responsibility for sacrificial offerings to ancestors.<sup>136</sup> According to this structure, the religious transactions in this circle were ‘ordered systematically’; which means “the sacrifices ensured the right responses, and the right responses by the spirits led, in turn, to appropriate thank-offerings by the kings.”<sup>137</sup> Food offerings were made to provide the energy and strength to ancestors. The offerings were not done out of filial obligation but ancestral spirits receive powers by offerings. It followed a rigid sacrificial schedule in order to receive the distribution of spiritual powers. Keightley points out that the scheduled food offerings by kings were used to preserve the potency of the ancestral energy. This idea still remains in the Records of Rite (Liji 禮記, Tan gong 檀弓 Chapter) where the Confucian Zi You 子遊 reported that “When a man dies, there arises a feeling of disgust. Its impotency (wu neng 無能) makes us turn away from it.”<sup>138</sup> In the context of ancestral veneration, however, the potency of the dead was restored by proper ritual treatment and in exchange material blessings and psychological empowerment were given to the ruling clan.

49. However, the price to remove the impotency of ancient ancestors would be shocking to modern people. In ancient times, the act of killing was legitimated as sacred performance; Keightley who reconstructed vividly the Bright Hall world describes this terrible scene:

We would today, I think, find the actual experience of Shang ancestor worship rather a shock. The cries of the animal and human victims, the blood streaming down, the body parts, the decapitated heads, the horrible uncertainties and dangers of the environment, the use of magic and spells, the awe and fear with which the ancestors and other Powers were regarded, the intense concern about lucky and unlucky days – all these “realities” should not be forgotten.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Arthur Wolf in his study of religion in modern Taiwan commented on the contractual nature of the bargaining that takes place in today’s Taiwan temple worship which may help us to understand this ancient religious belief. Wolf observed that “when a man appeals to an ancestor he appeals to a kinship relationship involving a certain degree of mutual dependence, but when he appeals to a god he negotiates for his good will just as he would in attempting to secure a favor from a magistrate or policeman. He makes a small sacrifice and promises a larger one if the god will grant his petition. If divination reveals that the god is not inclined to grant the petition, he then promises a more substantial gift, repeating the process until the god finally agree.... The larger gift is not produced until after the desired outcome has been obtained.” Arthur P. Wolf, “Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors,” in Arthur P. Wolf ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*, p.162, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974.

<sup>137</sup> K.C. Chang, *Shang Civilization* p.126.

<sup>138</sup> *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism. Part III. The Li Ki*, 1:177, Translated by James Legg. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, [1885] 1966.

<sup>139</sup> David N. Keightley, “The Making of the Ancestors: Late Shang Religion and Its Legacy” p.in *Religion and Chinese Society Vol. I. Ancient and Medieval China*. Edited by John Lagerwey. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004.

50. The rituals in the Bright Hall world were operational and pragmatic. Sacrifice meant to exchange offerings for higher spiritual and political powers that the ancestors possessed. In exchange for these blessings and powers, the ruling elites sacrificed large numbers of animal and human victims.<sup>140</sup> The relations with the High God and ancestors were exclusively for the ruling elites. The ancestors not only validated the ruler's status. In control of the Bright Hall the ruling clan had access to a political and spiritual monopoly on Divine energy.<sup>141</sup> In order to keep this monarchic control of the powers, the ancient ruling clan developed a ritual system that Keightley named generationalism. This system reflected the "willingness and the necessity to conceive of the world in hierarchies of power based upon the relative age of generations."<sup>142</sup>

51. According to this system the power passed within the same generation from brother to brother, before descending to the next generation. Following this system, the ancestral spirits were offered sacrifices and worshiped in accordance with the sacred calendar, namely "temple names" (Miao Hao 廟號). These temple names were given according to the greater or smaller contributions kings made to the ruling family. Great kings were revered in the great tablet, named with kin terms such as Father (Fu 父), ancestor (Zu 祖) or a descriptive prefix like Big (Da 大). Less important kings were given names like lesser (Xiao 小), or even dropped from the sacrificial schedule entirely. The temple names were arranged in a ten step alphabetical order like A (jia 甲), B (yi 乙), C (bing 丙), D (ding 丁) and so on. This order was named "ten stems" (gan 干). By this "ten stems offering" cult, the ancient shamans were able to link the ancestors' temple names to the name of the day on which rituals were performed. For example, Father Jia 父甲 received food offering on jia-day, Great Yi 大乙 on yi-day, Ancestor Ding 祖丁 on ding-day and Ancestress Geng 妣庚 on geng-day and Mother Xin 母辛 on xin-day. The ritual naming of the ancestors de-emphasized their individual personalities. To become an ancestor, in fact, was to undergo a process of depersonalization. An ancestor had to be renamed, and the name had to be limited to one of the "ten stems" categories allowed by the system. Generally speaking, his name when dead was not a name that he had used while alive.

52. We found that shamans in the Bright Hall relied less on spontaneous experience than Eliade suggested but stressed, the manipulating power of bureaucracy. This gift of administration is reflected in the complexity of the five-ritual cycle. Operation of such a complex system relied on the persistent religious commitment to sustain it well. Maintaining a complex schedule of worship required the ritual

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<sup>140</sup> For example, in Heji 合集 886, a ritual of Exorcism demanded to cleave three cows, pledge thirty dismembered victims and thirty penned sheep. The example just illustrates that in the ancient Chinese religion violence and the sacred not differentiated yet. Indeed, they were united at the center of the belief system.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>142</sup> David N. Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture" *History of Religions* 17 (1978): 211-224.

specialists to pay assiduous attention. Keightley argues that the religious commitment of ancient China is represented by its unfailing interest in gerontocratic power. Filial piety was embodied by the attribution of power and authority to the senior generations. Religious commitment was represented by the love of hierarchal order. The strong emphasis on bureaucratic control of religious meaning represents China's "stay against confusion". This is a religious belief in the validating efficacy of classification, hierarchy, number, and contract.<sup>143</sup> In Levenson's words, this religious commitment "could be taken to symbolize high culture, knowledge for its own sake, and the terminal values of civilization." It explains why "office-holding was clearly superior to any other social role," in Chinese history, why "the bureaucratic end" was indeed "the end of life."<sup>144</sup> It explains why, in the Bright Hall religious world, "the bureaucratic role, with all its kin and ritual elements, has been so passionately cherished."<sup>145</sup>

### 2.2.3. The High God (帝 Di) and the Heaven (天 Tian) Belief

53. Ancient Chinese religious belief was engaged in the birth and legitimation of the state. A shift of political power did not mean the structure and substance of the religious belief changed. For example, the Shang ruling clan believed their clan was protected or, sometimes, punished by the High God (Shang Di 上帝) and the Zhou kings also claimed that they were the heir of the High God also. For the Zhou people, the idea of the High God that the Shang clan conceived was identified with the Heaven they worshipped. Modern scholars argued that the relationship between the Shang and the Zhou was more complicated than we understand. Some scholars differentiate two dynasties as two discontinuous cultures in history. Other scholars argue that their differences are exaggerated. Indeed, these clans shared a lot of common beliefs and practices. During the reign of King Wu Ding (1200-1181 B.C.E.), for example, he sent his army to attack the Zhou frequently, and the Zhou people finally, submitted to the Shang's religion. Zhou people hereafter paid tributes to Shang, worshiped Shang's ancestors and the High God, and intermarried with Shang's ruling class. When the King Wu of Zhou, leading his military coalition, conquered the Shang capital and terminated the Shang's regime, what the Zhou ruling elites did was immediately to sacrifice to the High God of the Shang and hereafter integrated the religious system into their Bright Hall.<sup>146</sup> One of the significant changes made by the Zhou conqueror

<sup>143</sup> David N Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture" *History of Religion*. Vol. 17. No ¾ (Feb.1978) pp.223-224.

<sup>144</sup> Joseph R. Levenson, "The Amateur Ideal in Ming and Early Ch'ing Society: Evidence from Painting," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John K. Fairbank. Chicago, 1957, p.321.

<sup>145</sup> David N Keightley, "The Religious Commitment:" p.224.

<sup>146</sup> Many scholars agree that the Zhou integrated the Shang's concept of Di into its belief of the Heaven. There are abundant textual evidences to support this notion, such as the *Book of Poetry*, the *Classic of Documents*. Chen Mengjia highlights the term Heaven and High God (Tian-Di) to point out its continuity and change vis-à-vis the belief of Di of Shang Chinese. See Chen Mengjia, 1956, pp.580-2. Herrlee Creel counts 68 uses of Di in classical texts dated from the Western Zhou, as compared to 228 counts of

against the last Shang king was that he failed in the earnest reverence to the ancestral spirits and High God; he abandoned the sacrificial tradition, followed the way of debauchery, rejected wise exhortations from elders, and indulged in drinking parties. The victory of the Zhou people, as the mandate of the High God, was the divine punishment to the Shang ruling clan.<sup>147</sup>

54. Modern scholarship observes that the religious practices of the late Shang period were nearly abandoned. The High God worship was presided over in a careless way and reduced to the same level as ancestor worship. Its divination became formalized and careless, and the ruling clan abolished sacrifices to High God and natural powers altogether. They even used the title *di* for the kings.<sup>148</sup> The ‘secularization’ in the period can be detected by a quotation in an oracle inscription where the king said: “Yes, I know it’s the first day of a week tomorrow, but I want to sleep in. You (the diviners) handle the divination to ancestor Jia. I can’t be bothered. Just put my name on the form.”<sup>149</sup> In their identification of the High God and the Heaven worship, the Zhou Chinese demonstrated their conviction that they were the true heirs of the *di*-sacrifice, and so earned trust and submission from the former Shang subjects, they also indicated that they really intended to restore belief in the absolute supremacy of the High God in ancient China.

55. During the past century, studies on the nature of the High God have never come to an agreement. Some scholars define the nature of ancient Chinese religion as “monotheism” (James Legge).<sup>150</sup> Other describes it as “universism” (de Groot),<sup>151</sup> “animism with a fetishist tendency” (Tiele),<sup>152</sup> or “polytheism” (Soothill).<sup>153</sup> In recent scholarship, the centrality of ancestor worship has been emphasized to distinguish the Chinese religiosity from others (B. Schwartz, Ho Ping-ti and David Keightley)<sup>154</sup> Sacrifice to the ancestral spirits is well documented on the OBI. David Keighley pictures the Bright Hall religious life centered on ancestral worship. Schwartz writes

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Tian in the same paragraphs See Creel, 1970, pp.494-5. Hsu Cho-yun believes that for the Zhou, “the mergin of Di and Tian was a logical development that created alliance among the groups” Hsu and Linduff, 1988, p.108.

<sup>147</sup> The accusation of the late Shang kings was frequently recorded in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions and classical texts, including the Book of Poetry, the Classic of Documents, However, Tu Cheng-sheng argues that the Zhou’s condemnation to the Shang was exaggerated and elaborated upon. See Tu Cheng-sheng, *Gudai shehui yu Guojia*, pp.319-322. Yunchen wenhu shiye kufen youxian gongsi, 1992.

<sup>148</sup> Wang Aihe, 2000, p.59. Keightley, 1984, pp.14-18.

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Keightley. 2004, p.43.

<sup>150</sup> James Legge, *The Religions of China*. London, 1880. p.10.

<sup>151</sup> J.J.M.de Groot, *Religion in China* New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912. p.3.

<sup>152</sup> Quoted in James Legge, *The Religion in China*, p.17.

<sup>153</sup> W.E.Soothill, *The Three Religions of China*. London: Oxford University Press, 1929. p.119. It is not difficult to find scholarly agreement on Soothill’s study. However, Fung Yu-lan emphasizes the co-existence of polytheism and monotheism in the Zhou period. See Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, translated by Derk Bodde Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, I, p.24.

<sup>154</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Speculations on the Beginnings of Chinese Thought,” *Early China*, No.2, 1976, p.47; Ho Ping-ti, *The Cradle of the East*. Hong Kong and Chicago: The Chinese University of Hongkong and the University of Chicago, 1975, p.324; David Keightley, “The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture,” p.217.



that the belief of the High God and his powers “provided a basis for legitimization of the King’s power” though he conceded that ancestor worship also formed the base of the ruling power.<sup>155</sup>

56. The reason for this scholarly confusion is understood. For the original meaning of the word *di* is ambiguous; some scholars say the graph *di* signifies a celestial, vegetative, anthropomorphic, or ritual object. Others, based on etymological study, suggested its meaning is “tightly tied”. It indicated a corporate group of spirits, probably the ancestors of the ruling lineage.<sup>156</sup> The most acceptable theory of the origin of *di* is that the concept of High God evolved from the tribal god of the Shang.<sup>157</sup> Ho Ping-Ti summarizes this theory in brief as follows:

The Shang tribe’s legendary male ancestor, whom the odes simply call *T’ien* 天 and *Ti* 帝, was K’u or Ti K’u 帝嚳. The earliest biological ancestress of the Shang tribe was to Chien Ti a black bird, by which she became pregnant and gave birth to the Shang tribe. K’u was therefore at once the tribal god and God on High of the Shang.<sup>158</sup>

57. Ho Ping-Ti and many other scholars based this theory on the *Book of Mountain and Sea* (Shan Hai Jing 山海經). However, other scholars criticize the reliability of the source. Henri Maspero maintains the text Ho Ping-Ti used points to archaic astronomical ideas of ancient China rather than her religious beliefs.<sup>159</sup> Ho Houxian who also disagrees with the theory, maintains the role and function of the High God was abundantly illustrated by the OBI. He writes:

According to the content of abundant bone inscriptions, the Shang people in the time of King Wu Ding believed in a “unified god” who resided in a place, which was high above and dominated the destiny of natural and human affairs. The Shang people believed that in heaven above there existed a supreme deity with personality and will and that the name of the deity was *di* 帝 or *Shang di* 上帝.<sup>160</sup>

58. It is very difficult to say whether the concept of the High God could be recognized as a personal God different from the collection of the ancestral spirits. Many Christian scholars in China tended to believe that this High God is the one

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<sup>155</sup> Schwartz, *Speculations on the Beginnings of Chinese Thought*, p.48.

<sup>156</sup> For the scholarship on *di*, see Herrlee Glessner Creel, *The Birth of China: A Study of the Formative Period of Chinese Civilization* New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1937, pp.182-4; and Robert Eno, “Was There a High God Ti in Shang Religion?,” *Early China* 15 (1990): 18-20. The title Shang Di (Di on High) found in later texts which indicated that the Di resided above.

<sup>157</sup> Chen Meng-chia holds that “*Shang di* of the Shang people was a human ruler, and was not yet endowed with personal characteristics, it is through the evolution of ancestor worship that the legend of *di* was transformed into personal deity. See, Chen Meng-chia, *Zhung-shu 綜述*, p.646.

<sup>158</sup> Ho Pi-ti, *The Cradle of the East*. p.318.

<sup>159</sup> Henri Maspero, *Shu Jing zhung di Shen Hua*, trans by Fung Wan-jun. Beijing: Commerical Press, 1935, p.4.

<sup>160</sup> Hu Houxuan, *Yindai zhi Tianshen Congbai: Jiaguxue yu Shangshi Luncong*. Chengdu: Qilu University Press, 1944

revealed in the Old Testament. However, this assumption is very problematic. The difficulty relates to how we define the concept of the personal deity. If a personal God implies a close relationship between the Shang ruling clan and the High God as the Israelites had with Yahweh, this High God is not personal. As Hu and Chen argue, there were no sacrifices offered to the High God, no prayers were presented to him. The contact of the High God and ruling clan solely relied on the mediation of the ancestral spirits. On the other hand, if the High God as personal means his governance and providence, we see abundant evidences showing the High God to be a personal ruler, governing a host of ancestral and natural spirits. His powers influenced good or bad for every aspect of life of people. The wind, cloud, thunder and rain obeyed his commands. He was in charge of yearly harvest or famine, manifested in the Bright Hall complex and royal palace, in control of sending enemies to punish the ruling clan and had the power to bless or curse kings' behaviors.<sup>161</sup>

59. Though modern scholarship cannot resolve the nature of the High God, this issue, did not really bother the ancient Chinese minds. For the mediation of the ancestral spirits filled in the distance between the High God and kings. The *do ut des* contract with ancestors that Keightley describes was a more basic concern for the Bright Hall belief. Scholars agree that the High God of the Bright Hall apparently was not bribed by the *do ut des* contracts, but this conclusion can lead in two directions: either the High God was too remote to be reached or the High God was too impersonal to be real.<sup>162</sup> The problem remains that if the High God is really remote and abstract, how could ruling clans believe the High God exerted great influence in various dimensions of the community? How do we explain the fact that the Zhou peoples worship the High God as a personal deity in the *Book of Poetry* and the *Classics of Documents*?

61. Belief in the High God in the transmitted texts are far from abstract or impersonal. This High God as a personal deity was not only familiar to the Shang kings, but also to the Zhou ruling clan who made their worship of Heaven equivalent to the High God cult. However, was the ancient Bright Hall worship really able to distinguish the nature of the High God from the collective spirits of ancestor? Archeological evidences lead to much confusion among scholars. However, I take those confusions as a positive sign to understand the development of religious consciousness in Chinese history. For the ambiguity of High God worship in the ancient Chinese religious world exactly illustrates the struggle of differentiating the transcendent consciousness within the setting of the exclusiveness of the Bright Hall

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<sup>161</sup> Ho Houxuan, *Yin Shang Shi*. p.

<sup>162</sup> The former position holds by Ho Houxuan, and the latter holds by Chang Kwang-chih. As Chang writes "Shang-ti was not given a specific location, he was not to be sacrificed to, and his relations with the early, legendary ancestors of the Tzu clan were not clearly defined .... I would suggest that the concept of Shang-ti was an abstraction, whereas the ancestor deities represented substance." Chang, *Early Chinese Civilization*, p.190.

worship. The ambiguity of High God worship in the Shang ruling clan needed further differentiation by historical development. This differentiation was initiated when the paradigm shift occurred from the High God worship to the High God-Heaven worship. The change of kingship in the Bright Hall accelerated the progress of the human quest for Transcendence.

62. This discussion on the High God and Heaven worship is tentative because of the limited materials. But taking it as a part of our theological concern about the search for transcendent order in the ancient Chinese religious world, the discussion suggests the possibility that the High God and Heaven worship represents a dim 'revelation' of the divine light in the Bright Hall religious world. This divine knowledge might start from the tribal belief of the Shang, became lost and confused by the ritual practices and regain its supremacy in the High God-Heaven worship of the Zhou's religious world. However, the supreme position of the High God-Heaven worship does not mean that the Zhou's ruling clan clearly realized the nature of Heaven. In fact, the Zhou's belief in the Sacred, same as the Shang ruling clan, remained problematic. They understood the concept of the sacred in the form of violence and held the practice of warfare as a form of religious belief. The search the transcendent order has a long way to go.

### 2.3. The Martial Essence of the Bright Hall Political Religious World.

63. In this section my argument is that the meaning of *de* (Power) and its related martial ideal was the basic belief of the Bright Hall political religion. The conception of *de* (mana like power) in the Bright Hall was very different from the interpretations of early Daoism. It was understood as a sacred manifestation in relation to violence. The notion of the *de* in ancient Chinese religion was aggressive, violent and militant. The belief was that sacred power was sustained by the violent mechanism of the Bright Hall. Military campaigns and human sacrifice were believed by the ruling clan to be religious services to the ancestral spirits. This idea of *de* underwent a long taming process, and the early Daoism and classical Confucianism made great contributions to the transformation of this belief. The spiritualization of the idea of power was only achieved through a painstaking process of psychic, intellectual, moral and religious conversion.

#### 2.3.1. Human Victim and the Bright Hall Religious World

64. A poem records that in the year 621 B.C during the Eastern Zhou period, the Duke Mu of Qin 秦 died. By his time human sacrifice in the ancestral temple had been basically abandoned generally, but in the state of Qin 秦 on this special occasion, it was revived again. The poem in the Book of Poetry, presumably written shortly afterwards, tells us that human sacrifice was treated as one of the most sacred acts in

the religious world of ancient China. Violence and the sacred were not differentiated in significant degree. This poem the *Oriole* truly expressed people's critical attitude to human sacrifice during the time. The poem goes as follows:

“Kio” sings the oriole as it lights on the thorn-bush. Who went with Duke Mu to the grave? Yan-xi of the clan Zi-ju. Now this Yan-xi was the pick of all our men; but as he drew near the tomb-hole, his limbs shook with dread. That blue one, Heaven, takes all our good men. Could we but ransom him? There are a hundred would give their lives.

“Kio” sings the oriole as it lights on the mulberry-tree. Who went with Duke Mu to the grave? Zhong-hang of the clan Zi-ju. Now this Zhong-hang was the sturdiest of all our men; but as he drew near the tomb-hole, his limbs shook with dread. That blue one, Heaven, takes all our good men. Could we but ransom him, there are a hundred would give their lives.

“Kio” sings the oriole as it lights on the brambles. Who went with Duke Mu to the grave? Qian-hu of the clan Zi-ju. Now this Qian-hu was the strongest of all our men. But as he drew near the tomb-hole, his limbs shook with dread. That blue one, Heaven, takes all our good men. Could we but ransom him, there are a hundred would give their lives.

65. Through the transmitted texts, we can see that the Bright Hall religious belief was mixed with sacred violence. Mark Edward Lewis reminds us that in the ancient Chinese religious world, religious sacrifice, warfare and hunting were inseparable practices for the ruling clan. As a quotation from the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 shows:

The great services of the state are sacrifice and warfare. In the sacrifices one takes the meat from the sacrifices in the ancestral temple, and in warfare [before setting out on campaign] one receives the meat from the sacrifices at the *she* altar. These are the great ceremonies of the spirits.<sup>163</sup>

66. The text discusses the later development of relationship between warfare and sacrifice, but it also reveals the ancient religious belief and practices in the Bright Hall of the Shang and the Early Zhou periods. In this passage, the author explicitly mentions that sacrifice and warfare were the major forms of public and religious service and they were linked through sharing the ritual consumption of meat in the Bright Hall. This consumption, in turn, presupposed the killing of sacrificial victims including animals or human captives in the temples. In another passage, the duke of Lu not only acknowledged that warfare and sacrifices were the major services of the state;

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<sup>163</sup> Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhu, annotated by Yang Bojun (Beijing: Zhong-hua, 1981), Lord Chang year 13, p.861. Hereafter my translation adopts from Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*. Albany, New York: SUNY. 1990.

he argued further that they were the sole activities proper to the rulers. As the Zuo zhuan mentioned:

When the duke was about to go to Tang to view the fishing, Zang He Bo remonstrated, "The prince does not take any animal that is not of use in the practice of the great services [of state] or whose substance cannot be used to make implements [for sacrifice or battle]...The lord does not shoot any bird or beast whose flesh is not offered in the sacrificial pots or whose hide, teeth, bones, horns, fur or feathers are not used on the sacrificial vessels. The creatures which fill the mountains, forest, streams and marshes and the providing of tools are the business of underlings and the lowly officers; the lord has nothing to do with them."<sup>164</sup>

67. In this passage, the role of ruler is defined exclusively through the performance of violence in the ancestral cult, in military campaigns and in the hunt. All other business is dismissed merely as the work of "underlings." Walter Burkert in his study of sacrifice in ancient Greece has mentioned that "for the ancient world, hunting, sacrifice, and war were symbolically interchangeable."<sup>165</sup> This observation can also apply to ancient Chinese civilization. In the Bright Hall religious world, hunting, warfare and sacrifice were closely tied which was clearly demonstrated in the lengthy poem "Closed Temple" in which the glories of the ruling house of Lu were praised and the poet took the wealth and regularity of its sacrifices and the size and conquests of its army to be interrelated. When the ruler gave his account of the proper process for building a palace complex, building the ancestral temple (the Bright hall) was the first priority, and then the stables and military storehouses were built. And finally his royal dwelling house was built.

68. The symbolism of the Bright Hall religious world demonstrates this centrality of sacrifice and warfare. As we discussed above, The shaman musicians played the yue (music, song and dance) mainly by drums, banner, ax and ge-herds. All these musical instruments had a martial nature. While drums in battle revealed the power of the king to his soldiers and enemies, commanders used the banner to give signals; while ax and ge-herds demonstrated the ruler's punishing force. Furthermore, the bronze vessels symbolized political authority that clearly demanded on the waging of war and the performance of sacrifice. Therefore we can say that the ancient Chinese religion highlights martial ideals (wu 武).

69. K.C. Chang has already pointed out that in order to understand how a city of ancient China was built; one should not only describe the floor plan of the sacred site but also the beliefs regarding kingship and how they evolved. This expresses the insight that the order of the human social world reflects the order of a human

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<sup>164</sup> Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhu, Lord Yin year 5, pp.41-44.

<sup>165</sup> Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial ritual and Myth*, trans. Peter Bing. Berkeley: University of California, 1983, p.47. See also Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*. Berkeley: University of California, 1979), pp.84-94.

worldview. The king in ancient Chinese civilizations was one who presided over a hierarchy of religion, economy, politics and military. According to K.C. Chang, in the characteristic Shang state a city for the ruling clan was an institution rather than a permanent site.<sup>166</sup>

70. Since the sacred city is movable, it is necessary to investigate the religious and cosmological beliefs beyond the establishment of a city and how the city related to others. In our discussion of the complex of the Bright Hall and the ideology of four quadrates, I have indicated that this worldview intermingled with the undifferentiated complex of sacred violence. Human sacrifice demonstrated this ambiguity and terror in the Bright Hall religious world. In this sacred world, there were five cardinal directions: north, south, east, west and the “central kingdom”. The central city exerted religious and political control over other ‘colonies’ through an effective administrative system. Beyond the central kingdom lay hostile powers and aliens in all four quadrates waiting for conquest, with which the ruling clan constantly engaged in various degrees of warfare and hunting. The captives of the wars became human sacrifices to ancestral spirits in exchange for magical empowerment and material blessings to the ruling clan. David Knightley through his study of the Shang’s manufacture of artifacts suggests that Chinese ancient civilization (the Shang religion) shows a strong tendency to a “Spartan” model, compared to its neighboring clans. Mark Edward Lewis directly calls this a culture formed by the warrior aristocracy.<sup>167</sup>

71. The hunt and warfare in ancient Chinese had an equivalence in both language and law. The characters “martial” (wu 武), or “military” (rong 戎) were applied to hunting. The word “hunting” (lie 獵) also described an army’s attack, and the same word “capture” (huo 獲) refers to captures in battle or in the hunt. For the ruling clan, warfare and hunting meant the same thing. Hunting was a form of warfare. It was one of the “great services” (dashi 大事) for the public interest. Mark Edward Lewis points out that the hunting and warfare supplied necessary ‘food’ for the ancestral cult. He pinpoints three roles in this hunting service to the ancestors: 1) it provided “animals” for the temple sacrifices; 2) hunts were a part of ceremony in several major sacrifices; 3) it was a form of religious service to please the ancestors.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, as with collective hunts, military campaigns were a religious practice serving the ancestors and the High God. Though we lack detailed descriptions from the OBI, the transmitted texts show us that the idea remained until a very late period. A story set in the state of Chu 楚 in 555 B.C. made this point explicitly:

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<sup>166</sup> As he said, “The locus of a city *per se* was accorded no permanent relevance as being worthy of political and ceremonial eminence. Once the capital was moved away, the old site was often transformed, in cruelly short years, into farming fields.” See. K.C. Chang, “Urbanism and the King in ancient China” in *World Archaeology*, vol.6, No1, Political Systems (Jun., 1974), p.6.

<sup>167</sup> Mark E. Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*. p.17-27.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

[Zheng] was going to turn against Jin and raise the Chu army to drive them off, but Zi Kang [prime minister of Chu] did not agree. The king of Chu heard of this and sent his messenger Yang to tell Zi Kang “The capital populace says that I am master of the state’s altars but will not send out the army, and when I die they will not bury me with proper ritual. It has been five years since I ascended to the throne, and the army has not yet gone out. The people say that I am enjoying my leisure and have forgotten the inherited achievements of the previous rulers May the minister please plan some way to deal with this.”<sup>169</sup>

72. Taking a military campaign as a religious service was made explicit when the king claimed to be “master of the altars”. Sending his army out was to defend the “inherited achievements” of the ancestors. This was not a particular belief of the king of Chu, but a common belief among states descending from the ancient time.<sup>170</sup> I have already underscored that every military campaign began at the grand academy (Pi-yong 辟雍), the ruler’s military school, in where the ruler and his officials practice a series of sacrifices and divinization to assure the success of the campaign. While on the march, the army made “travel sacrifice” (lue 旅) to expel evil spirits and ward off harm from the local gods whose domains (mountains, rivers etc..) they had trespassed. Divination and the battle prayer expressed the need to invoke the protection of the ancestral spirits and other guardian divinities of the state. The most significant religious ceremony in the preparations for battle was the “solemn declaration” (shi 誓). The oath invoked the spirits as witnesses to bind a warrior to act in a certain manner. The commander counts a detailed list of the crimes of his enemies, declares himself to be ignorant and without particular merit but following the command of the High God/Heaven, warns the soldiers how to conduct themselves in the battle, and specifies conditions of punishments if soldiers do not obey his commands and, in some cases, the rewards they will receive after the victory.

73. This classical solemn declaration exists in the classics of document (Shang shu 尚書), the most ancient government document in ancient China, and we can trace its influence to a late period in history.<sup>171</sup> After the battle, to dispose of the soldiers’ corpses was the immediate task. Given the priority of ancestor worship, ensuring the proper burial of the fellow corpses was taken as serious matter. The corpses of the enemy were collected into a large tomb mound, like the Greek *tropaion*. The site became a monument to show glory and honor to the descendants.<sup>172</sup> In returning to the Bright Hall, the grand sacrifice marked the end of the campaign in which captives, the heads or left ears of those slain, and any spoils taken in the battle were presented at the

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<sup>169</sup> Zuo Zhuan zhu, Lord Xiang year 18, p.1041.

<sup>170</sup> See also Zuo Zhuan zhu, Lord Cheng year 16, p.882; p.1236.

<sup>171</sup> See Zuo zhuan zhu, Lord Ai year 2, pp.1613-15.

<sup>172</sup> Zuo zhuan zhu, Lord Xuan year 12, p.744.

ruler's military school. Thus the hunt or the military campaign as the "great service" was presented to the ancestors by offering the spoils of battle, and above all human victims.

74. While the sacred and violence have not yet been differentiated in ancient China, human sacrifice was a regular institution closely related to military activities in the Bright Hall. Excavations in the Shang capital, Anyang 安陽 have unearthed the mass execution of human victims. The practice of human sacrifice was also continued in the Zhou dynasty. The *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 has preserved a tradition which mentions that after King Wu of Zhou defeated the Shang army, he sacrificed the last Shang king and his two wives, offered the heads of all the slain enemy soldiers at the *she* 社 altars and burnt them as an offering at his new Bright Hall.<sup>173</sup> This tradition shows the fact of ancient Chinese religious practice was very different from the Confucian humanistic ideal of antiquity.

75. In the Bright Hall religious world, the shaman king, his ruling family and his high officials possessed wealth and resources through frequent warfare: above-ground houses and temples, rituals and yue (music, song and dancing), bronze vessels for sacrifice, valuable metals, lavish feasts and banquets, and military schools. This religious-political world was operated by a large group of officials, including shamans, oracle-takers, musicians, historian-scribes and ministers of state affairs, the best artists and artisans of the ancient times, warriors who engaged in battle to capture aliens to serve as sacrificial victims for in the maintenance of law and order within. We should bear in mind that during the ancient time, there was no clear division of labor in government, but many roles might overlap in one person. Therefore, a shaman could be an musician as well (as Yang Xiong mentions "shamans play dark strings" 巫扣玄絃) or he might serve as a scribe at the same time ("shamans and scribes come from same origin" 巫史同源).<sup>174</sup> In his detailed study of the relationship between soldier and scholar in ancient China, H.G.Creel has also pointed out that the Shang was established by conquest and maintained through military force. The Zhou founders, who have been idealized by the Confucian literati during the period of Warring states, also ruled on a military basis. The 'scholars' in ancient time were mainly in charge of divination and battle.<sup>175</sup> Ho Houxuan adds that the 'teachers' of the Pi-yong (the military school of the Bright Hall complex) were senior warriors training young soldiers.<sup>176</sup> Modern scholars agree that the close linkage of warfare and sacrifice in ancient Chinese religion suggests that the violence in the period was highly ritualized.

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<sup>173</sup> *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書, annotated by Kong Chao 孔晁, in *Han Wei congshu*, vol.1. Taipei: Xinxing, 1977. See Chap.2, pp.2a-3a; 9a-11b.

<sup>174</sup> Lao Gan 勞幹, 'Shi zi de jiegou ji shiguan de yuan shi zhiwu', 史字的結構及史官的原始職務 *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 14.3 (1957), 1-4.

<sup>175</sup> Herrlee Glessner Creel, "Soldier and Scholar in Ancient China" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.8.No.3 (Sep., 1935), pp.340-341.

<sup>176</sup> Ho, Houxuan 胡厚宣. *Yin Shang Shi*. Shang Hai: Shanghai Renming Chuban She. pp



Numerous oracle bone inscriptions (OBI) indicate that sacrifice was regarded as a form of bloodshed and killing analogous to warfare. The central act of the Bright Hall religious world was the slaughter and consumption of one or more human victims and animals regularly. The cereal offerings were made with grain from a designated field sanctified through the dismemberment and burial of several animals, and even the ice used in the offerings had to be consecrated with the blood of a sacrifice.<sup>177</sup> Chinese linguistic scholars argue that the character “sacrifice” (ji 祭) derived from another character meaning “to kill”. It was also virtually homophonous with the character “killing” (sha 殺).<sup>178</sup>

76. According to the study of Ho Houxuan 胡厚宣, modern excavations have unearthed 3,684 human victims around the late Shang capital, Anyang 安陽. If we calculate the amount recorded in the unearthed OBIs, the number of human victims could reach to 14,197 people and this is still a limited estimation. As to the identity of the human victims, the OBI mentions numerous times the Jiang 羌, the nomadic people who lived in the northwestern part of the central plain. They may have been major hunted objects for the Bright Hall sacrifice.<sup>179</sup> C.K. Chang writes further that in evacuation of the Shang capital *Anyang*, hundreds of pit-house were found amidst and around the loci of this late Shang capital. The best indications of the social distance between the ruling clan and the pit-house dwellers are the remains of human sacrifice associated with the construction of the royal palace-temples and the royal graves, e.g. the burial of tomb no.1001 in which at least 164 men accompanied the deceased lord to the other world.<sup>180</sup> For a construction of a single house in the middle segment at Xiao-tun 小屯, more than 600 human victims were killed and buried in its southern front.<sup>181</sup> Also there are numerous records of slaughtering human victims found in the OBI. For example, in a rain dance, a divine taker asked: “should a man be burnt at the stake? Will rain follow?” Or another diviner in a different divination asked “should Princess Hau be purified in front of her deceased father? Should a slave be sacrificed?” Or “should the purification take place before ancestor Xin? Should a man of Jiang be sacrificed?” The anthropologist Herbert Plutschow explains that human sacrifices in the ancient Chinese religion were war prisoners and/or, hunted slaves.<sup>182</sup> But it was not always these victims. According to Sarah Allen’s study, human sacrifice might include a sacred person, the shaman or shamaness who was able to explore the realm

<sup>177</sup> Guo yu, chap.1, pp.18-20; Zuo zhuan zhu, Lord Huan year 14, p.140; Lord Zhao year 4, pp.1248-49.

<sup>178</sup> In the *Shang shu zhenyi* 尚書正義, annotated by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, the word “killing” combined together with the “altar sacrifice” as *sha yin* (殺禋) or “blood sacrifice” (*xue ji* 血祭). Therefore we can draw a conclusion that the central act of sacrifice in the ancient Chinese religion was to slaughter animal and human victims.

<sup>179</sup> Ho, Houxuan. Yin Shang Shi. pp.145-171.

<sup>180</sup> Liang and Kao, 1959.

<sup>181</sup> Shih 1970a; 1972.

<sup>182</sup> I adopt samples from Herbert Plutschow’s research “Archaic Chinese Sacrificial Practices in the Light of Generative Anthropology” in *Anthropoetics* I, no.2 (December 1995).

of spirits.<sup>183</sup> For example, an OBI asked: “Should the woman Tsai (shamaness) be burned at the stake? Will this bring rain?” or “On the first day of the ten-days week (Jia zi 甲子), the diviner asked should shaman(s) sacrifice to the High God?”<sup>184</sup>

77. Human sacrifice in this religious world represented a mana-like consciousness that we need to discuss further. We should ask what mechanism produced and maintained this sacred violence in the Bright Hall world. While various kinds of sacrifice were offered to ancestral spirits, these sacrifices were offered within ten-day week at the ancestor’s name for ancestors were believed to be the mediators with the High God or Heaven, who controlled the weather and the welfare (e.g. harmony and peace) of the kingdom for which the ruling class was responsible. How do we explain the religious reality of this ancient world? What religious mechanism dominated the ceaseless slaughters over hundreds of years? To answer these question is not easy and we draw on different perspectives and interdisciplinary collaboration. Here my argument derives from Eric Voegelin’s famous thesis by saying that the order of history reflects the order of the human soul. If the Shang and Zhou religion took violence as the guaranty of human existence, we should go beyond the phenomena and see what explicit belief dominated in their conscious world. My argument is that the concepts of the martial power (wude 武德) to a large extent dominated the beliefs of the Bright Hall religious world. The worship of sacred violence was only partly tamed and civilized by the new waves of spiritual and intellectual movements in the period of the Warring states.

### 2.3.2. The Concept of power (de 德) and Sacred Violence

78. Clifford Geertz has defined the meaning of religion as a culturally determined system of symbols. According to this definition, ancient Chinese religion (including the Shang and early Zhou periods) was centered around the symbols of martial, power and sacrifice. Peter Boodberg has stated that perhaps the term power (de 德) is the most significant word, next to way (dao 道), in ancient Chinese macro- and micro-cosmology.<sup>185</sup> The standard translation of the word *de* by western scholars is ‘virtue’ which points to an inherent quality and moral excellence. Arthur Waley is the first modern scholar to challenge this conventional rendering and insist on interpreting it as “power”. Peter Boodberg points out that many modern scholars believe that the term originated in the Bright Hall world and it referred to a kind of mana-like potency

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<sup>183</sup> Sarah Allen. “Drought, Human Sacrifice and the Mandate of Heaven in a Lost Text from the :Shang shu” in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol. 47, No. 3 (1984), p.529.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Herbert Plutschow’s “Archaic Chinese Sacrificial Practices in the Light of Generative Anthropology”. I slightly modify the translation.

<sup>185</sup> Peter A. Boodberg, “The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts” in Philosophy East and West, Vol.2, No.4 (Jan., 1953). p.323.

inherent in substances, things, and human beings.<sup>186</sup> To understand the original meaning of *de*, we cannot rely on the traditional interpretation, for this traditional interpretation represented the enormous moral and spiritual efforts of Daoism and Confucianism to tame the martial ideal of ancient Chinese religion. To understand the place of the *de* in the Bright Hall world, we have to go back to the archeological remains of oracle bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, aided by modern anthropological study, by which we discover that the concept *de* has similar features to the Oceanic notion of *mana*.

79. David Nivison says the term *de* “seems to be a subtle transformation of (the) feeling of obligation we naturally have toward someone who does us a favor. The feeling gets projected on the giver, who is thus regarded as virtuous and is felt to have a psychic attractive power.”<sup>187</sup> This definition tends to define the term as a kind of psychological activity. Peter A. Boodberg goes beyond Nivison’s ‘psychological’ interpretation and reconstructs the meaning the word more vigorously by a graphophonetic analysis. He writes that “*de*” is composed of a semantic determinative indicative of movement and a phonetic-etymonic element consisting of the graphs for “heart” and “upright,” “direct”. The later word, though graphically distinct, is a remote cognate of “correct” *zheng* 正. In its ancient pronunciation this word, now read “upright” *zhi* 直, was a homophone of *de* and is undoubtedly the etymon from which *de* was originally derived.”<sup>188</sup>

80. Donald Munro based on Peter A. Boodberg’s insight, gives a more comprehensive study of the word. He sees the word basically constituted by four components: path, heart, unknown element, and eye. According to Munro, the first element, the “path,” in the word *de* emerged from the sense “to go” and extended the meaning of “to act”. This meaning still retains in its verb form as ‘to obtain’ (*de* 得). The second element of the word is “heart”. Donald Munro suggests the element refers to the “attitude” toward the antecedent Heavenly standard. My argument is that it should be understood within a ritual context and referred to a sacrificial object offered to the ancestral spirits and High God. The third unknown element plus the fourth element ‘eye’ combined together to form the proto-*de* in the Shang period, Donald Munro interprets it as “to look,” which in the OBI refers to a ruler going to inspect his hunting area.<sup>189</sup> It also implies a special religious meaning, combining the act of consulting a divine being and making sacrifice to one.

81. Donald Munro’s study of the word supports my observation. If the possible meaning of proto-*de* means ‘to look’ and can be translated as ‘consulting a divine

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> David Nivison, “Royal “virtue” in Shang oracle inscriptions”, *Early China*, 4, 1978-1979, p.54.

<sup>188</sup> Boodberg, “The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts” p.324.

<sup>189</sup> Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China*. pp.185-189.

being and making offerings to one,’<sup>190</sup> the religious services in the Bright Hall as warfare and sacrifice become clear. Munro argues further that in the Shang people’s religious world, the graph proto-*de* indicates ‘consultation with a deity’ or ‘focusing attention on a divine being’. Religious belief gradually changed when the concept of selfhood in the early Zhou emerged. The semantic domain shows that reverence on the deity gradually shifted to a definite attitude or viewpoint on Heavenly decreed norms. So in the Bright Hall of the Shang dynasty, the contact point of the ruling clan and its ancestors was ensured by regular sacrifices and divination. The manifestation of the sacred power was the center. In the Western Zhou period, the sacred contact was understood as contract between ruling class and the High God by a correct regulation of the social norms.<sup>191</sup> Munro is correctly to highlight the common religious nature of both Shang and Zhou, but it is anachronistic to stress the point of ‘social norms’ in the early Zhou dynasty. Vassili Kryukov argues that to view the heart as any ‘attitude toward something’ was a sort of secondary reaction.<sup>192</sup> He criticizes the insufficiency of modern scholarship on the concept of *de*, arguing that it takes the word out of context by exclusively graphical and lexical analysis. He argues that “*de* is not an isolated term but a cultural symbol inseparable from other similar symbols.”<sup>193</sup> He adds that the graph is not an estranged concept but in connection with a whole system of categories such as ‘foundation’ (yuan 元), ‘integrity’(chun 屯), ‘ability to inspire sacred awe’ (weiyi 威儀).

82. To study the semantic field of the word *de*, we should go back to its semantic field in the OBI. In the OBI, there are two groups of meaning for the word proto-*de*. The first group of proto-*de* belongs to the same semantic domain as the synonymic verbs ‘to campaign against’ *fa* 伐 and ‘to punish’ *zheng* 征. Kryukov quotes a few examples as follows:

Crack-making on zhen-chen, Zheng divined: “Should I punish (fa 伐) the tribe of Qiang?” (S330.1)

Crack-making on yi-mao, Que divined: “Should the king campaign (zheng 征) against the tribe of Tu?” (S 71.1)

Crack-making on wu-chen, Que divined: “Should the king make the “*de*” action against the tribe of Tu?” (S 320.1)

Crack-making on gen-shen, Que divined: “This spring should the king make the ‘*de*’ action and punish (fa 伐) the tribe of Tu?” (S 320.2)

The second group of proto-*de* belongs to the same semantic domain as the word

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p.188.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>192</sup> Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (O the Anthropology of “*de*”) in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, vol.58.No 2 (1995), p.325.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

sacrifice, deciphered by the graph you(侑)

Crack-making on ji-you: “On ding-si should libation be made to the ancestor Zu-ding and two bulls be sacrificed (you 侑) to the ancestor Zu-xin and two bulls to the ancestor Fu-ji?” (S506.3)

Divined: “Should be the ‘*de*’ action and sacrifice (you 侑) be made to the ancestor Zu-yi?” (S 320.3)

Crack-making on jia-wu, the king divined: “Should I make sacrifice (you 侑) and make the ‘*de*’ action for the ancestor Da-yi?” (S 320.3)

83. In the OBI, we observe that the subject who performs the action relates the verbs such as “to campaign against” fa 伐, “to punish” zhen 征, “to sacrifice” you 侑. And the proto-*de* 德 occupies constantly the same position in the sentence. The verbs also can exchange their positions in double compounds (e.g. de you 德侑 or you de 侑德) that indicate their grammatical equivalence and, as a result, the lexical homogeneity. Several scholars interpreted the proto-*de* in the OBI as ‘upright’ or ‘vertical’ (zhi 直)<sup>194</sup> which conforms to the interpretation in the Han dictionary *Suo wen* 说文 in which Xue Cheng 許慎 defined the character as ‘to rise up’(sheng 昇). But neither ‘upright’ nor ‘to rise up’ can explain adequately the semantic meaning of the proto-*de* in relation ‘to campaign,’ ‘to punish’ and ‘to sacrifice’. Donald Munro argues that the word should imply an action of ‘to observe’ or ‘to inspect’ which in consequence derives the meaning of ‘inspection tour’.<sup>195</sup> To follow up our observation that warfare, hunting and sacrifice were inseparable in the Bright Hall religious services, we can say that the proto-*de* can be interpreted as a kind of military action that took place in the hunting area and demonstrated sacred violence through killings in sacrifice.

84. In the bronze inscriptions the term *de* was frequently used. A special formula denoted complete actualization of *de* as ‘obtained integrity is spotless.’<sup>196</sup> The semantic domain of *de* is also related to the term ‘ability to inspire sacred awe’ (weiyi 威儀). The synonym of the word almighty (wei 威) in the early Zhou religion was the homonymous word fear (wei 畏) The word implies double meanings which closes to Eliade’s concept of *hierophany and kratophany* in which the sacred power reveals itself as paradox, in glorious but fearful form. The ‘ability to inspire sacred awe’ (weiyi 威儀) refers to a certain sacred ‘image’ for the king’s power, the visible image is a sign which can create horror to people and his enemies. This ability to inspire sacred awe is exactly expressed in the *Book of Poetry* where a prominent dignitary of the king and

<sup>194</sup> . See Nivision, “Royal “Virtue”,’ p.55; compare Boodberg’s interpretation of *de* as ‘inner arrectivity’: Boodberg, ‘semasiology’ p.33.

<sup>195</sup> Donald Munro, *The concept of Man*, p.187.

<sup>196</sup> For example, it was used on the Guo-shu zhong, Liang Qi zhong, Shi Wang ding, and Shi Qiang pan. Quoted in Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication.” p. 319.

his army is glorified, for whom ‘ancient teachings were [his] model, and *wieyi* was [his] power.’<sup>197</sup>

85. The idea of *wieyi* also implies an archaic ambivalence towards the highest deity and ancestral spirits as both gracious and terrifying, powers that invoke feelings of attraction and horror. The graph awesome (*wei* 威) was not use in the OBI, but its synonym fear (*wei* 畏) was. According to Kryukov, the idea of *wieyi* indicates sacred power pouring from a superior source.<sup>198</sup> The highest deity in the Bright Hall religious world was known as the High God (*Shangdi* 上帝) or Heaven (*Tian* 天). The conquest of the Zhou people over the Shang clan fused faith in the High God and the Heaven together. In Kryukov’s terms “Heaven did not oust High God, but rather subordinated and transformed *Shangdi* by its universally ethicized nature.”<sup>199</sup>

86. The context of the *de* was the ritualism of ancient Chinese religion. The spiritual ideal of the ruling family was described by some key words in the ritual context. The ruling family was requested to offer heart to the ancestral spirits (*xin* 心), to make purification in the ritual (*shu* 淑), to comprehend the power of the Divine (*zhi de* 哲德), to show their fear, trembling and humility in the presence of the spirits (*xiao* 孝). Then the will of the ancestral spirits and High God will be manifested (*xian* 顯) and heirs of the Divine will be enlightened (*ming* 明). In this religious belief the *de* was expressed in a ritual formula “to enlighten the heart and comprehend the power, to possess primordality” (*mingxin zhide binyuan* 明心哲德秉元).

87. Blood and human sacrifice manifest the excessive nature of the Bright Hall political and religious worldview. The symbolism of *de* obviously occupied the central point of the religious system. Kryukov argues that *de* can be interpreted as an act of sacred communication involving sacred violence (‘punishment’) which is directed at an outward scapegoat(s)—sacrificial victims or the object of hunting.<sup>200</sup> Offerings to the ancestral spirits and the High God were accomplished through these external objects. The communicative act of *de* no doubt bore the ambivalent nature inherent in sacred violence. Ritualized homicide was structuralized within the concept of magical power, which was used to legitimate the authority of the ruling clan to kill the enemy (victim), and was the power increased by killing rituals. The manifestation of the *wieyi*, which was a correlative part of the concept of *de* revealed the paradoxical characteristics of power as authority and as violence.

88. The concept of *de* is not only related to the sacred violence. Some positive meanings still remain inside the idea. According to Kryukov, in the Shang period, the graph *de* was closely related to a graph *yuan* 元. This word in its original meaning meant ‘first’, or ‘initial’. In the early Zhou period the graph was symbolically used to

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<sup>197</sup> J.Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. IV, pt.2, p.542.

<sup>198</sup> Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication” p.320.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* p.326.

mean something ‘foundational’ or ‘primordial’. It was used as an adjective to describe the nature of the *de* as primordial.<sup>201</sup> Another word closely related to the *de* was the character *chun* 屯. In ancient China, the word meant primordial integrity. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 emphasizes semantic links between *chun* 屯 and *hun-dun* 混沌 (primordial chaos) which becomes a key resource for early Daoist theological reflection.<sup>202</sup>

89. In sum, OBIs and epigraphical sources demonstrate the semantic connection among the conception of *de* and number of categories—a close semantic circle of *de* (to offer heart, to campaign against, to punish, to sacrifice, to inspire sacred awe and fear etc.) This semantic field by no means intends to say the concept of *de* is a sum of the corresponding meanings. My argument is *de* is a central symbol in ancient Chinese religion. This nature of this centrality is defined by semantic ‘borders’ the notions we mention above. Its symbolic ‘liminality’ might explain why any modern translations of *de* (power, charisma, grace, gift, virtue, morality) are unable to exhaust its meanings, for the concept binds all other ritual concepts. It is better defined it as a ritual category par excellence, irreducible, a mechanism of human desire for sacralization.

### 2.3.3. An Anthropological Understanding of the Ideal of the Martial *de*

90. Warfare and mass human sacrifice in relationship to the idea of *de* needs further theoretical explanation. My hypothesis is that the concept of the martial (*wu* 武) dominated the interpretation of the notion of the *mana*-like *de* in the ancient Bright Hall religious world. And this belief even extended to the period of Warring states. The concept of *de*, is similar to the anthropological notion of *mana*. It is mainly manifested in martial forms in connection to religious services as warfare, hunting and human sacrifices. Modern anthropological discussion takes the Maori and oceanic concept of *mana* as one of the most significant discoveries of primitive societies. In Roger Keesing’s terms, it becomes an important element of the meta-language of anthropology.<sup>203</sup> Here I simply highlight a few aspects of the phenomena and translate my previous semantic study of the *de* into this anthropological category. It is worthy to note a number of particular coincidences and parallels between *de* and *mana*: a ‘mana-inspired’ warrior aroused a dual feeling of fear and respect. The sacred power manifested itself outwardly in extraordinary events and personal appearances. It was a gift from Heaven, indispensable to any great chief, and demanded careful preservation inasmuch as it could be lost. In case of such loss, various ritual transgressions need to be practiced in order to recover the *mana* of the guilty person. The power was increased by means of prayers and human sacrifices. The chief appealed to the spirits: ‘This one belongs to you, and to me, please, give *mana*.’<sup>204</sup> The power of a chief was

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<sup>201</sup> The I Ching, or Book of Changes, translated by Richard Wilhelm, p.4. 1983: p.16, 398.

<sup>202</sup> Qiu Xigui, ‘Shi Qiang pan ming jieshi’, Wenwu, 1978, p.30.

<sup>203</sup> R.Keesing, ‘Rethinking mana’, Journal of Anthropological Research, 40/1, 1984, 137-56.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

manifested in his authority and ruling force and the 'tribal mana' was represented by the possession of a certain territory and treasuries. The ultimate source of mana belonged to gods and ancestors and the privilege of chiefs to communicate with the mighty gods and to evoke mana from this communication built the foundation of his authority.

91. This concept of mana also was tightly connected to the practice of taboo. The 'mana-taboo' formula signified a double nature of the sacred – its heirophanic and katrophanic aspects. Nowadays, anthropologists believe that the concept of mana belongs to an extremely archaic consciousness in the religious world. It is a concrete metaphor of the sacred, rather than any abstract conception.<sup>205</sup> It operates on the realm of human unconscious experience rather than the realm of theory. Mana expresses a vague awareness of the fullness of human existence, its verbal form used to indicate anything supernatural, wonderful or terrifying. Mana, in Eliade's terms, is a human experience of *coincidentia oppositorum*, it shows the very moment of differentiation between sacred and profane. Roger Keesing makes a significant contribution for our understanding of the consciousness beyond this anthropological term through his vigorous philological and anthropological reconstruction of the concept. First, he argued that mana was used in Oceanic languages as a stative verb with the meaning 'to be effective'. Person or actions in this usage were considered 'to be mana'. The stative verb had a derivative verbal noun that described not substance but state of quality ('effectiveness', or 'mana-ness'). Moreover, this verbal noun, in turn, could be used figuratively in such phrases as 'to have mana'. This made possible the subsequent hypostatization of the concept. In addition, the word mana was also used as an active verb ('to mana-nize'). According to Keesing, the important anthropological implication of these linguistic analyses is this: early inhabitants of Oceania lived in unpredictable worlds that lead them to seek the help of ancestors and spirits. The concept mana was applied to mark the difference between an ordinary stone and a stone that is 'effective', between successful and failed warfare and so on. In other words, mana referred to a certain supernatural power which made an 'effective' object separate from others. In consequence, this invisible power was associated with the gifts of spirits. Gradually, the belief in mana was incorporated into the formation of social hierarchy in which the high chiefs acquired a semi-divine status. The formation of the high rank class of hereditary chiefs in East Polynesia and the legitimization of their sacredness lead to the hypostatization of mana as possessions of wealth. Following this development, the concrete symbol mana, originating in a particular explanation of a specific event, was symbolized as an abstract medium of power. This transformation gave birth to different theological and cosmological applications of the image of mana-like possessions which

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<sup>205</sup> E.Cassirer, *Language and myth*. New York: 1953, pp.62-83.



had only a figurative sense in the early stage.<sup>206</sup>

92. In many ways, *de* shared similar features with *mana*. It was noticeable (*xian 顯*), making people feeling humble (*xiao 孝*), inspiring awe and fear (*畏*) and the rulers obtained its power through prayers and sacrifices. The legitimation of ruling authority and territorial expansion were also done by means of *de*. But the differences between *de* and *mana* are obvious. For example, ancient Chinese epigraphy never mentioned trees, stones or other natural objects as possessing *de*. The real issue for this parallel study of *de* and *manna* is not particular details of the two categories but the operation of consciousness behind the symbols. Vassili Kryukov notes that the grammatical change of *de* indicates an evolution in human behaviors. The word *de* changed from its predicative function in the late Shang period to the nominal function at the early Zhou. The change was very quick and definite. While Proto-*de* was used as an active verb, it became a substantive noun in the beginning of the Zhou period. Meanwhile, the process of hypostatization of proto-*de* reflected the changes in religious consciousness. In the Shang's Bright Hall, the graph still implied a strong magical, shamanistic characteristic, in Zhou's temple; the term began to reflect its quasi-cosmological feature.<sup>207</sup> While both Shang and Zhou's *de* presupposed its religious nature in communication between ruling clan and ancestral spirits, the Shang's graph indicated concreteness of killing actions as the sacred manifestation of the *de* (*fa 伐*, *zheng 征*, *you 侑*) while Zhou began to take social norms as the 'theophany' of *de* (*weiyi 威儀*). Kryukov points out that this grammatical difference in the ancient time showed by the function of *de* as a direct object changing to corresponding predicates.<sup>208</sup>

93. As Mark Lewis observed, the changing use of the word *de* signifies the emergence of a rationale to restrain violence.<sup>209</sup> The change was indicated by the innovative interpretation of the conception of *de* beginning in the early Zhou period. However, it was far from abandoning the martial nature of the Bright Hall religious belief. Kryukov correctly explains that "Proto-*de* and the categories of its semantic circle signified the violent and excessive manifestations of Shang ritual; Zhou civilization banned them, together with other 'immoral' doings. However, it did not actually eliminate but rather forced them out, or to put it more precisely, 'pressed them inside' the culture. The external excessiveness was not eliminated but rather sublimated and interiorized."<sup>210</sup> To sanction the violence was one of most important issues after the fall of the ancient Bright Hall world. Reading the *Dao De Jing* in its historical situation will show that early Daoism's search for transcendent order was a

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<sup>206</sup> Roger Keesing, 'Rethinking mana', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 40/1, 1984, 137-56.

<sup>207</sup> As Shi Qiang pan inscribed "In antiquity King Wen first brought harmony to government, and High God sent [him] down the great support of perfect *de*". Quoted in Kryukov, 'Symbols of Power and Communication' p.330.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.331-332.

counter spiritual movement in a prevailing world full of violence. Reading the theology of peace in the *Dao De Jing* we need this basic perspective.

94. In sum, the Bright Hall complex constituted the ancient Chinese religious world. Sacred violence was the prevailing form of religious services. My argument is that the conception of *de* should be understood in the ritual context with performances of ‘martial’ and ‘military’, ‘hunting’ and ‘warfare’. Human sacrifice serves as an outlet of aggression among human beings. This argument adds further evidence from its semantic context. Reading OBI and epigraphic records shows that the semantic domain of *de* is close to the actions such as “to campaign against”, “to punish”, “to sacrifice”, “and to inspire fear and awe”. The ancient understanding of *de* expressed in a ritual formula was “to enlighten the heart and comprehend the power, to possess primordially.” In comparison with modern anthropological discussion of mana, my contention is that the concept of *de* shares many similar characteristics of mana. The belief of *de* represents as the symbolic ‘liminality’ in the Bright Hall religious world.

### Chapter 3. The Search For Transcendent Order in Lao Tzu’s *Dao De Jing*

#### 3.1. The Mysterious Power against the Bright Hall’s Political Religion

##### 3.1.1. The Practice of Sacred Violence after the fall of the Western Zhou

1. Every society is violent. The fall of the ancient Chinese religious world of the Western Zhou (c.771 B.C.E) indicates the end of nearly three centuries of shamanistic reign of the Zhou ruling clan. The coming of the first two and a half centuries of the Eastern Zhou is best known as the Spring and Autumn period (770-481 B.C.E), and the following period is known as the Warring states (481-221 B.C.E) the time when the *Dao De Jing* was compiled. After the last King *You* of the Zhou was killed by the invasion of barbarians, the vassal states initially declared lordship, built their own Bright Halls, devouring or uniting other states without paying loyalty to the royal court. The period of Warring states was an era of “unremitting competition.”<sup>211</sup>

2. Jacques Gernet notes that the ancient kingdom could resist neither the decline of its political control over the feudal states nor the dramatic influence of economic changes. The old ruling clan was ruined, removed from their Bright Hall world and finally lost in history. But the cults of the Bright Hall, which did not disappear as Jacques Gernet claims, were swallowed up in the new ‘bright halls’ of new states. Encouraged by the decline of the Zhou clan, the “seven powers”, namely the new states of Han, Wei, Zhao, Qin, Qi, Chu, embarked on a period of “military dynamism.”<sup>212</sup> The *mana*-like belief of the martial *de* continued to dominate the new states’ political-religious thinking. We can follow this attachment to the Bright Hall faith and find its explosive expression in the period of the Warring states.<sup>213</sup>

3. In Chinese history, the sharp contrast and ceaseless struggles between the practice of martial and civil virtues can be easily detected. The martial character of Chinese civilization has not always been recognized by modern scholars; From at least the Song dynasty (c. 960-1279 C.E.) the dominant culture has elevated the literary arts over martial ones, and this becomes certainly the main source of the contemporary stereotype of Chinese as a peace-loving race. The fact is, for the religious beliefs, statesmen, and political discourses of early China, the civil was obviously superseded by belief in martial power (*de*).<sup>214</sup> In a lengthy passage, the inequality of the status

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<sup>211</sup> K.C. Hsiao states: “The chief support of feudal society, its system of social classes, was falling speedily into dissolution along with the government of the legitimate Zhou kings. Aristocratic clans fell, their members becoming mere clerks and minor functionaries, subservient to superiors who in some instances had come from the lowest classes... All the old ceremonial behavior and customs that in the past had bound people together intellectually and spiritually lost their original significance... The conditions were such that the feudal world that Kings Wen and Wu had brought into being could hardly continue to exist much longer.” K.C.Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, translated by Frederick Mote Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 30-31.

<sup>212</sup> Charles O. Hucker, *China’s Imperial Past*. Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1975, p.37.

<sup>213</sup> Amid chaotic battles for land and political-religious hegemony, the situation could be described by K.C.Hsiao as follows: “those most capable of vigorous action and ambitious undertakings succeeded in making their states ever stronger and themselves ever more autocratic rulers. There was no restraining authority from the legitimate king above and no guiding or controlling influence exerted by the aristocracy below.” See. K.C.Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*. p.32.

<sup>214</sup> The martial culture can be captioned by a slogan “use the civil to dominate the states, use the martial to subjugate all under heaven. See. ????. Also see Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton: University Press, 1995.

between the civil administrators and the martial officers was described vividly:

In antiquity the form and spirit governing civilian affairs would not be found in the military realm; those appropriate to the military realm would not be found in the civilian sphere....In the civilian sphere words are cultivated and speech languid. In court one is respectful and courteous and cultivates himself to serve others. Unsummoned, he does not step forth; unquestioned, he does not speak. It is difficult to advance but easy to withdraw. In the military realm one speaks directly and stands firm. When deployed in formation one focuses on duty and acts decisively. Those wearing battle armor do not bow; those in war chariots do not observe the forms of propriety; those manning fortifications do not scurry. In times of danger one does not pay attention to seniority.<sup>215</sup>

4. In the chapter “Denoting the Martial”, an advisor talked to King Wen of Chu by arguing for an expedition against a small state. When for moral reason the King was hesitating to attack, the advisor argued, “the great attacking the small or the strong attacking the weak is like large fish swallowing small fish, or like a tiger devouring a hog. In what sense is this unreasonable?” King Wen therefore raised troops to devour the small state. On the verge of death, King Yan, the ruler of the ruined state, lamented, “being over-reliant on civil virtue, I did not understand martial preparations.”<sup>216</sup> By these two passages we see that there exists a common assumption regarding the status of the martial: first, its official ranking should honor it and its priority for a state affair should be set without any ambiguity. Second, human aggressive desire should be considered as natural, a part of natural law. In Bourdieu’s terms, the martial is a “structured structure” that provides for making decisions and shapes the forms of knowledge of the states.<sup>217</sup>

5. In the opening line of the Chapter *Grand Illumination of the Martial*, the martial is even related to the mandate of Heaven. It declares “the Heaven generated the martial and allowed it to produce weapons and form military force in order to assist those righteous leaders to correct the wayward.”<sup>218</sup> This search for the divine foundation for practicing violence still can be seen in recently discovered Mawangdui silk manuscripts. A common formula of the ruler’s communication with Heaven and earth in the manuscript goes as follows:

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215 Sawyer Ralph D. trans. *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*. Oxford: Westview Press. pp.131-132.

216 *Shui yuan* 15.3, p.441C.

217 Bourdieu, Piere. *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991. pp.12-16.

218 *Yi Zhou shu huijiao jizhu*. Compiled by Huang Huaixin, Zhang Maorong, and Tian Xudong. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1995. p. 132.

[The ruler] to form a triad with Heaven and earth, to be in harmony with the people's hearts, to establish conjointly the civil and the *martial*—this we define as the highest unity.<sup>219</sup> [Italics mine]

6. In another passage of the same text, the ruler's practice of violence in the execution of his leadership was legitimated by analogy with Heaven's giving of life and death. As it states:

To rely on Heaven's giving of life in order to nurture life—we call this the Civil. To rely on Heaven's punishment of death in order to attack the dying—we call this the Martial. If you can enact the Civil and the Martial in concert, then all under Heaven will follow.<sup>220</sup>

7. We have already studied the features of the martial *de* in the Bright Hall religious world in the previous chapter. The good news is that a certain spiritual breakthrough occurs during the period of Warring states. New spiritual movements began asking for balance between the shamanistic practices and the “civil” attitudes of the rulers. This shows that violence has been gradually sanctioned by certain civil mechanisms during this time. For example, a passage from the collections of *Guanzi* advocated the necessary balance and integration of military and civil arts precisely in re-conception of the *de*-belief.<sup>221</sup> In another passage of the *Guanzi*, the four cardinal elements of a ruler's authority were juxtaposed, with the civil in the first place: “the first is called the civil, the second is called the martial, the third is called awesomeness, and the fourth is called *de-power*.”<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, a passage in the *Huainanzi* stresses the necessity to integrate a ruler's martial charisma within the civil pattern:

The power of the troops relies on their willingness to die for the ruler; the reason for their willingness to die is based on the [ruler's] upright manner, the strength of the upright manner to be enacted depends on his awesomeness. Thus, the rulers integrate both of them into civil patterns and bring command to people with the martial.<sup>223</sup> (My Translation)

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219 *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Hunag-Lao, and Yin-Yang in Han China*. Translated by Robin Yates, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997. pp.72-73.

220 Yates, pp.62-63.

221 “When they [enemies] are united and you attack them, this is the Martial. When they submit and you pardon them, this is the civil. When the civil and the martial are both replete, this is *de-power*.” *Guanzi*?? Translated by W. Allyn Rickett, quoted in ZZJC vol. 5. p.145.

222 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

223 兵以強者，(民必死)也。民之所以必死者，義也。義之所以能行者，威也。是故合之以文，齊之以武。 *Huainanzi*15, ZZJC vol. 7, pp.264-265.

8. According to K.C.Hsiao, the seven powerful states hastened to re-establish a centralized, authoritarian empire. Three distinct intellectual/spiritual movements made endeavors to restrict violence during this time: The Confucian school expresses a nostalgic attachment to the fallen system, coupled with a moral/ritual endeavor to reconstitute the “rites of the Zhou”. The Legalist School recognizes the present reality. Intentionally or unintentionally, they express receptiveness to the future trend and justify it. Hisao regards the first two movements as “positive-minded” currents in that historical period. He considers the third movement as a “negativism with a view to liberating the individual” within which he includes the “*Lao-Zhuang* philosophers of Daoism” together with “individualist” practitioners, “recluses cultivating their solitary virtue.”<sup>224</sup>

9. We can augment Hisao’s identification of the third movement by further differentiating it into three strands: primitivists, hedonists, and syncretists.<sup>225</sup> Hisao’s description of the movement is close to the characteristic of hedonists, but we should also pay more attention to two distinctive perspectives advocated by primitivist Daoism and syncretist Daoism. For primitivist Daoism, in order to avoid violence, returning to a more simple form of community life is essential. This is the only radical way to sanction violence in turbulent world.<sup>226</sup> For syncretist Daoism, to establish an organized government by the patterns of Heaven and Earth is effectively to constrain violence. In this government, the image of sage-ruler is being the mind and sources from Confucian, Mohist and Legalist traditions, integrated within a Daoist cosmological and intellectual framework. This present project will, focus only on primitivist Daoism to see how this spiritual lineage sought to overcome the desire for domination by finding a transcendent anchor in a new-born humanity.

### 3.1.2. Laozi and the Composition of the *Dao De Jing*

10. Taoist theology and spirituality teach that to intentionally try to harm or hurt someone is not the true nature of human beings. Violence without sanction is not the way people behave, but it’s a mistake to think that Daoism is about a modern concept of pacifism. Daoism celebrates life but also raises the idea that death should be overcome. Daoism is not a modern pacifist movement for it advocated killing animals for food as a natural way of life. However, killing animals and throwing them away or hanging them on a wall is not natural. It is brutal. Daoism emphasizes ways to expand one’s potentiality and quality of life. It also provides training in ways to defend oneself as spiritual practice. If attacked violently, Daoists see martial arts as a means to repel

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<sup>224</sup> K.C.Hsiao, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*. p.33.

<sup>225</sup> Livia Kohn, *Daoism and Chinese Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Three Pines Press. 2001. p. 31.

<sup>226</sup> Harold Roth, “Redaction Criticism and the Early History of Taoism” *Early China* 19 (1994), pp.6-7.

the attack with the aim of controlling the situation and defusing the violence. Self-defense is a natural tool of humanity when it is guided by the principle of non-coercive, effortless action named *wu-wei*.

11. Early primitivist Daoism developed one of the strongest critiques of the Bright Hall political religion. In this spiritual tradition, “the Old Master(s)” was generally revered as the founder of this spiritual movement. Joseph Needham refers to the voices of *Dao De Jung* (DDJ) as the “spokesmen of some kind of primitive agrarian collectivism.”<sup>227</sup> Modern scholarship has developed a subtle and complicated study of the rise of the primitivist movement. The authenticity of the DDJ’s author becomes one of the hermeneutical keys to understanding the nature of the *Dao De Jing*. The traditional theory claims that an archivist named the Old Master (Laozi) composed the DDJ in the sixth century B.C.E, around a hundred years after the fall of the Western Zhou. He was viewed as the single author who transmitted the DDJ to a disciple, a minor officer of the gatekeeper. The problem is that the only primary source for proving this early dating of the author is the *Record of History* by the Han Historian Sima Qian (145-87, BCE). In his writing, Sima Qian mentions a meeting between Confucius and Laozi in which Confucius expresses a great admiration for Lao’s profound knowledge of the Zhou’s religious rites.<sup>228</sup>

12. By Sima Qian’s account, Laozi lived in *Ku* prefecture, the state of Chu, considered a marginal region of the central kingdoms. Nowadays scholars debate the accuracy of Sima’s collection of facts and hearsay. One side accepts the traditional viewpoint and takes Laozi as a historical person who came from a wealthy official clan, owning a large number of properties, living a country life in an attempt to escape the wars that were destroying his peaceful world, and addressing his criticism to contemporary spiritual and political disorders.<sup>229</sup> Others read him as a legendary figure that may or may not have existed at anytime. From this perspective, there was never a sole author of the *Dao De Jing* but it is composed of texts that accumulated over a few hundred years.

13. A.C. Graham, who argued that Laozi’s meeting with Confucius was not based on historical fact, represents the radical scholarship in the Western world. He contends that the story was originally a legend manufactured by Confucius’ disciples to exalt their master’s passion for knowledge. This literary device was popularized around 300 B.C.E. and adopted into the Daoist tradition. Later, after the end of the period of Warring states, all spiritual movements tried to extend their political influences to the new ruling class, and the “Daoist” literati also compiled their

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227 Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, volume 2: History of Scientific thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1956. p.100.

228 錢穆, 先秦諸子繫年, pp.451-453

229 E.g. Homer H. Dubs, “The Date and Circumstances of the Philosopher Lzo-dz” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (Dec., 1941), pp. 215-221.

inherited sayings into a corpus of texts and called it the work of “the Old Master”, the alleged teacher of Confucius, in order to gain political influence.<sup>230</sup> As a matter of fact, W.T.Chan states: “In the final analysis, any theory about Lao Tzu is a matter of personal choice.” One of the modern authorities on Chinese philosophy, Fun Yu-lan expresses a similar viewpoint. He says:

The book of *Lao-tzu* is traditionally attributed to Lao-tzu. Who was Lao-tzu? What was his period? As early as in the second century B.C. there had already been different theories on these questions. Szu-ma Ch'ine, the Grand Historian, could not decide which theory is authentic, so, as a good historian, he recorded all theories available in his time, but refused to give his preference... He recorded: “Some say Tan was Lao-tzu while others say no. People today do not know who are right.”<sup>231</sup>

14. John Emerson proposes a modern canonical analysis of the stratification of DDJ. He suggests a fourfold chronology for the development of the DDJ. First the early stage (ca. 330 BCE) which included chapters 1, 4-6, 10, 15, 31-32, 35, 37, 50-51, 56, as well as the beginnings of several other chapters otherwise dated later. Second, the middle stage (ca. 300 BCE) which included chapters 8-9, 11, 24, 26, 36, 38-49 with the exception of tags appended to 42, 44, and 46-47 much later. Third, the late stage (ca.270 BCE) that included 3, 12, 17-19, 53, 57-81, as well as tags appended to several earlier chapters. Fourth, additional stage (ca. 200 BCE) included chapter 54 and portions of several other chapters. Chapters or portions not mentioned in this stratified analysis are identified as “indeterminate” which means that they are materials from different developmental phases of the text.

15. Emerson’s theory is based on some geographic assumptions regarding the composition of the DDJ. Four historical facts are presented to establish the states of Qi and Chu as the site of the formation of the primitivist Daoism movement: First, the discovery of early manuscripts in Mawangdui and Guodian sites, both located in the ancient Chu regime. Second, the similarity between proverbial patterns in the DDJ and the ancient Chu dialect.<sup>232</sup> Third, the wide recognition of Qi as the primary activity

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<sup>230</sup> A.C.Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. pp.215-219. A good summary of the different hypothesis regarding the date and authorship of the DDJ see William H. Baxter “Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*: the Probable Date of the *Tao-te-ching*,” in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, edited by Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998: pp. 231-253

<sup>231</sup> Quoted in Wing-tse Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu*, the Library of Liberal Arts, N.Y.: 1963. p.37. Fung continues “as we have not discovered anything newer than the material available to Szu-ma Ch'ien, thus it is impossible for us to solve the problem that the Grand Historian was unable to.”

<sup>232</sup> Baxter, p.247.



center of Daoism during the period of Warring states.<sup>233</sup> Fourth, the close connections between religious and intellectual movements existing between Chu and Qi during the age.<sup>234</sup>

16. Russell Kirkland takes this modern hypothesis further, arguing that the sources of the *Dao De Jing* came from the living experience of anonymous “village elders” of Chu. These sayings in the beginning circulate among the villages but finally are received by a group of the *qi* practitioners who collected various teachings to cultivate the “life energy”. The strength of this hypothesis is that it invalidates the artificial demarcation between “philosophical” Daoism and “religious” Daoism. It focuses on materials that go back to the living world from which the *Dao De Jing* emerged. According to Kirkland, the textual “pre-history” of the *Dao De Jing* finds its best comparison in work of “wisdom literature”, e.g. *Proverbs*, in the Hebrew Bible. Modern scholarship tends to misread the DDJ as socio-political treaties in competition with a “hundred schools”, but they ignore its own political-religious background and inner development. For Kirkland, the pre-history of the DDJ is set in a community in the southern part of Chu that passed down an oral tradition of wisdom before 300 B.C.E. This tradition included practical advice from elders such as “behave in a wise and healthy manner, and you will have a long and comfortable life, free from conflict or unexpected suffering.”<sup>235</sup> That is the reason why the book refers generally to the “old ones” as the source of its content. By the late fourth century, some literati of this community wrote down sayings of fathers on bamboo slips until other anonymous compilers collected different volumes of the bamboo slips for specific purposes: cultivating the invisible force of life, *qi*.<sup>236</sup> These compilers most probably belonged to a group that sought inward training of the self. Furthermore, a group of “maternalist” voices joined later into the stream urged the world to return to a more primordial level of belief with images based upon the mother and child relationship.<sup>237</sup>

17. Kirkland argues that the locale of the composition of the DDJ is found in the *Jixia* academy, the “think tank” or “conference center” of the Qi 齊 state under the financial support of the rulers. In this academy, many famous minds had worked out their thoughts including Confucians Mencius, Xunzi; Yin-yang thinker Zhou Yen; a group of literati who promoted the Yellow Empire’s political ideal and the Old Master’s wisdom. Kirkland concludes that most probably a scholar named Huan Yuan finished the composition of the DDJ in the *Jixia* academy.<sup>238</sup>

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233 John S. Major, “Research Priorities in the Study of Ch’u Religion,” in *History of Religions* 17 (February-May 1978): pp. 226-243.

234 Ibid.

235 Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004. p.61

236 Kirkland, p.62

237 E.g. DDJ 20.

238 Kirkland, p.65.

18. Kirkland's historical reconstruction of the pre-history of DDJ is fascinating. It summarizes the important discussions of modern scholarship and restores the DDJ to its life experience (*sitzen im Leben*). More importantly this historical reconstruction of the DDJ tears down the artificial boundary between "philosophical" and "religious" Daoism and explores the origins of Daoism as a complex spiritual movement that we need to study in detail. But Kirkland's conclusion is still debatable, for we don't have solid historical materials to support all of his chronological assumptions on the DDJ's composition. All we have are the "canonical texts" themselves.

19. My reading of the DDJ has benefited from Kirkland's work and other modern scholarship. At the same time, The hermeneutics of consciousness also creates a heuristic scheme for interpretation of the DDJ. I argue that there are different layers of DDJ that can be differentiated according to different realms of meaning: namely historical experience, theoretical speculation, exploration of the realm of interiority and spiritual exercise in terms of effortless action. We should recognize that there indeed exist various voices within the DDJ texts, though it is almost impossible to retrieve these voices in full and accurate detail from their historical context. A moderate approach is to accept that there are various voices in the text. They can be categorized into four levels of meaning (historical experience, meditative exegesis, speculative reflection, and, exploration of the interior mind and spiritual practices) that compose a "quartet" DDJ. The polymorphic voices represent the search for transcendence in the early Daoist movement. We should avoid the pitfall of iconoclasm in the modern study of the DDJ. In my opinion, Laozi should still be held as the seminal author of the *DDJ*. He and his disciples formed the "Laoist" circle that advocated a harmonious ideal in order to overcome the military dynamism in his time.<sup>239</sup> In order to achieve this ideal, they criticized the ruling clan's shamanic religious faith through radical reinterpretation of the notion of mana-power (*de*) and ancient practices. Based on the criticism of the Bright Hall political religion, these "laoists" also engaged in a more "primitivist" theological speculation by which they maintained that the ultimate reality (the 'unknown/impersonal' God) manifests to the world as the "void-way-*ziran*" triad structure. Furthermore, to verify this theoretical speculation, they engaged in a "psychological turn" into the realm of interiority where mystical experience is appropriated and spiritual exercise is perfected.

### 3.1.3. The Mysterious *De* against the Martial Belief in the *Dao De Jing*

20. The first level of the DDJ has to do with its historical setting. There is no agreement among scholars about this setting. For some traditional scholars, especially for those who read the DDJ influenced by the commentary of Wang Bi (226-249 C.E) and other Neo-Taoist literati, the DDJ is a book of philosophical speculation in which

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<sup>239</sup> Michael LaFargue, *Tao and Method*

Laozi presents an ontological vision from above. Contemporary reading of DDJ found a new perspective when the Mawangdui manuscripts of the *Dao De Jing* were discovered. In these manuscripts, the *De* chapters precede the *Dao* chapters. As Alan Chan notes, the current DDJ has been separated into two sections and eighty-one chapters. Part one (1-37), the *Dao* section, begins with the word Dao. Part two (38-82), the *De* section, begins with the term “the superior De.” If the reader begins the book at the *Dao* section it will seem to be a metaphysical work; but the reader who begins at the *De* section will understand it as a spiritual and socio-political text.<sup>240</sup> Yu Ying-shih suggests that the transcendent breakthrough of primitivist Daoism starts with its departure from the tradition of “rite and music”, a tradition at the foundation of the Bright Hall political religion. This breakthrough is clearly indicated in the beginning of the DDJ 38 by saying that “it is because the most excellent (*De*) do not strive to excel (*De*) that they are of the highest efficacy (*De*).”<sup>241</sup> Those who are familiar with the background of the Bright Hall political religion will recognize immediately that one of most distinctive features of the DDJ is its radical reinterpretation of the practices of the ancient faith. Its criticism of the mechanism of violence and reinterpretation of the meaning of *de* shows its unique character distinctively.

21. Wang Chen (C.E), a DDJ commentator in Medieval (Tang) China, stirred by the endless violence in human history, stressed the antiwar message of the DDJ. He argues that the armies of the ancient Kings sanctioned violence very carefully, but later rulers totally lost control in using force. The problem, according to the DDJ, can by no means be blamed on the armies but on human desires.<sup>242</sup>

22. Wang Chen’s observation of the horror of violence in human history echoes from age to age. Wang, a senior army commander, sharply observed that the teachings of the DDJ provide a transcendental anchor for overcoming violence in human history. This insight has resonance for many other commentators and shapes an important tradition in reading the DDJ.<sup>243</sup> In DDJ, two causes for human violence are discussed: human desires and their mimetic mechanism. For primitivist Daoism, human desires, being an inherent part of humanity, are ineradicable and problematic. The primitivist

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<sup>240</sup> Alan Chan, “The Daode Jing and Its Tradition” in *Daoism Handbook*. Edited by Livia Kohn. Leiden: Brill. 2000. p. 7

<sup>241</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “論天人之際—中國古代思想的起源試探” See. <http://www.zlunwen.com/culture/traditional/7952.htm>

<sup>242</sup> Wang Chen says: “[Those rulers] were arrogant, uncouth, brutal, dissolute, angry, greedy, boastful, or evil, so they created personal armies, regiments, states, and families. When they acted, it was to seize the strong; when they employed their armies, they sought victory. Even though their troops became weary and their provisions were exhausted, they still advanced and fought. Some did not desist and were engulfed; some were never satisfied and brought extermination upon themselves, exposing the people’s livers and brains on the road. Because of a single man’s anger or desire, all within the seas were poisoned and in pain, and disaster as rife throughout the land.” Wang Chen, *The Tao of Peace: Lessons from Ancient China on the Dynamics of Conflict*. Translated by Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-chuen Lee Sawyer. p. 1.

<sup>243</sup> Edmund Ryden, *Philosophy of Peace in Han China*, Taipei: Ricci Institute 1999

Daoist protests:

The five colors blind the eye, the hard riding of the hunt addles both heart and mind, property hard to come by subverts proper conduct, the five flavors destroy the palate, and the five notes impair the ear. (DDJ 12)<sup>244</sup>

23. Human conflicts come from disordered desires. Daoist understands that the disordered desires come from things to be distinguished and emotion to be stimulated by operating of human consciousness. Because of desires for domination, various conflicts accumulated and finally lead to different scales of conflict and warfare that flourishes throughout human history. Wang Chen comments that human conflicts inevitably employ various weapons. Ordinary people fight with hands and feet, but when it comes to the states, “there isn’t one who doesn’t employ metal [weapons] and leather [armor]. No calamity exceeds this!”<sup>245</sup> Therefore, the DDJ expresses a hope that politicians who assist rulers to run a state should prevent the ruler from adopting the martial belief. It said that:

Those who use *the Way* to minister to the ruler do not seek to make him the strongest in the world by force of arms. Such a business would likely come back to haunt them. Wherever armies bivouac brambles and thistles will grow. [In the wake of great armies, lean years are sure to follow.] (DDJ 30)

When *the Way* does not prevail in the world, warhorses are bred just outside the city walls. (DDJ 46)

24. Early Daoism realizes the fearful sequences of human aggressive desire, especially when the desire is complemented by intelligence and the capacity to develop military weapons. On the other hand, these early Daoists also realize that violence in a society is unavoidable. They admonish those powerful men who control the killing power to do it “coolly and without enthusiasm.” Stated in other terms, they know that violence generates excitement and a sense of achievement. If we don’t understand the allure of violence, we will forever be in danger of becoming captive to it. Thus the DDJ says:

Military weapons are inauspicious instruments, and are so generally despised that even those who want things cannot abide them. Rulers under normal circumstances take the left side as the seat of honor, but when they go to war, they honor the right. Thus, military weapons are not the instruments of true rulers. Military weapons are inauspicious instruments, and so when you have no choice but to use them, it is best to do so coolly and without enthusiasm. Do

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<sup>244</sup> I use Roger T. Ames and David Hall’s translation as standard text in this dissertation but I sometimes slightly modify their translation in accordance to my knowledge of DDJ. Other translations include D.C. Lao’s *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* and Robert G.Henricks’ *Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching*.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

not glorify weapons, for to do so is to delight in killing people, and anyone who delights in killing people will come up short in the world. (DDJ 31)

25. For early Daoism, human society is vexed by militarism and social and psychological trouble that stem directly in origins from the Zhou's Bright Hall political religion. The DDJ says, "There is no crime more onerous than greed, no misfortune more devastating than avarice. And no calamity than brings with it more grief than insatiability." (DDJ 46) "When treasure fills the hall, no one is able to keep it safe. Those who are arrogant because of station and wealth bring calamity upon themselves." (DDJ 46)

26. Unfortunately, the progress of human civilization follows a pattern that "when the uncarved block shatters it becomes vessels; the sage makes use of these and becomes lord over the officials." (Lau, DDJ 28) The government produces rankings, titles and hierarchy: "when we start to regulate the world we introduce names." (DDJ 32) Since human society is mobilized by a desire to dominate and learns to classify things and peoples, then, our anxiety rises and it becomes a part of our being. (DDJ 13)

27. Daoists observe that when rulers practice warfare, people suffer in their daily life because of the high taxation for the wars. People's hunger also creates social instability. As a result, thieves and rebellions are found everywhere. "The people's hunger is because those above are eating too much in taxes—this is why they are hungry. The people's lack of order is because those above manipulate them—this is why they are not properly ordered. And the people's scoffing at death is because those above are exacting so much from life—this is why they scoff at death." (DDJ 75)

28. The primitivist Daoists reflect critically on the root of the present chaotic situation by saying that "only when we have lost sight of the Way (*Dao*), is there *Mana-like power (de)*, only when we have lost sight of *de* is there authoritative conduct, only when we have lost sight of authoritative conduct is there propriety. As for ritual propriety, it is the thinnest veneer of doing one's best and making good on one's word." (DDJ 38) Obviously, primitivist Daoism takes human progress as a way of 'deterioration' from its original harmony to our present situation. Furthermore, these Daoists take human moral conduct as only a trouble containment mechanism that prevents the human society from getting worse. But morality has no positive capacity to restore humanity to its original harmony:

It is when grand Way is abandoned that authoritative conduct (*ren*) and appropriateness (*yi*) appear. It is when knowledge (*zhi*) and erudition arise that great duplicity appears. It is when the six family relationships are disharmonious that filiality (*xiao*) and parental affection (*ci*) appear. It is when the state has fallen into troubled times that upright minister appear. (DDJ 18)

29. According to David Miller, the four characteristics of a “state” can be classified as follows: the state is a *sovereign* body; it claims its authority to define the rights of its peoples. It is a *compulsory* body: persons born into a society must recognize an obligation to the governing authority. One has no right to be released from this obligation except by leaving the state. This state is also a *monopolistic* body: no competitor is allowed to stand alongside with it in the same territory. Finally, the state is a *distinct* body, a separate entity from social functionalities in general. The people who manifest the power of state form a distinct class: politicians (ruler), bureaucrats, armed forces and police.<sup>246</sup> Primitivist Daoism never developed a systematic theory of state. Their political-theological imagination is manifested in their advocacy of the “life choice” to free people from the bondage of chiefdom and to pursue the ideal of “fief” which follows the spontaneous intimacy between mother and children.<sup>247</sup> As Joseph Needham states:

The ideal of Taoist society was cooperative, non-acquisitive. Instead of being subjected to corvee labor and ordered about by feudal lords, the people in ancient society carried out their activities communally and according to custom. The crafts had not so far differentiated as to preclude communal collaboration at tasks such as house-building... In the ancient society there was little need for division of labor.<sup>248</sup>

30. Primitivist Daoism envisions the world as formed by many fiefs in intimate relationship with a minimal population. Weaponry is maintained at the lowest possible level and there is no need for its use. The education in the community is to make sure people take dying seriously, so that they would not have any desire to venture far from home. DDJ maintains:

Though you have ships and chariots enough, have no reason to man them; though you have armor and weapons enough have no reason to parade them. Bring the common people back to keeping their records with knotted string, to relishing their food, to finding beauty in their garments, to enjoying their customs, and to finding security in their homes. Although you neighboring fiefs are within eyesight and the sounds of their dogs and cocks are within earshot, your people will grow old and die without having anything to do with them. (DDJ 80)

31. Some scholars object that early Daoist expresses an idealistic anarchism; it does not recognize any positive value for human society. But my contention is that

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<sup>246</sup> David Miller, *Anarchism* London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1984. p.5.

<sup>247</sup> A.C.Graham translates the first line of the DDJ 80 as “Make fiefs small and their people few”. See *Disputers of the Dao*. p.68.

<sup>248</sup> Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*. p.104.

primitivist Daoism develops its insight as a form of therapeutic action, and we cannot read the passages entirely literally. These passages should be read as pedagogical rhetoric expressing a primitivist hope to find “security” in the transcendent realm. To separate from martial belief and uproot the disordered desire, a radical conversion from present social reality is required. Primitivist Daoism therefore calls for a return to a primordial condition where human being might find its source of life in a way of simplicity and tranquility..

32. For Laozi, this radical conversion should occur on three levels: (i) human understanding; (ii) social conduct and family; (iii) economic activities. As the DDJ says:

*Cut off* sagacity (*sheng*) and get rid of knowledge (*zhi*) and the benefit to the common people will be a hundredfold. *Cut off* authoritative conduct (*ren*) and get rid of appropriateness (*yi*) and the common people will return to filiality (*xiao*) and parental affection (*ci*). *Cut off* cleverness and get rid of personal profit and there will be no more brigands and thieves. But these three sayings as they stand are still lacking and need to be supplemented by the following: Display a genuineness like raw silk and embrace a simplicity like unworked wood, lessen your concern for yourself and reduce your desires. (DDJ 19)

33. According to this radical rhetoric, the primitivists clearly seek a return or reversion. By returning a sage is asked to cut off aggressive desire and pursue a politics of “weakening.” Behind this language of conversion, the core value of the Bright Hall belief, the martial *de*, is subjected to a radical reinterpretation. Therefore the DDJ states:

It is because the most excellent (*de*) do not strive to excel (*de*) that they are of the highest efficacy (*de*). And it is because the least excellent do not leave off striving to excel that they have no efficacy. (DDJ 38)

“Returning” is how *Dao* moves, and “weakening” is how it functions. The events of the world arise from the determinate (you?), and the determinate arises from the Nothing (wu?). (DDJ 40)

34. Modern Chinese philosopher Wing-tsit Chan explains that in primitivist Daoism “*de* is Tao endowed in the individual things. While Tao is common to all, it is what each thing has obtained from Tao, or its *de*, that makes it different from others. *De* is then the individualizing factor, the embodiment of definite principles which give things their determinate features or characters.”<sup>249</sup> Similarly, Feng Yu-lan also observed that “*de* is what individual objects obtain from *tao* and thereby become what they are.”<sup>250</sup> The distinctive characteristic of *de* in primitive Daoism has drawn many

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<sup>249</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu*. New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1963. p.11.

<sup>250</sup> Feng Yu-lang, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols. Translated by. Derk Bodde Princeton:

scholars' attention. Ellen Marie Chen has distinguished three types of *de* in early China: (i) the magical power of the ruler (explored in the previous chapter); (ii). Moral charisma in the Confucian perspective; (iii).the primitive Daoist concept of 'mysterious' *de*.<sup>251</sup> She argues that for primitive Daoism, the mysterious *de* is the manifestation of *Dao*. The relation between *Dao* and *De* is the issue of the one and the many.

35. Philip J. Ivanhoe, from a different perspective, provides a similar analysis. He notes that primitivist Daoism shared with Confucianism the belief that those who have *de* are able to draw people to them. But their interpretations come from very different approaches. For Confucians, people are drawn by moral charisma which encourages people to follow models of excellent social conduct. Sometimes, Confucian gentlemen even have no hesitation in calling this life model 'awe-inspiring' (wei 威) like the Polar Star or the wind-symbol of power *above* the people. For the early Daoist sages, however, the *de*'s a power is to draw people by submission or deference. In one of the central metaphors of the DDJ, this powerful attraction is symbolized as the 'valley' that places itself below everything and as the defenselessness a newborn babe. As the DDJ states:

Know the male, yet safeguard the female and be a river gorge to the world. As a river gorge to the world, you will not lose your real potency (*de*) and not losing your real potency, your return to the state of the newborn babe. (DDJ 28)

What enables the rivers and seas to be king over all the valleys is that they are good at staying lower than them. It is this that enables them to be the king of all the valleys. (DDJ 66)

36. For early Daoism, the *de* is not an awesome power but the natural tendency of things to flow down toward lower and secure places. Ivanhoe said: "the *de* of the Daoist sage is welcoming, accommodating, and nurturing—not awe-inspiring like that of Confucius's sage."<sup>252</sup> The Daoist sage always cultivates an excellent character, a character that delights "in saving people, and so abandons no one." (DDJ 27). This soteriological consciousness intends to nurture and does not seek for domination but shows respect and allegiance to all things. The nature of *Dao* is life-giving and the characteristic of *De*--not like the ancient practice of killing power--is a nurturing power to rear everything. For this reason, the DDJ states:

The myriad creatures all revere the way and honor virtue. Yet the way is

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Princeton University Press, 1952, 1:180.

<sup>251</sup> Ellen Marie Chen, "The meaning of *te* in the *Tao te Ching*: an examination of the concept of nature in Chinese Taoism"

<sup>252</sup> Philip. J. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the Laozi" in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*. Edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J.Ivanhoe New York, Albany: SUNY press. p.243.



revered and virtue honored not because this is decreed by any authority but because it is natural for them to be treated so.” (DDJ 51)

37. One of the distinctive characteristics of the interpretation of *de* in primitivist Daoism is that instead of regarding it as the martial and dominating element that the ruling clans believed it to be, the *de* is in some sense part of the peaceful “*ziran*” (character, vitality, naturalness, spontaneity, self-so etc.) of human beings. In contrast with early Confucianism’s anthropocentric interpretation of the concept, Laozi believes that not only human beings, but other creatures as well, also participate in the power of naturalness to the degree that even the most poisonous ones could recognize the natural vitality that causes them to suspend their defensive inclination to attack enemies. As the DDJ writes:

One who is vital in *de* can be compared with a newborn baby. Wasps and scorpions will not sting a baby, snakes and vipers will not bite him, and birds of prey and ferocious beasts will not snatch him up. (DDJ 55)

38. The newborn babe symbolizes the perfect image of the manifestation of the *de*. Laozi admonishes the ruling class to cultivate and hold the value of humbleness as in a valley. In doing so one’s power is able to transform heaven and earth, And by practicing this lowly humility, “the world (under the Heaven) will flock to you. Flocking to you they come to no harm, and peace and security prevails.”(DDJ 35)

39. Laozi’s other distinctive interpretation of the *de* relates to its “mysterious power” that animates all things and influences all creatures. Human beings employ too many rites and become overly thoughtful and too “clever”. This leads them to produce all sorts of artificial devices, venture many military adventures and turn away from spontaneous naturalness. In looking for social goods such as reputation, power, wealth, and beauty, they forget to cultivate their natural desires for simplicity and tranquility, the true source of satisfaction in life. While primitivist Daoism developed a radical reinterpretation of the ancient religious faith, their major concern was to preserve life in a violent world and restore its original vitality. Contrary to the Confucian’s pragmatic vision to educate and develop people’s morality and social conduct, primitive Daoism’s strategy is to develop an “esoteric discourse” to enable people to become aware of their inauthentic existence, behavior and thinking.<sup>253</sup>

40. Laozi’s third interpretation of the *de* is to highlight its stillness. He believes that whatever is “still” naturally has “power” to settle conflicts and turbulences. For example, “staying active beats the cold, keeping still beats the heat. Purity and stillness can bring proper order to the world. (DDJ 45) A sage (including ruler) who cultivates his still life will discover naturally his root and destiny if he extends his “empty mind”

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<sup>253</sup> Ivanhoe, p.246.

as far as he can. “I do my utmost to attain emptiness; I hold firmly to stillness....Returning to one’s roots is known as stillness. This is what is meant by returning to one’s destiny.” (DDJ 16) If a ruler executes the power of stillness, he will be able to clear all rebellions and contentions within his state, because in tranquility, everything will return to its particular destiny with a natural spontaneity. A ruler who is in harmony with the pattern of Heaven and earth will succeed

The heavy is the root of the light; the still is the lord of the restless....If light, then the root is lost; if restless, then the lord is lost. (DDJ 26)

41. In summation, early Daoism develops a radical discourse of *de* in its historical situation. In facing the turbulence of the martial spirit in the period of Warring states, Laozi and his circle asked for therapeutic action to heal the wounded world. In doing so these Daoists go back to the core value of the Bright Hall political religious world. They draw attention to the basic belief of the ancient practice and reinterpret the notion of *mana-like de* entirely through a nuanced intellectual/spiritual framework. This framework breaks with the ancient High God-Heaven belief system and posits a primordial ground of being where the principle of simplicity and purity can be found and the transcendent realm can be attained. They argue the notion of the *de* is not exclusively defined by the will of the ruling clan but it discloses its original meaning through the mediation of a series of metaphors and finally is explained through philosophical speculation on the triadic structure of ultimate reality and verified by spiritual cultivation.

### 3.2. Laozi’s Theoretical Speculation of the “Three Ones” Ultimate Reality

#### 3.2.1. The Metaphorical Conception of the Dao as the Babe and the Mother

42. Metaphors are embedded in human language and thinking. In our own experience, people are always living between and beyond the conceptual and the metaphorical, especially when it is necessary to bring “images” into the theoretical realm. This is the case in primitivist Daoism. The appropriation of ultimate reality by the human mind requires a certain kind of metaphorical thinking, through which that reality can be manifested in reciprocal fashion.<sup>254</sup>

43. The human body is an organic reality which exists distinct from its social reality. According to the DDJ, a new-born body, the field of life, reveals the perfect nature of ultimate reality. It is the synthesis of the divine essences contained at birth. Gradually, through the life process, these energies are lost. Death occurs when human vital energies (*qi*) seep out of the body and are finally entirely depleted. To resist the

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<sup>254</sup> Charles Wei-hsun Fu, “Lao-Tzu’s Conception of Tao” *Inquiry* 16 (1973): 367-71; and Nai-tung Ting, “Laotzu: Semanticist and Poet,” *Literature: East and West* 14 (1970): 212-44.

power of death and gain new life, energies must be nurtured before this dispersal takes place. Primitivist Daoism rejects grand narrations as ruling class manipulations. Social engineering programs are seen as artificial and harmful to human peaceful life. Preserving and nurturing life is human beings' most sacred task; external rituals, religious practices, and social patterns and institutions are secondary. Thus, DDJ 44 asks:

Your reputation or your person—which is dearer to you? Your person or your property—which is worth more? Gaining or losing—which is the greater scourge?

Miserliness is certain to come at a huge cost; the hoarding of wealth is certain to lead to heavy losses. Therefore, those who know contentment avoid disgrace, and those who know where to stop avoid danger. They will be long-enduring.

44. The Dao resembles a new-born babe because a baby knows when “enough is enough” (DDJ 46). The babe symbolizes the supreme human goal of locating and embodying the Dao in our soft, weak body. To overcome the civilization of domination, the Daoist argues, we must first turn to cultivate the inward self. By meditating on the human body, we become aware of the Dao's embodiment in our immediate life. The person who has attained this spiritual level knows how to manage the unceasing desires of competition. Feminine compassion is another form of this most basic manifestation of the Dao.

45. As Harold Roth points out, the DDJ shares many important themes with the inward training (*Neiye*) tradition. Two texts take a newborn body as the endowed image of ultimate reality, pure vital essence (*jing?*).<sup>255</sup> The marvelous power of newborn life, the DDJ declares, can keep one safe from dangerous insects and wild animals. The arousal of the babe's sexual organ indicates the fullness of vital essence generated completely from life inside without external stimulation. (DDJ 55) The infant is the perfect image of the Dao because there is no wastage of the energies in this body. A new life never feels exhausted, “he screams through the entire day and yet his voice does not get hoarse.” The babe directly reflects the ultimate source of energy, the Dao.

46. This metaphor of the divine as infant is sustained throughout the DDJ, with the baby representing the ideal image for the spiritual cultivation of the adult. In the DDJ 10, the infant is the model for the perfect circulation of the cosmic energy. By “concentrating your *qi* and making it pliant,” Laozi advises, the practitioner will be transformed into a new person, like a new-born babe. In DDJ 28, Laozi assures the reader that the perfection of the infant life can be restored when the real *de* is being kept completely:

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<sup>255</sup> Harold Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism*. 144 -152

Know the male, yet safeguard the female and be a river gorge to the world. As a river gorge to the world, you will not lose your real potency (*de*), and not losing your real potency, you return to the state of the new-born babe.

47. In this passage, an ideal state of humanity is described. The harmonious balance between masculinity and femininity of a human body refers to the operation of the principle of androgyny. In this vision, the ultimate reality is seen as the “valley” of the impregnated mother that gives birth to the world by the binary dynamism of *Yin-yang*.

Among the ancient Chinese classics, only the DDJ offers the metaphor of the Dao as the Great Mother.<sup>256</sup> This birthing mother is a mysterious, moist, and vacant concavity. She is the mother of the “ten thousand things,” as well as the mother of heaven and earth. (DDJ 1;25) She is the dark (mysterious) mare (DDJ 6) who nurtures human beings by her milk. Abiding securely at her breast the Dao keeps every life (DDJ 20; 28). Thus the primitivist Daoist celebrates the fetal beginning of the world as the mother of the world:

You have to have gotten to this mother, before you can understand her progeny. And once you have understood her progeny, if you go back and safeguard the mother, you will live to the end of your days without danger. (DDJ 52)

48. The Mother Dao is capable, by her powers of tranquility and equilibrium, to best the disordered desires of human beings because she places her properly underneath (DDJ 61). So the second root metaphor for the manifestation of the Dao in primitivist Daoism is the image of a mother in giving birth. Some recent scholars have argued that the DDJ originated from the cult of the Moon.<sup>257</sup> Eduard Erkes contends that it derived from the worship of a Mother goddess. For Duyvendak, it “would seem to suggest a matriarchal society.”<sup>258</sup> Ellen Marie Chen argues that one of the most fundamental concepts in the DDJ, nothingness, reveals itself as “the most dynamic and fertile life force,” the female principle of the ultimate reality. Chen suggests that the religious background of the DDJ can be traced back to a Mother-goddess worship predating the rise of the ancestral cult. “Chinese philosophy is a long celebration of life,” Chen writes.<sup>259</sup> From my perspective, the portrayal of the cosmogenic process as

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<sup>256</sup> Ellen Marie Chen, “Tao as the Great Mother and the Influence of Motherly Love in the Shaping of Chinese Philosophy” in *History of Religions, Vol. 14, No. 1* (Aug., 1974)

<sup>257</sup> Tu Er-wei, *Studies on the religions of Ancient China*. Taipei: Hua Ming Press, 1959. See also *The Religious system of Ancient China: Studies of the gods, Dao, Ti and Hou-t'u* Taipei: Hua Ming Press, 1960.

<sup>258</sup> J.J.L.Duyvendak, *Tao Te Ching*. London: John Murray, 1954, p.56.

<sup>259</sup> Ellen Marie Chen, “Tao as the Great Mother and the Influence of Motherly Love in the Shaping of Chinese Philosophy” pp. 51-64.

the tender love of a mother represents a powerful spiritual effort on the part of primitivist Daoism to counteract the religious beliefs underlying the practices of the Bright Hall.

49. The history of religions contains numerous symbols of the Great Mother motif: dark, night, chasm, cave, abyss, valley, depths, womb, and so on.<sup>260</sup> The clue that the DDJ sees a link between the ultimate reality and the feminine can be found in its description of the Dao as a deep abyss preceding all things. In celebrating this deep reality, Laozi argues that this reality is even more fundamental than the ancestral High God. (DDJ 4) It is obvious that the phrase “*xiang di zi xian*” (the pre-figuration of the High God) implies a theological criticism of the Bright Hall’s martial philosophy, and at the same time provides an alternative way of thinking for ruling classes: the abandonment of sacred violence and the celebration and nurture of life. Ellen Marie Chen, who is sensitive to the vision of primitivist Daoism, finds the Great Mother motif in the DDJ in the image of the Dao as an empty vessel (DDJ4), a bellows (5), the mysterious dark (1), the dark female who is the gateway of heaven and earth, (6), mother (1, 20, 25, 52), mare (6, 61), and the Greatness (25,34). Her characteristic is water (8, 78), which births, nourishes, and benefits everything. She is a valley (6, 28, 32, 39, 41) that lies down in lowliness, then becomes productive and powerful. This, according to primitivist Daoism, is the nature of the ultimate reality: the Mother Dao; the non-possessive power of life; the *wu*; the archetypal *en sich*; the *Ouroboros*, the ancient symbol of a snake or dragon swallowing its own tail, constantly creating itself and forming a circle.<sup>261</sup>

49. According to Laozi, one of the most important attributes of this mother Dao is compassion (*ci*?). This compassion, Chang Chung-yuan explains, is more basic than love: It is “the primordial, immediate source of love, the secret root of all love and compassion.”<sup>262</sup> Laozi declares that in this world, everyone knows the greatness of compassion:

It is because of my compassion that I can be courageous; ... Compassion will give you victory in waging war, and security in defending your ground. When Heaven sets anything up, it is as if it fortifies it with a wall of compassion. (DDJ 67)

The Mother Dao expresses her compassion evenly under the heavens (DDJ 32). She embraces all and allows myriad things to flow together (DDJ 62). Her compassion

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<sup>260</sup> Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: an Analysis of the Archetype*. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series 47 Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955. See also, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, translated by R.F.C.Hull. New York: Pantheo Books for Bollingen Foundation

<sup>261</sup> Chen, p.53. A pig dragon is a type of jade artifact from neolithic China. Pig dragon is zoomorphic forms with a piglike head and elongated limbless body coiled around to the head in the manner of an ouroboros. It might prefigure the Yin-yang circle.

<sup>262</sup> Chang Chung-yuan *Creativity and Taoism: A study of Chinese philosophy, art, and poetry*. New York: The Julian Press, Inc., 1963 p.24

accomplishes all things and yet never claims credit (DDJ 34). Neither, however, does it hesitate against the evils and sufferings of this world (DDJ 24).

50. In early Daoism, the mother's unconditional compassion for her children and the babe's unquestioning trust in her symbolize the most significant attributes of the Dao. Living amid turmoil, the primitivist Daoist celebrates the compassion of the Dao in a way unique to ancient texts. While the Greeks elevate strength and beauty, Laozi and his disciples see the grotesque, the deformed, and the weak as somehow integral to the processes of life. They celebrate life in all its transformations. Like an innocent babe, the primitive Daoist submits himself willingly to a life of change. He cultivates effortless action, freeing his hands to let the Mother Dao take her back to the Dao's "belly," to be fashioned like clay into new forms of life. Daoism calls this transformation or metamorphism of life *hua*. We will discuss this crucial motif in greater depth in section

### 3.2.2. Dao as Water and *Hun-dun* (Chaos)

51. Water is a universal phenomenon in the natural world, but it also serves as a root metaphor for the primitivist transcendental imagination. If the metaphorical language of primordial babe and Great Mother disclose a personal dimension of the world and the transcendent realm, water in the DDJ symbolizes the impersonal aspect of the Dao. Water is the cyclical way whereby the Dao gives birth to all that is, as formulated in the lost DDJ text *the Great One Gives Birth to the Water*, discovered recently in the Guodian site (1993). The text declares:

In the Great One (Dao) giving birth to the *Water*, the water collaterally assists the Great One, thereby producing the heaven. The heaven collaterally assists the Great One, thereby producing the earth. The heaven and earth again assist each other, thereby producing the spiritual and numinous. The spiritual and numinous again assist each other, thereby producing *yin* and *yang*....Thus it is that the Great One is hidden away in the Water, and travels with the seasons. It completes a cycle only to begin again, making itself the *mother* of everything that happens. (DDJ, Appendix. Slightly modified; italics mine.)

52. The significance of Water in relation to the Dao has been noted by Sarah Allan in her book *the Way of Water*, where she argues that water is a root metaphor of Chinese philosophy. According to the passage just cited, the image of *Water* overlaps with the *Mother* and finally denotes the Great One, another name of the Dao. In his advice to the wise on surviving the time of turmoil, Laozi suggests imitating the attributes of water. Water nourishes all life and everything turns to it; yet it never rules

over them, but positions itself in the lowly place.<sup>263</sup> Ancient Chinese thought noted several characteristics of water, according to Allen: (i) it flows continuously (DDJ 25); (ii) it flows along a course and downward (DDJ 20; 27; 32; 61; 66); (iii) it carries detritus; (iv) it is soft, weak, yielding, and non-contending; (DDJ 8; 39; 78) (iv) when still, it clears itself of sediment and becomes reflective; (DDJ 15) (vi) it is difficult to see.<sup>264</sup> Water overcomes everything because it does “nothing” to dominate the world. The attributes of water are the attributes of the Dao. Human beings, and especially rulers, ministers, and warriors, should imitate water, both for strategic benefit and to bring an end to violence under the heavens:

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way.... It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault. (DDJ 8)

53, Meditating on the characteristics of water, Laozi suggests that *effortless action* (*wuwei*) and *not contending* represent two distinct aspects of the same attribute: “Hence, because the sages do things noncoercively (*wuwei*), they do not ruin them, and because they do not try to control things, they do not lose them” (Lau, DDJ 64). “It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.” (Lau, DDJ 66). Imitating water, for a good warrior, means knowing how to avoid fighting, as water does:

One who excels as a warrior does not appear formidable; one who excels in fighting is never roused in anger; one who excels in defeating his enemy does not join issue; one who excels in employing others humbles himself before them.

This is known as the virtue of non-contention; this is known as making use of the efforts of others; this is known as matching the sublimity of heaven. (DDJ 68)

54. Practicing life as the way of water requires tranquility and stillness (DDJ 6;45) and the attainment of a perfectly level (spiritual) state. This is what Laozi means by effortless movement. It is not the stillness of dried plants in winter.<sup>265</sup> Human destiny (*ming*?) implies a transcendent dimension, called “constancy.” Stillness is a

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<sup>263</sup> The *Dao*, wending and weaving, can flow left or right. It achieves success and accomplishes its task, but we do not call it “having.” The myriad living things turn to it (?), yet do not take it as their ruler. The myriad things turning to someone, but not taking him as their lord, can be called being great. For this reason the sage’s ability to achieve greatness is because he does not act great. Hence, he is able to achieve greatness. Translated by Sarah Allan, quoted in *the Way of Water*.

<sup>264</sup> Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*. pp. 35-54

<sup>265</sup> Sarah Allen, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*. p.141.

means of “returning” to this transcendent realm. Thus to cultivate one’s stillness, to become “soft” (ruo) and “weak” (rou), is to expand one’s resiliency like water:

Nothing in the world is as soft and weak as water, and yet in attacking what is hard and strong, there is nothing that can surpass it. This is because there is nothing that can be used in its stead. There is no one in the world that does not know that the soft prevails over the hard and the weak prevails over the strong, and yet none are able to act accordingly. (DDJ 39;78)

55. Sarah Allen contrasts the image of water in the DDJ to images from the Hebrew Bible and Greek thought.<sup>266</sup> All three traditions associate water with original Chaos. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this association is invariably negative (Creation, the Flood). In Greek thought (e.g., Hesiod), chaos represents a cosmogonic state of total confusion, which must be regulated by the laws of nature. In early Chinese thought, the word disorder (*luan*) indicated the antithesis of civilization. States without a ruler, a mind, without cohesion, are *luan*; so are poorly defined familial relationships and poorly codified rites. In early Daoism, however, Chaos (*Hun-dun*) has none of these negative associations. On the contrary, the undifferentiated *Hun-dun* is regarded as the holistic origin of Heaven and Earth, manifested in the form of water. Water represents fluency and holism. The Dao particularly likes flowing water, which can run in any direction. Water doesn’t mind being counted as insignificant; this is the source of its holism and greatness (DDJ 34). Laozi envisions this cosmogonic process:

There is a thing confusedly formed, born before heaven and earth, silent and void. It stands alone and does not change, goes round and does not weary. It is capable of being the mother of the world. (DDJ 25)

56. Ellen M. Chen has observed that the core teaching of DDJ is a kind of ontological thinking based on a specific cosmological reference.<sup>267</sup> The mythological concept of Chaos is employed as a theoretical language by which the first principle is established as origin or primordial ground and source of being. In the Zhangzi, Chaos—still in its mythical form—is slain:

The Emperor of the South Sea was called Shu (Swift), the Emperor of the North Sea was called Hu (Sudden), and the emperor of the Central Region was called Chaos (Hun-tun). Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the land of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them generously. They

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p.39

<sup>267</sup> N.J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*, p.48. See also Ellen Marie Chen, “The meaning of *te* in the *Tao Te Ching*: An Examination of the Concept of Nature in Chinese Taoism,” *Philosophy East and West* 23 (1973): p.463.



said, “All men have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breath. But Hun-tun doesn’t have any. Let’s try to bore him some!” Everyday they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died.<sup>268</sup>

57. In this myth Chaos (Hun-dun), is the center of the world, the *axis mundi*. With no openings and no face, he resembles a sac, similar to the cosmic egg which represents the world’s harmony, undifferentiation and potentiality. The boring of Chaos in Zhang’s story symbolizes the “death/beginning” of human primordial nature. The death of Chaos, Norman Girardot notes, is not an initiation rite to inaugurate one into a social order. On the contrary, human beings are urged to return to their primordial status by imitating the chaotic unity through spiritual cultivation.

58. In DDJ 25, Chaos (*Hun*) is presented as the first principle of the world. Girardot points out that the focus of primitivist Daoism is on the pre-cosmic—the stage preceding the cosmogonic process.<sup>269</sup> In the beginning of the DDJ, the motif of mother is strongly attached to a theological theme that relates the Dao as the origin of the world. The “named” Dao, mother of the myriad things, and the “nameless” Dao, the origin of the heaven and earth, are still a part of the grand project of the “chaotic” unity of the primordial beginning. This unity, although both nameless and formless, can be named with a series mythologically significant terms, such as “mother,” “chaos,” or “ancestor” (DDJ.4), as well as other more abstract metaphysical terms such as “nothingness” (*wu*), “great” (*ta*), “empty” (*xu*), and “one” (*yi*).<sup>270</sup> DDJ developed a technical term, “*xuan*” (obscure/darkness/mystery), to define this chaotic status. According to Fung Yu-lan, the dynamism of Chaos suggests that an inner movement of the Dao exists prior to creation. As the DDJ says:

Those of magnificent power follow the Dao and the Dao alone. As a movement the Dao is elusive and vague. Though vague and elusive, there is image within it. Though elusive and vague, there is substance. Though dim and dark, there is an essence. This essence is authentic and has within it true credibility. (DDJ 21, my translation)

59. The “elusive and vague” (*huang-hu*), the “vague and elusive” (*hu-huang*), and the “dim and dark” (*yao-ming*) refers to the threefold structure of the Chaos in its undifferentiated condition. It resembles the “life-force” of the womb; the mystery at the foundation of heaven and earth (DDJ.6). Daoism employs a principle of identity, the *tung*, to regulate various attributes of the Dao.<sup>271</sup> Girardot contends that Zhuangzi’s

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<sup>268</sup> Burton Watson, *The complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. 97

<sup>269</sup> N.J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*, 50.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 52

<sup>271</sup> For example, Zhuangzi says: “Being identical [*tung?*], you will be empty [*xu?*]; being empty, you will be a great [*ta?*]. You may join [*ho?*] in the cheeping and chirping and, when you have joined in the

avored terms, “identity,” “emptiness,” “greatness” and “harmonization,” find their parallels in DDJ 1, 25, and 42. In DDJ 25, for instance, Laozi writes that the chaotic unity, the mystery, is the root of the world. Chaos is the mother of heaven and earth, although its name is not known; it is simply the “way.” Being the way, it must be called “the great.” Being great, it is also receding; receding, it is also far away; being far away, it is described as turning back (DDJ 25). Speaking as the Dao, the DDJ exclaims:

The entire world knows me as “great.” I am great, and yet bear a resemblance to nothing at all. Indeed, it is only because I resemble nothing at all that I am able to be great. If I did bear a resemblance to something else, for a long time now I would have been of little consequence. (DDJ 67)

60. In the “silk manuscript” of the *Mawangdui*, a Daoist manuscript which was recently excavated, the emphasis is on the great Dao as the origin of the world. As Girardot argues, the text can be read as a commentary on DDJ 25. The opening lines of the text speak of the chaotic state (*hun-cheng*) in its primal unity (*tong*): “In the beginning of the ancient past, all things were fused and were identical with the great vacuity (*tung-tung ta-xu*). Vacuous, and blended as one, resting in the [condition of] one eternally. Moist and chaotic (*shi shi meng meng*), there is no distinction of dark and light .... From the ancient times [Dao] had no form; it penetrated greatly but was nameless.”<sup>272</sup>

The Dao is seen as a birthing Mother as well as still water. It is grand, like the ocean, but humbles itself to collect detritus as “valley.” The primitivist Dao does not contend; “doing nothing,” she eventually overcomes all violence and all desire by her lowly “greatness.” The greatness of Dao comes from her chaotic character. By the nature of chaotic unity (*hun cheng*), she is able to identify myriad things and finally bring them back to the mysterious identity (*xuan tong*). How exactly does she achieve this? What is the immanent nature of the Dao that causes her to extend her compassion to the world and draws the world return to her mystery? To answer these questions, we must inquire into the threefold structure of the Dao.

### 3.2.3. The Immanent Nature of Ultimate Reality as the Spontaneity of Dao in its Nothing and Something.

61. In Daoist theological language of the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., the ultimate reality reveals its immanent nature as “Three in One” (*sanyi*). The celestial one worthy of primordial beginning, the celestial one worthy of numinous treasure, and the celestial one worthy of Dao and his powers are to be revered by name as the Highest God(s).

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cheeping and chirping, you may join with heaven and earth.”

<sup>272</sup> The Chinese Text sees Wen Wu 10 (1974): 42. Translated by Jan Yuen Hua, “The Manuscripts on Taoism” *T’oung Pao* 63 (1978): 65-84. quoted in N.Girardot, 54.

They are the Three Purities (*san-qing*); to each other, they are “worthy one.” This faith was eventually formulated in Trinitarian terms as follows: “the One as the *qi* transforms (*hua*) itself as Three Purities.” (*yi qi hua san qing*).

62. The characteristics of the Dao have been summarized in different ways within different theoretical systems. Fung Yu-lan, for example, has highlighted four characteristics of the Dao in the DDJ. According to Fung Yu-lan, (i) the Dao is nothing /emptiness (DDJ 14); (ii) Dao is constancy (DDJ 1;16;32;37;52;55); (iii) Dao is a circular movement (DDJ 25); (iv) Dao combines both being and nothing (DDJ.1).<sup>273</sup> These features, I would argue, point precisely to the Dao’s immanent nature as three and one. In order for its economic powers to become manifest, the immanent Dao must contain both being and nothing. DDJ 42 famously opens with the “three and one” account of the ultimate reality in relation to the cosmogonic process:

The Dao begets one; one begets two; two begets three;  
Three begets the myriad creatures....( DDJ 25)

63. Ames and Hall provide an alternative translation. In their reading, “way-making (*dao*) gives rise to continuity, continuity gives rise to difference, difference gives rise to plurality, and plurality gives rise to the manifold of everything that is happening (*wanwu*). According to this interpretation, one is equivalent to the process of continuity, two means the act of difference, and three symbolizes the plurality of the reality. This reading, write Ames and Hall, follows the notion of a Chinese contemporary philosopher, Tang Jungyi, who characterizes the Daoist worldview as “the inseparability of the one and the many, of continuity and multiplicity (*yiduo bufen guan*).”<sup>274</sup> For Tang, one and many are interdependent. The immanent nature of the Dao is inseparable from its economic procession. While I appreciate this perspective, I do not believe it takes into account the difference between the immanent nature of the Dao and its economic manifestation. Tang’s insistence on keeping the DDJ in the framework of monism cannot be reconciled with Daoism’s theological understanding of the Great One as the Three Purities.

64. For Max Kaltenmark, the concept expressed in DDJ 42 is close to mythology: “Heaven and Earth are conceived as the Father and Mother of creatures. The One is clearly an abstract designation of chaos which is itself generally described as an undifferentiated unitary condition of the ‘primordial breath’.”<sup>275</sup> Kaltenmark is aware of the Daoist “three and one” worldview, but hesitates to apply theological

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<sup>273</sup> Quoted in Jan Yun-Hua, “Problem of Tao and ‘Tao Te Ching’” in *Numen*, vol.22, Fasc.3. (Dec., 1975), pp.208-234.

<sup>274</sup> Roger T. Ames & David L. Hall, *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation*. 143.

<sup>275</sup> Max Kaltenmark, ‘La naissance du monde en Chine’ in *La naissance du monde* Paris: Editions du seuil, 1959, 464. quoted in Girardot, 57. See also J. Needham, SCC, 2:78.

analysis to this passage. He can understand the notion of *sanyi* only in historical perspective; he is unable grasp this *sanyi* worldview on the transcendental level.

65. My own view is that if the DDJ is read through the lens of the tradition established by the *Scripture of the Great Peace* and other Daoist *sanyi* commentaries, the triune nature of the Dao in the DDJ becomes obvious. A threefold understanding of the ultimate reality is already implied in the primitivist DDJ. Its immanent nature can be formulated as the triune structure of the spontaneity of Dao in its nothingness and something. This formula provides a theological lens for the Three Purities worship which developed later. The implications of the Three/One theological issue are explored in DDJ 1, 4, 6, 14, 21, 25, 41, and 42, as follows:

66. First. The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the constant way; the name that can be named is not the constant name. The *nameless* was the beginning of heaven and earth; the *named* was the mother of the myriad creatures... *these two are the same* but diverge in name as they issue forth. Being the same they are called mysteries, *mystery upon mystery*—the gateway of the manifold secrets. (DDJ 1)

67. Second. The *Dao* is *empty*, yet use will not drain it. Deep, it is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures. Blunt the sharpness; untangle the knots; soften the glare; let your wheels move only along old ruts. Darkly visible, it only seems as if it were there... (Lau, DDJ 4)

68. Third. The life-force of the valley never dies—this is called the dark female. The gateway of the dark female—this is called the root of the world. Wispy and delicate, it only seems to be there, yet its productivity is bottomless. (DDJ 6)

69. Fourth. What cannot be seen is called *evanescent*; what cannot be heard is called *rarefied*; what cannot be touched is called *minute*. There *three* cannot be fathomed and so they are confused and looked upon as *one*. (DDJ 14)

70. Fifth. As a thing the Dao is shadowy, indistinct. *Indistinct and shadowy*, yet within it is an *image*; *shadowy and indistinct*, yet within it is a *substance*. *Dim and dark*, yet within it is an *essence* (Lau, DDJ 21).

71. Sixth. There was something formless yet complete, that existed before heaven and earth; without sound, without substance, dependent on nothing; unchanging, all pervading, unailing. ... The ways of men are conditioned by those of earth. The ways of earth, by those of heaven. The ways of heaven by those of Dao, and *the ways of Dao by the Self-so (Ziran)* (DDJ 25)

72. Seventh. *The Dao begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures carry on their backs the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and blending the generative forces (qi?) together to make them harmonious (he?)* (DDJ 41)

73. A few observations can be drawn from these texts. There is a clear theoretical understanding of the ultimate reality. The Dao is identified as the One and it is empty.<sup>276</sup> This Dao is conditioned by the Self-so/Spontaneity. The Dao is evanescence, inaudibility, and intangibility (*xi-yi-wei*); Laozi maintains that these are both three and one (DDJ14). The process of the Dao is elusive and vague, vague and elusive, and dim and dark (DDJ 21). The nature of the Dao is: “one begets two; two begets three.” In the early first century, some Daoist commentators argued that Daoist faith arose from a search of the threefold nature of Nothingness. The Nothing gives rise to the One, and the One divides to Three Primes. The Nothing is the One. This threefold understanding of the Nothingness was characterized as the chaotic cavern (*Hun-Dung*), the red illumined Chaos (*Ci-Hun*) and the dim Silence.<sup>277</sup> According to the commentator, the chaotic Cavern is embodied as the Lord of the celestial treasure, the red illumined Chaos is the Lord of numinous treasure, and the dark Silence is the Lord of the spiritual treasure. This correspond to the Daoist worship of the celestial worthy of the primordial beginning, the celestial worthy of the numinous treasure, and the celestial worthy of the Dao and the for its powers.<sup>278</sup> In the 6th century C.E., a Daoist commentary states:

The key of three the ancient emperors received is “three and one”: the Ultimate One, the Authentic One, and the Mysterious One. The Three One names three primes. The original energy begets spirits, and these spirits and energies beget human beings. Human beings finally become spirits.<sup>279</sup> (My translation)

74. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Daoist commentator continues to elaborate the notion of Three Ones. In the text “*the scripture of spontaneity of emptiness and nothing in its very beginning*,” a Three-Ones’ language is developed as follows:

The Dao is the great beginning (*Taichu*)... This beginning of the Dao hides in

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<sup>276</sup> See. DDJ 10, 14, 22, 39

<sup>277</sup> Hu, Qide, “Taiyi and Sanyi” in *Journal of Easter Religious Study* (Vol.3) 1993.

<sup>278</sup> 雲笈七籤 卷三 「原夫家由肇，起自無先，垂跡感應，生乎妙一，從乎妙一，分為三元。…其三元者，第一混沌太無元，第二赤混太無元，第三冥寂玄通元。從混沌太無元，化生天寶君；從走混太無元，化生靈寶君；從冥寂玄通元，化生神寶君。」

<sup>279</sup> *Scripture of Wonderful Essence of the Spirit of Cavern and Eight Emperor* 洞神八帝妙精經

the great simplicity (*Taishu*). Dao is the One and the grand simplicity is the means of harmony. The great genesis (*Taishi*) is the source of *qi*. The three origins embrace each other: the *qi* embraces the spirit; the spirit embraces essence... The One (Red) embraces three and the three embraces one. When three and one has accomplished chaos and harmonization, it names the *Hun-dun* (*Chaos*). Thus the DDJ says: ‘The Dao begets one; one begets two; two begets three; Three begets the myriad creatures.’ And it says ‘the *Hun-dun* looks like an egg’. The Dao is triune can be called as emptiness, nothing and void.

75. The DDJ’s Three Ones language is important, but its theoretical explanation remains unclear and confused.<sup>280</sup> The One is the central teaching of the early Daoist school. Laozi asks, “in carrying about your more spiritual and more physical aspects and embracing their oneness, are you able to keep them from separating?” (Ames and Hall, DDJ 10). He asserts that “the sages grasp oneness to be shepherds (standard) to the world” (DDJ 22), and “Of old there were certain things that realized oneness: the heavens in realizing oneness became clear; the earth in realizing oneness became stable; the numinous in realizing oneness became animated; the river valleys in realizing oneness became full; the lords and kings in realizing oneness brought proper order to the world” (DDJ 39).

76. Crucial to understand the relation of the three ones in the DDJ is an awareness of the notion of *hua* (transformation, mutation, flux, metamorphism). From the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E, varying spiritual movements employed this concept. They spoke of the begetting (*shen*), the transformation (*hua*), change (*yi*), and flux (*bien*). Daoist theological language also reflects the influence of these movements: “The One as *qi* is transformed (*Hua*) as the three purities” (*yi qi hua san qing*). By the late period of the Warring states and time of the early Han dynasty, thinkers had come to employ four characters, “flux” (*bien*), “transformation” (*hua*), “change” (*yi*) and begotten (*shen*), to express the most momentous aspects of universal change. From the late 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C.E. to modern times, the terms *bien-hua*, *hua-shen*, and *bien-yi* are used in the Chinese language to denote the idea of change. In the *Zhuangzi*, for example, *hua* denotes both the physical transformation of myriad things and the greater cosmogonic and ontological transformation of ultimate reality. The term *hua* is not employed frequently in the DDJ. Laozi used it only twice, in both cases mainly with social-political connotations (DDJ 37; 57). The concept of transformation, however,

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<sup>280</sup> The issue is that the Dao in many places of the text is identified with the One (cf. DDJ 10, 14, 22, 39). In the case of “the way (Dao) begets one,” DDJ’s position becomes inconsistent, for it indicates the Dao is the origin of the One instead of the two being identified with each other. I conclude that the DDJ at this point does not completely realize the “mysterious identity” (*xuan tong*) of the immanent nature of the Dao.

occurs throughout the texts, usually in terms of begotten-ness. According to Laozi, this transformation can take place within the immanent nature of the Dao.

77. The root metaphors of the Dao as the mother giving birth to the world and as constantly changing water dominate Laozi's thinking. For Laozi, the spontaneity of the way is the fountainhead of the world. Tang Junyi comments that the Dao of the DDJ is an existing being that is a substantive principle in the realm of transcendence.<sup>281</sup> John C. Dider, in his study of DDJ 1, has differentiated a threefold nature of the Dao: the Constant Dao, the Dao of Nothing and the Dao of Something. The Constant Dao, he writes, is called by nature "Self-so" (*Ziran*); the Dao of Heaven is associated with the Nameless, and the Dao of Earth with Having-Name.<sup>282</sup> Having taken account of the various commentators on the DDJ, Dider contends that we still can find plenty of room for further speculation of the triune nature of the Dao. In DDJ 42, for example, we can identify "the One" as the Constant Dao, "the Two" as the Nameless and Named, and "the Three" as harmonized in the *qi* and sustained in the existence of Heaven, Earth, and the thousands and thousands mysteries of things.<sup>283</sup>

78. Dider's understanding of the DDJ is similar to my own, but I differ from him in drawing a distinction between the immanent nature of the Dao and its economic manifestations in the created order. This distinction, I argue, can go a long way to resolving some of the confusion created by commentators. DDJ tradition views the immanent nature of the Dao as indefinite and uncertain, as in this passage from DDJ 21:

The immanent process of the Dao is only indefinite and vague:

Though indefinite and vague, there is image within it.

Though vague and indefinite, there is event within it.

Though nebulous and dark, there is essence within it.

79. This passage describes the experience of primitivist Daoist practitioners in

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281 Tang Junyi *An Original Interpretation of Chinese Philosophy*.370-373

282 John C. Didier, *Way Transformation: Universal Unity in Warring States through Sung China—The Book of Transformation (Hua Shu) and the Renewal of Metaphysics in the Tenth Century*. A Dissertation. Princeton University. 1998. p.89

283 To compare modern scholarship with classical commentaries is interesting. In the commentary of Wang Pi, the author asks, "myriad things have myriad shapes but return to the One. How can they become One?" He answers: "because they are from nothingness. From nothingness comes One; this One may be called nothingness. Once it is called 'One,' how can it not be described? Having One and describing it, are there not two?" In the commentary of He-Shang-Gong, the Dao is identified with the One, the Two with the Yin and Yang, and the Three with the manifestations of the Yin and Yang and their harmonization, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. In the commentary of Gao Yu of the Han, "the One" is identified with the Dao, "the Two" are the numinous and illumined, and "the Three" are harmonious *qi*. In an alternative way, Gao Yu identified "the One" as primordial energy, but wrongly counted "the Two" as Heaven and Earth and simply ignored "the Three." Following the insight of Christian theologian Karl Rahner, I differentiate between immanence and economic within the divine nature. I contend that the saying "one begets two; two begets three" points to the immanent nature of the Dao, while the phrase "three begets the myriad creatures" expresses "three and one" vestiges in the universe and the human world.

heightened states of consciousness, glimpsing the inner process of the complete Dao on an ontological level. Though what is glimpsed is shadowy and indistinct, Laozi is able to pinpoint within the immanent Dao a threefold structure as image, event, and essence. Dider classifies the “indefinite and vague” image of the Dao as Having-name, and the “vague and indefinite” event as Nameless, the source of creative power. The nebulous and dark essence corresponds to the Constant Dao, perhaps the Original *qi*.<sup>284</sup> While Dider may risk stretching his speculations too far based on the textual evidence, I find his suggestions helpful. The following chart shows the names and characteristics associated with the threefold structure of the Dao, and their corresponding sections in the DDJ:

Ch	Immanent Nature of the Dao	Economic Powers: the De		
Ch.	One	Two	Three	The Three Begets Myriad Things
1	Constant Way; Dark upon Dark	Nameless; Dark; Beginnings of Heaven-and-Earth	Named; Mother of myriad things	Myriad Things carry on their back the yin and embrace in their arms the yang and are the blending of qi together to make them harmonious (he) DDJ42
4	The Way : Images the fore(mother or father) of God	Empty	Abysmally Deep: its is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures	
6	The gateway of the mysterious female Dark upon dark	Valley	Numen	
21	Essence	Shadowy and indistinct		
25	Ziran (Self-so, Spontaneity,	Dao	Heaven	Earth and Human Beings

<sup>284</sup> John Dider, *Way Transformation*, p.94



	naturalness )			
41	The Way	Nameless		
42	The Way begets One	One begets two	Two begets three	Three begets the myriad creatures

Table 1: The Immanent Dao and its Economic Powers in the DDJ

80. In this chart, the threefold structure of the Dao and its economic manifestation are clearly laid out. The One represents the Dao’s mysterious origin of inmost being, speculatively referred to as the self-so of the Dao. This Dao has the added character of self-emptiness. The fountain of unrestricted creativity styled as nothingness, the ultimate reality is the way of the Nothingness in its Self-so, this is the transcendent order of the Dao.

81. A.C. Graham, in a lengthy article on *ziran* (self-so), understands the concept as expressing opposition to “rational deliberation.” He defines the notion as “all activity that is not the result of a considered choice.” Awareness is the imperative for all action; rational deliberation is subsumed into the process that leads spontaneously to action.<sup>285</sup> While Graham’s major concern is on the ethical dimension of the *ziran*, Joel Kupperman notes that:

Spontaneity (*ziran*), in the sense that everyone has it, is the occurrence of a thought or an action, or the formation of a preference, in a descriptive and explanatory context in which it is anomalous.<sup>286</sup>

82. These modern scholars are concerned with the economic aspect of the *ziran*. Traditional commentators, in contrast, tended to focus on the immanent side of the Dao. He Shang-gong, for example, interprets the One as the Dao.<sup>287</sup> The immanent nature of the Dao, Laozi explains, is nothingness,<sup>288</sup> but its nature is conditioned by the *ziran*. Commentators throughout history have struggled over an accurate description of the nature of the Dao. At the heart of the matter is the question of which is the highest

<sup>285</sup> A. C. Graham. *Reason and Spontaneity* p.4..

<sup>286</sup> Joel Kupperman. *Learning from Asian Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.89.

<sup>287</sup> Eduard Erkes, “Ho-Shang-King’s Commentary on Lao-tse.” *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 8.No.2/4. (1945)

<sup>288</sup> Laozi also argues: The thirty spokes converge at one hub, but the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness (*wu?*) inside the hub. We throw clay to shape a pot, but the utility of the clay pot is a function of the nothingness inside it. We bore out doors and windows to make a dwelling, but the utility of the dwelling is a function of the nothingness inside it. Thus, it might be something (*you?*) that provides the value, but it is nothing that provides the utility. (Ames & Hall, DDJ 11)

manifestation of the ultimate reality: the Dao, Nothingness, or Ziran.<sup>289</sup> Yan Ling-feng, who follows the route of traditional commentary, defines *ziran* as referring to “the primordial condition of the ultimate horizon of the universe. It implies the meaning of suchness or totality of the world; Nature.”<sup>290</sup> According to this definition, the concept of *ziran* implies a sense of self-causation. According to the *Sanyi* tradition, the self-causation of the Dao revels in its emptiness and its birthing of myriad things. These three (*ziran*, nothingness, and something) are one, and one is three.

83. As apparent from the above chart, *ziran* is crucial to our understanding of the immanent structure of the Dao. It was Laozi who first combined the characters *zi* and *ran* into *ziran* to express the spontaneity or naturalness of the ultimate reality (DDJ 17, 23, 25, 37 and 64). The precise meaning of the original word is obscured. The term *zi* refers to reflexive action (action performed on oneself). The word *ran* originally meant “to burn,” but as the second part of *ziran*, came to mean “like this.”<sup>291</sup> The Daoist understanding of the term *ziran* focuses on actions taken to maintain quiescence, stability and harmony, such as when a flower, ant, baby, jungle, village, or river obeys its interior or exterior condition. By no means an exhaustive definition of *ziran*, this dimension of the term sees the imitation of the natural world as following the way of Heaven.

84. The mystery of Dao remains the infinite, the indefinable, and the ineffable. As the original source of the world and human beings, *ziran* is nameless, impenetrable. We cannot dominate it with our minds and calculations. The Dao is something human beings yield to in desire, writes Laozi, but the “name” points to what is nameless and incomprehensible. In my view, the term *ziran* in the DDJ is close to the concept of self-communication, as defined by modern theologians. It evokes the divine indwelling. Karl Rahner, for example, describes the concept of self-communication in this way: “God bestows God’s very self to human being. God gives God’s self as God, i.e., as infinite being. God gives the very reality, the inner, divine, Trinitarian life. God bestows the internal essence of divine being upon human beings.”<sup>292</sup> In the same way the *ziran* is a real ontological communication of Dao to the myriad things and human beings. Rahner refers to this mode of the Dao’s self-communication in its immanent nature as “quasi-formal causality, a modification of Aristotle’s “formal causality.” Aristotle takes “form” to be exhausted in what it informs, but the spontaneous Dao is never exhausted in its self-communication to the world. As Laozi says: “[the Dao]

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289 In DDJ 25, Laozi exclaims: [Human beings] model themselves on earth, earth on heaven, heaven on the way, and the way on the *ziran*. (Lau, DDJ 25, slightly modified from its literal meaning). The meaning of this phrase “the way on the Ziran” has led to numerous discussions among commentators.

290 Yan, Ling-feng. *A Study of Laozi and Zhuangzi*???. Taipei: Chung Hwa Publisher, 1966. 77

291 Duan Yucui, *Shuo wen jiezi zhu* Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Publishers, 1981, 480.

292 George Vandervelde, “The Grammar of Grace: Karl Rahner as a Watershed in Contemporary Theology,” *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): p.446.

stands alone and does not change, goes round and does not weary.”<sup>293</sup>

85. The Dao, as the quasi-formal causality of the world in its most unrestricted way (no-thing) freely shares its inner nature (something) by self-so communication (*ziran*) to myriad things. At the same time, it begets the world by compassion (*ci*) and imprints the world (heaven, earth, and human beings) with its characters (the Three beget the myriad things). Contemplating the “space” between Heaven and earth, Laozi compares it to a bellows, which, “even though empty it is not vacuous. Pump it and more and more comes out.” (Ames and Hall, DDJ 5) “The myriad creatures in the world are born from Something, and Something from Nothing.” (Lau, DDJ 40) It should be noted that the Daoist notion of nothingness differs greatly from the usual western conception. In the religious tradition of the West, nothingness is generally associated with nihilism, estrangement, finitude, anxiety, sin, evil, destructive powers, and death. In the DDJ, on the contrary, nothingness is the creative ground out of which the myriad things have come. Robert E. Carter writes of “the Nothingness beyond God,” as the “undivided something” out of which even God emerges.<sup>294</sup> For Huinanzi, the nature of nothingness is emphasized on the way of negativity:

In the period of “there was not yet a beginning of the not yet beginning of non-being (triple negative),” Heaven and Earth had not yet split, the Yin and Yang had not yet become differentiation, the four seasons were not separated, and the myriad things had not yet come into birth. It was vastly tranquil and silently transparent. Forms were not visible. It was like light in the midst of Nonbeing, which retreats and is lost sight of.<sup>295</sup>

86. The High God of ancient China reigning in power is contradictory to the Dao of Laozi, which has emptied itself of divinity and abdicated to necessity. Dao is sheer no-thing and freedom. Human beings, in our limited lives, refuse the nothingness of Dao out of desire and an insatiable craving for domination, but according to the DDJ, we can only become one with the Dao by uniting ourselves to a Dao emptied of its divinity. The Mother Dao has given up the supreme power to act within the world; the begetting Dao is essentially a passion for powerlessness. Laozi’s notion of nothingness implies a profound resistance to world power—to disordered desires acting in the world. Indeed, according to his understanding, human beings are more “powerful” than the Dao. The Dao of Nothingness, having a negative relation to the world, can bring about effects in the world only by means of “weakening” (DDJ 40), inspiring human

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<sup>293</sup> See Karl Rahner’s discussion on Christian side “Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace,” *Theological Investigation* 1: pp. 330-331.

<sup>294</sup> Robert E. Carter, “The Nothingness beyond God,” *Eastern Buddhist* 18 (1985): p.125.

<sup>295</sup> quoted in David C. Yu, “The Creation Myth and Its Symbolism in Classical Taoism” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 31, No.4 (Oct., 1981), p.485.

desire toward effortless action. This immanent but transcendent nature of the DDJ has led to its being named “uncarved block” and “simplicity,” terms connoting nothingness. The nothingness of the Dao is a state of perfect quiescence in which all the action of the external world is achieved. Chang Chung-yuan writes: “One’s own will will cease and every trace and mark of limitations and conditions will vanish. No thought will disturb. One becomes aware of a Heavenly radiance within. It is light in darkness.”<sup>296</sup> For Laozi, the attainment of absolute reality means attaining to the realm of the great infinite, the realm of nothingness. Images like the light of darkness and the uncarved block point to great simplicity. In this great simplicity, nothingness as the absolute identification and interfusion of everything shows its character as “unification of subject and object, the knower and the known.” A three and one indwelling is achieved by immediate, spontaneous self-communication.<sup>297</sup>

87. If the *Ziran* is an ultimate reality such that the unrestricted way can be begotten from it and every movement illustrates it, why are there unspontaneous, forced actions? Why is the Dao lost in the human world? Sung-peng Hsu suggests that there exist two kinds of changes in the DDJ: spontaneous changes and unspontaneous changes. The former are in accord with the immanent nature of the Dao; the latter presuppose the Dao. Unspontaneous changes come about by the competitive polarity and dialectical movement between *yin* and *yang*. When the *yang* factors “neglect,” the pairing partner, the *yin*, assert themselves independently, competing with other *yang* factors, they cause and causing unspontaneous changes to take place.<sup>298</sup> Spontaneous changes, by contrast, involve the harmonization of *yin* and *yang* factors, bringing about an ordered relation in the Dao. The spontaneity of nothingness is the source of something.

88. Zhuangzi also pondered the relation between the something and unrestricted nothingness of the Dao. Affirmation, he wrote, “arises from negation and negation from affirmation. ...Affirmation and negation alike blend into the infinite One.”<sup>299</sup> *The scripture of the Great Peace* (the TPJ) calls the Dao the pole of great transformation and the master of great change.<sup>300</sup> Dao is the primordial energy (*qi*) at the foundation of the world. This primordial energy comes from the transforming power of the Dao and transforms everything:

What is the meaning of the Dao? It is the principle of the myriad things whose

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<sup>296</sup> Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism*.pp.48-49.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>298</sup> Sung-peng Hsu, “Two Kinds of Changes in Lao Tzu’s Thought,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 4 (December, 1977): 329-355; see also “Laotzu’s Conception of Evil” *Philosophy East and West* 26, no.3 (July, 1976): 301-316.

<sup>299</sup> Zhuangzi Chapter 2, quoted in Chang Chung-yuan p.56.

<sup>300</sup> Wang Ming, *Taipin Jing He Jiao*. p.662.

name we cannot reach. Between the center of the Heaven, earth, and the four directions (*liu-ji*), nothing can be transformed without the Dao. The primordial energy (*qi*) follows the Way in order to beget the myriad things. Big and small things come from the begetting Dao.<sup>301</sup> (My translation)

89. According to the TPJ, the “immediate spontaneity” of the ordered world (Heaven, earth and humanity) finds its “progenitor” in the “three and one”. While things begin in the primordial *qi*, the primordial *qi* is elusive and vague in its self-so and “condenses” to become the One. This power of creativity is named Heaven, the beginning of the myriad things. When Heaven divides and begets the *yin*, the earth, it is two. The intercourse of Heaven and earth begets human being, and this is three.<sup>302</sup> Because the Three in turn beget the ordered world, the TPJ says, we find the “three and one” everywhere: the great *yang*, the great *yin*, and the harmony between them; the sun, moon, and stars; father, mother, and children; the emperor, ministers and people.

90. Robert Neville observes: “from the perspective of creation *ex nihilo*, the spontaneous activity of emergence or change reflects the ontological grounding of the change in the creator.” Speculating on the profound relations in the immanent Dao, Neville argues that the *yin* and *yang*, in creating the world, are “strictly correlative.”<sup>303</sup> According to Neville; the early Daoist theological thinking is a way of incipience. This theological meditation uses ontological speculation on human experience to refer to a more fundamental ground of being. For example, the named Dao is the beginning of the world. It is the basic structure of the world, the mother, the way of movements and time, the way of ten thousand things, the way of the Heaven and earth. But the fountain of the named Dao is the nameless Dao, the constant Dao.<sup>304</sup> This expression doesn’t mean there exist two Ways, but Laozi indicates that the essence and certitude of something (*yu*) is nothing (*wu*) in its self communication. He says that the spokes converge at one hub, and the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness inside it.(DDJ 11) Daoist theoretical construction always implies a soteriological concern. Apparently the Daoist advocates that human beings a return to the Stone Age, the primitive condition of human living. In fact, the DDJ asks to restore the depth of transcendent order in our present society. Human history has disconnected its present situation from its ontological root. We should sit and forget our present disordered life and restore the chaotic unity and invisible vitality. Therefore, a return to the womb of the Mother Dao, the unrestricted freedom of nothingness is celebrated. Finding the

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301 Ibid., p.16.

302 Wang Ming, p.305.

303 Robert Neville, “From Nothing to Being: the Notion of Creation in Chinese and Western Thought” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.30.No.1 (Jan., 1980), p.27

304 Robert Neville, *Behind the masks of God: an essay toward comparative theology* New York: SUNY 1991, 76

function of nothingness in the utility of the clay pot recognizes that the unconditional freedom can be found within space and time. The quest of the order of Three in One is not a pure theological speculation, but a soteriological act to change our present situation. It encourages us to abandon artificial works. It is an invitation to the impulse of tranquility in an eternal now.

### 3.3. Verified Faith of the Triadic Realty in the DDJ

#### 3.3.1 *Guan* 觀 and *Ming* 明 in the DDJ

91. The goal of theoretical speculation is to manifest the truth of reality. Human knowledge of existence should come from inside. Ellis Sandoz explains that existential knowledge elucidates experiences of good, beauty, justice, of love, friendship and truth, of all human virtue and vice, and , most importantly, of divine reality.<sup>305</sup> In the European classical experience, the knowledge of existence was captured by terminologies such as *episteme*, *aletheia*, and *theoria*. These terms refer to the experientially rooted mode of knowing in the primary level of meaning. Reality, indeed, is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it.

92. In early Daoism, spiritual exercise finds verification of the theoretical speculation of reality through the adept's participation. In terms of the DDJ, this exercise is *guan* (contemplation) and *ming* (illuminated consciousness). Modern scholarship tends to ignore the religious experience expressed in the DDJ. For example, Livia Kohn summarizes the major intellectual trend by saying: "the text conspicuously lacks concrete descriptions of mystical methods, physical or otherwise. Nor does it show the emphasis on the mind and on the development of the individual known from later mystical literature. In other words, the *Daode Jing*, as it stands, is not obviously a mystical document."<sup>306</sup> On the other hand, Kohn also notes that the Daoist commentary tradition takes the DDJ as the original source of spiritual experience. "Together with the *Zhuangzi* it has shaped and influenced Chinese mysticism like no other text."<sup>307</sup>

93. Harold Roth argues that there are abundant evidences showing that mystical praxis can be found in the DDJ and its spiritual context. The failure of modern scholarship is to ignore the larger context of "inward training" tradition that the DDJ shared. In *Zhuangzi* passages, for example, we find numerous indications of practicing "sit and forget", of letting organs and members drop away", of dismissing eyesight and hearing, of parting from the body and expelling knowledge, of merging with the universal thoroughfare". As Roth argues, these spiritual practices are similar to the ancient practice of inward training.

94. According to Roth, the mystical praxis of early Daoism can be differentiated into three stages: the preamble stage calms the normal consciousness; resists disordered desire, limits the activities of sense perception, controls the emotions

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<sup>305</sup> Ellis Sandoz, "Editor's Introduction," Ellis Sandoz ed., *Eric Voegelin: Published Essays 1966-1985* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990, p.xx.

<sup>306</sup> Livia Kohn, *Early Chinese Mysticism*. p.40

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41

and cultivates knowledge and wisdom. In the next consecutive stage, spiritual growth heightens consciousness, upright body and regulates breathing. This stage addresses the goal of tranquility and equanimity. The mind pursues a state of being unadorned, being concentrated or purified, being illuminated, having a numinous spirit, and, finally, attaining the Way of Self-so or Nothingness. Some practical benefits achieved in the first two stages included instantaneous accurate cognition, spontaneous responsiveness to things, ability to return to simplicity, insight in which nothing is unrevealed, and taking effortless action and at the same time action in a non-coercive manner. 308

95. A Chinese scholar, Wang Shuren repeatedly argues that Chinese metaphorical thinking always pursues “holistic intuition and bodily awaking”<sup>309</sup> He names this experientially rooted mode of knowing “image thinking”. Image thinking takes images in life experience, processes them through interaction of images by inner dynamism, and finally verifies the theoretical knowledge in contemplative meditation. In the DDJ, Laozi put this participatory verification in terms of *guan*. For example, in the DDJ 16, Laozi addresses this issue clearly. He said:

I do my utmost to attain emptiness; I hold firmly to stillness. The myriad creatures all rise together and I watch (*guan*) their return. The teaming creature all return to their separate roots. (DDJ 16)

96. According to the DDJ and its commentary tradition, the ultimate reality as three and one is based on the epistemic function of contemplation. The utmost emptiness attains the realm of transcendence. For Laozi, the nothingness or emptiness or void represents the utmost theological construction to which our thinking can extend. In Daoist terms the ultimate reality is the chaotic unity. To hold stillness corresponds to the reality of emptiness. Stillness or tranquility, characteristic of the Mother Dao, can be imaged as a baby held quietly in her mother’s womb. The baby grows, but at the same time she gains her power of growth by the power of tranquility. (DDJ 28) Contemplation imitates this mother and baby relationship and the adept experiences the Way of Self-so as a baby experiences the nurturing power in the mother’s womb. The process of physiological and mental exercise aims at this state of tranquility.

97. DDJ mentions that “the myriad creatures all raise their separate roots,” pointing to the phenomenon (*yu*) that we are able to retrieve our root. But the contemplative meditation is not merely a matter of empirical observation of fact “but of clarifying, opening up, and rendering conscious and available the possibilities

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308 Harold Roth, “The Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis” in *Religious Philosophical Aspects Laozi* Edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip Ivanhoe. p.70

309 Wang Shuren. “The Original Creativity of *Zhou yi* and its Thinking Characteristic” in *Philarchisophia and Contemporary Education*. Edited by Yang Shi Beijing: Social Science Documentation Publishing House. 2003 p.290-291



implicit in existence in its fullness.”<sup>310</sup> To verify the ultimate reality thus is a reflective mode of knowing by which the truth of existence and of reality becomes luminous in the realm of interiority.

98. The DDJ emphasizes the epistemic function of *guan* in order to verify the ultimate reality as three and one. For Laozi, contemplation means to go beyond the theoretical realm, it is a speechless act. He declares: “the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking effortless action and practices the teaching that uses without speech” (DDJ 2). This is important to those sages who “reach an understanding of the benefits of teachings that go beyond what can be said and of doing things non-coercively.” (DDJ 43) Apparently the concept of speechless words is self-contradictory. Without language, human communication becomes impossible. So what does speechless teaching mean in the DDJ? To answer this question, we should handle two issues: language and its pedagogical function.

99. For Laozi, language is not a perfect vehicle to express ultimate reality, for it only functions well within social practices and conventions. “Language is a regulative, conventional activity which carries most of the burden of ‘socializing’ us – generating and reinforcing in us attitudes and patterns of action.”<sup>311</sup> If language is conditioned by the preconceptions and prejudices of social practices, it is not permanent and can be manipulated by different interest groups. Therefore, human beings struggle constantly with the imperfection of human mediation of communication. For Laozi, teaching, therefore, is not collecting empirical data, analyzing information and reciting some memorable phrases of ancient times. The DDJ shows no interest in dogmatic formulation but tries to convey something that cannot be formulated in terms of propositions or categories.

100. Speechless teaching is paradoxical; it invites people to think creatively and to keep a reflective distance from human consciousness. This speechless teaching is a form of contemplation. Joseph Needham defines *guan* not as the meditative duty of the recluse to look within himself, but rather as an observation about “the natural phenomena.”<sup>312</sup> This definition is too narrow for primitive Daoism, where contemplative action moves from inside out. For example, in DDJ 54, Laozi differentiates five layers of contemplation for the adept. As he says: “just as through oneself one may contemplate Oneself, so through the household one may contemplate the Household, and through the village, one may contemplate the Village, and through the chiefdom, one may contemplate the Chiefdom, and through the empire, one may

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<sup>310</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* p.5.

<sup>311</sup> Chad Hanson, “Linguistic Skepticism in Lao Tzu,” *Philosophy East and West* 31 (July 1981) p. 327

<sup>312</sup> Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* Vol. II. London: Cambridge University Press, 1956, p. 57.

contemplate under the Heaven.”<sup>313</sup>

101. The Chinese character *guan* consists of radicals “bird” (隹) and “seeing” (見). Ellen Chen interprets the word as “to see the world as the birds do, that is from on high.”<sup>314</sup> In other words, the *guan* is not only seeing things in depth and in details, it also rises high to achieve a comprehensive bird view. In the case of the DDJ 54, there exists a scale of seeing from the personal level to the utmost level of Heaven.

102. Throughout history, the Daoist priests named the temple as *guan*. The first chapter of the DDJ contains the whole work in a nutshell. Laozi, after indicating the profound relation between the way of constancy, the way of nothing and the way of something, immediately points out that “truly, only he that rids himself forever of desire can see (*guan*) the secret essences.” (DDJ 1) Self-cultivation is the key to verifying the existence of Dao. Chang Chuan-yuan points out the contemplative insight that we simultaneously see both the nameable, the manifestations of the Dao and the nameless, the immanent nature of the Dao. In the third paragraph of the DDJ 1, Laozi explains that human beings are unable to *guan* the mystery of the Dao except we abandon the dominated desire to cognize it in the way of looking at the empirical world. Yet, with our desire, we still can see (*guan*) the outcomes/boundaries of the Dao. In Shigenori Nagatomo’s terms, the meaning of desire is directionality within a noetic act.” The boundaries are the limit that human desire can reach.<sup>315</sup> To understand the reality as three and one, the *guan* is the bridge to connect these Three Ones. In contemplation, we are able to see where the boundaries are drawn, and at the same time, the *guan* leads us to go beyond the border. By contemplation, we can contemplate the secret of the constant Dao, at the same time, the way of something. (DDJ1). By contemplation, the DDJ means we are able to receive illumination (*ming*).

103. Laozi rejects ritual knowledge of his time; he argues that people should remain ignorant of any knowledge. (DDJ, 3) He criticizes knowledge as something harmful that causes disordered desires. Throughout the DDJ, Laozi shows a negative attitude toward knowledge; he even is willing to be called an idiot. (DDJ 20) I argue that this radical attitude toward knowledge is understandable, given the religious practice of Bright Hall that shapes the ritual and social knowledge of his time. Going back to his ideal fiefdom, he will say, “the wise are not erudite, and the erudite are not wise.” (DDJ 81), He also maintains that “In loving the common people and breathing life into the state, are you able to do it without recourse to wisdom?” (DDJ 10). Laozi’s “anti-intellectualism” should be read in the deeper light of his theological criticism of the Bright Hall worldview.

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<sup>313</sup> Waley’s translation of DDJ 54, slightly modified by myself

<sup>314</sup> Ellen Chen, *The Tao Te Ching: A New Translation with Commentary*. New York: Paragon House, 1989. p.54.

<sup>315</sup> Shigenori Nagatomo, “An Epistemic Turn in the *Tao Te Ching*: A Phenomenological Reflection,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 23 (June 1983): p.178

104. Many scholars tend to read Daoism as a competing school with Confucianism and to interpret Laozi's negation of human knowledge as opposition to Confucian social ritualism. To a certain degree, this is true. But my observation is that Laozi's negative attitude toward ritual knowledge should be read in light of the contrast between *zhi* 智 and *ming* 明. The meaning of *zhi* is "knowledge," "learning" or "to know," "to comprehend." For Laozi, ritual knowledge is external and superficial and can be manipulated by the political interests of the ruling clans. The knowing of *zhi* takes external knowledge as everlasting patterns of human life as if they were timeless taboo. When ruling clans are everywhere vigilant, the common people are cunning. (DDJ 58) Laozi images that "of old those who excelled in the pursuit of the way did not use it (*zhi*) to enlighten the people but to hoodwink them. The reason why the people are difficult to govern is that they are too 'clever' (DDJ 65), their 'cleverness' caused by the mimetic desires among ruling clans and people, As Laozi says:

The more prohibitions there are, the more ritual avoidances, the poorer the people will be. The more 'sharp weapons' there are, the more benighted will the whole land grow. The more cunning craftsmen there are, the more pernicious contrivances will be invented. The more laws are promulgated, the more thieves and bandits there will be. (DDJ 57)

105. So what Laozi criticizes is mimetic knowledge of social life by which human desires are stimulated for accumulating competitions, pleasures, wealth, power, fame and various favors. (DDJ 3;12) Any knowledge, which causes anxiety of mind and agitation of harmony, will lead to Laozi's spiritual resistance.

106. On the other hand, Laozi's reinterpretation of the concept of *ming* in his religious background is worthy of note. As already explained, the word *ming* (brightness, illumination) comes from the Bright Hall religious world. The original meaning of the word refers to the ritual setting where sacrifices were offered to the ancestral spirits; it implies the mandate coming from the High God. The composition of the word *ming* is simply "sun" and "moon". In the DDJ, Laozi emphasizes its epistemic function such as discernment, acuity, self-reflection, illumination, even mystical vision.<sup>316</sup> Laozi declares that "to know the Self-so is to be illumined." (DDJ 16) Again, "Making out the small is real illumination; safeguarding the weak/soft is real strength. He who having used the outer-light can return to the inner-light (*ming*) is thereby preserved from all calamities. This is called resorting to the Self-so." (DDJ 52) (my adoption from various translations)

107. The human mind has been known as the field of the Dao, Laozi names it the "dark (mysterious) mirror" (?). If one desires to be illumined and verifies the

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<sup>316</sup> See the DDJ 4,16,27,33,41,52, 56,58,65

authenticity of the Dao, he should purify and concentrate his mind by spiritual practices. He should be accompanied by the consciousness of the quest and cultivate his/her life field(s) everyday.<sup>317</sup> The quest will be surrounded by the mysterious Dao as the boundary that draws us to moving forward.<sup>318</sup> Laozi believes that the inner light (*ming*) can direct our mind to the quest for truth. For this reason he asks his disciples to polish the mind/heart and leave no blemish on it. (DDJ 10) Truth can be found within the self by practical methods. For the beginner, the method of *via Negativa* is basic for spiritual practice. He instructs him “to block up the openings, and shut the gate ways” and promises, “to the end of your days your energies will not be used up.” (DDJ 54)

108. Positively speaking, Laozi’s notion of illumination refers to human inner experience. To be illumined means to differentiate the operation of human consciousness/energy, and by doing so, to know the One in Three within. This divine-human movement is manifested as a human seeking in response to a mysterious drawing and moving from the mysterious Dao by practice of the effortless action. The process of verification of the ultimate reality can be called “the meditative complex” in which the “human quest reaches a climax with the discovery of the quest itself as a source of order and disorder in existence.”<sup>319</sup> For the Daoist tradition, this meditative complex can be symbolized as the Bright (Illumined) Hall; it is envisioned as a sacred space to nurture selfhood. It is the place to manifest the emptiness and nothing. An adept, by establishing a “psychological focus” of spiritual cultivation, which means the “illumined hall” of mind, will experience the original reality revealed. A Daoist commentator has said by blocking up the openings, and shutting the gateways, the spiritual tree can be planted.<sup>320</sup> In a commentary, the *Book of the Yellow Court*, the ancient Bright Hall political image is transformed to the symbol of spiritual cultivation: “the Bright Hall opens onto the four directions, in the middle of a circular pool (Pi-yong), there is the True Person Cinnabar-of-the-North, and he [represents] me. The vital Spirit descends through the Three Passes. If you do not wish to die, take care of the K’un-lun...” To attain the reality of emptiness presupposes a correct use of images. In search of the illumined experience, the DDJ has developed a contemplative method namely Keeping the One to achieve the ideal end of humanity.

### 3.3.2. Keeping the Three Ones

109. Keeping the One is the summary of the Taoist contemplation. The idea

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<sup>317</sup> Neidan Daoism identifies that human life are constituted by three energy fields named the upper, middle and lower “cinnabar” fields.

<sup>318</sup> Eric Voegelin, “Wisdom,” p.245.

<sup>319</sup> I borrow this term from Eric Voegelin, see his discussion in “Wisdom” p.268.

<sup>320</sup> Peng Xiao, DZ Vol.20, p.137.

comes from Laozi's notion of searching for illumination of one's mind, at the same time, detaching from the perplexity of five senses. "Can you embrace in your arms the One and not let go?" asks Laozi. (DDJ 10) Ge Hong (283-343 CE), the Master-Who-Embraces-Simplicity, declares that what all Daoists take most sacred is the names of the One. He told us that this One is "Three Ones" which can be differentiated in our mind and which he symbolized as the "great Ravine of the Pole Star" and this Pole Star divided symbolically to three parts as "the Bright Hall", "the Scarlet Palace" and the lower Cinnabar field in the human body. If Harold Roth is right, the DDJ should be read in a broad mystical and medical context connecting it with the inward training tradition or it should be related to the Yellow Emperor medicinal tradition as Ge Hong suggested. Interestingly, Daoist meditation aims to verify the cosmic qualities of one's authentic self as "three and one." Livia Kohn said that Daoism employs three forms of meditation: concentrative meditation, insight meditation and ecstatic excursion, to achieve the ends.<sup>321</sup> What Laozi presents in the DDJ is the concentrative meditation, the rest of the contemplative forms are later development borrowed from ancient shamanic tradition and Buddhism. Kohn suggests that the concentrative meditation focuses on the One. "One" (*i*) in Chinese also means "total" and "complete," symbolized as a circle rather than a number. For Daoists, it is the most profound circle before the world, the singular point of ultimate reality.<sup>322</sup> This circular emptiness named the Great One is omnipresent in all creation and the adept is called to focus on it. The Great One, that the Daoists understand, is not the numerical one but the great circle of unqualified freedom (nothing) that begets the world (something) as a creator (the Three Ones or Three in One).

110. Schipper said that Keeping the One refers to "keeping together" one's vital energies in order that all of them remain with nothing lost.<sup>323</sup> Keeping the One provides a method to search for equilibrium and harmony of selfhood through breathing practices that are in many ways inseparable from the precepts of hygiene and Chinese medicine. Schipper points out that Keeping the One means being in search of the center. Mapping a complicated world in symbols (the *yin* and *yang*, five phases, the eight trigrams, sixty-four hexagrams etc.), the Daoists try to free life from the disordered world by regulating manifold experiences. But this systemization of the symbolic world is not rigorous, but composed of resilient exercises in order to achieve one's unqualified freedom (nothing, emptiness, chaotic unity, harmony, tranquility, purity etc.). The wisdom of the DDJ is to recognize the openness of any system, Laozi talks of this openness as being "defective" He declares that "what is most consummate seems defective, yet using it does not wear it out." (DDJ 45) Keeping the One takes the

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<sup>321</sup> Livia Kohn (ed.), *The Taoist Experience: An Anthology*. p.191.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 192

<sup>323</sup> Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*. p.132

essence of everything in the *wu*-form.<sup>324</sup> Laozi, alert that the worldly order is based on its changing and transforming character, offers cultivation as a kind of disposition that frees up the energy from the “system” (concepts, theories, moral precepts etc.). By developing a reflective distance we are able to learn the deferential act which is to engage ourselves in yielding (and being yielded to) based on “an acknowledgement of the shared excellence of particular foci in the process of one’s own self cultivation.”<sup>325</sup>

111. An excavated jade knob inscription reveals the earliest Daoist practice of inner cultivation. Scholars agree that this is the earliest evidence for the practice of guided vital energy in China.<sup>326</sup> Gai Jianming in the book *Taoist Medicine* suggests that the DDJ shares the same original source with Chinese medical history. Early Taoism is the major contributor to the development of the medical field. For example, the holistic worldview, the theory of balance, the preventive approach to disease, and a living style based on effortless action are largely adopted by the Inner Classic of the Yellow Emperor, the basic text for Chinese medical students.<sup>327</sup> Harold Roth also argues that the parallels between the Inward Training tradition and the DDJ are obvious. In two mystical schools, the Way of Self-so is presented as both ineffable yet concrete. He based on his extent textual study argues that diversified yet closely related inward training communities did exist in the early China. The content of the practices might be different, but the threefold progressive stage is the same among them.<sup>328</sup>

112. The most direct evidence on spiritual exercise in the DDJ is Chapter 10 wherein to keep the One is encouraged. To concentrate on the vital energy and to clean the “profound mirror”, heightened consciousness, is required. Chang Chung-yuan said that in this chapter Laozi encourages breathing exercises for concentration and purification. The most tranquil experience of one’s innermost world is the unification of consciousness. Laozi promises that when the gate of Heaven (that means nothing), the one or the unified Chaos, manifests to the innermost self, one finds his authentic identification.<sup>329</sup>

113. Daoists believe that the Dao manifests as three original energies in the form of power in the human body. To verify them, one should go back to the realm of

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<sup>324</sup> By using Ames and Hall’s term, see *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Interpretation*. p.36

<sup>325</sup> Ames and Hall, p.38

<sup>326</sup> This inscription states: “To circulate the vital energy: Breath deeply, then it will collect. When it is collected, it will expand. When it expands, it will descend. When it descends, it will become stable. When it is stable, it will be regular. When it is regular, it will sprout. When it sprouts, it will grow. When it grows, it will recede. When it recedes, it will become heavenly. The dynamism of Heaven is revealed in the ascending; the dynamism of Earth is revealed in the descending. Follow this and you will live; oppose it and you will die. Harold Roth, “Evidence for Stages of Meditation in Early Taoism” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London. Vol.60. No. 2 (1997), 295-314.

<sup>327</sup> Gai Jianming, *Taoist Medicine*. p.345-

<sup>328</sup> Ibid. p.312.

<sup>329</sup> Chang Chung-yuan, *Tao: A New Way of Thinking*. p.33.

interiority, to visualize our consciousness as three energy fields: the upper ‘Cinnabar’ field, the middle Cinnabar field and the lower Cinnabar field. These energy fields are dominated by the vital essence, vital energy and numinous spirit. They are separated distinctively yet still are one in the original Dao. The DDJ does not present a systematic understanding of the human body as a union of three energy fields, but the human body as the contact between material world and the transcendent order is shown in the DDJ. The DDJ 21, for example, mentions that the Dao is hidden and obscure, yet there is vital essence (Jing) in it. Another example is the DDJ talking about the vital energy (Qi), where myriad creatures participate in the *yin* and *yang* movements and blend the vital energy (Qi) together to make them harmonious.(DDJ 42) The third example, the numinous spirit, is mentioned in the DDJ 39 as the numinous spirit (Shen) that becomes animated in realizing the One. These three--vital essence, vital energy and numinous spirit (three treasures) as the “substance” of the practice of keeping the One--draw attention to some traditional commentators.

114. *Tai Ping Jing* (TPJ), a Daoist commentary in the Han dynasty, personified and divinized this illumined consciousness and depicted how the Three Ones dwell and correlate within the body. It states:

In the head, the One is at the top; among the seven apertures (of the face), it is the eyes (light); in the belly, it is the navel (the center of the body); in the arteries, it is the breath (dynamic principle); in the five viscera, it is the heart (ruler of the body); in the limbs, it is the hands, the feet, and the heart (that is, the “three passes” which play a great role in circulation); in the bones, it is the spinal column (the axis); in the flesh, it is the intestines and the stomach (which transform food into blood and breath).<sup>330</sup>

115. The TPJ highlights three energy fields as the foci for the Daoist spiritual practice: the bodily consciousness is to be differentiated and unified as the vital essence (精), vital energy (氣) and numinous spirit (神). Those adepts who search for immortality should practice the Keeping the One in order to unify the three fields and to return to the One.<sup>331</sup>

116. The Master-Who-Embraces-Simplicity (Ge Hong) in his writing also mentioned that the goal of the spiritual exercise is to know the One. And the One should be honored without peer. The One is understood as the Three Ones because myriad things participate in the One and thereby it reflects heaven, earth and humanity. In studying the manifestation of the One in the human body, Ge Hong found that we could identify the One in three energy zones of the human body: the lower cinnabar field, the middle cinnabar field and the upper cinnabar field. By using very symbolic

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<sup>330</sup> Wang Ming (ed), *Taiping Jing*, p.13. Translated by Isabelle Robinet

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p.728

and esoteric language, Ge Hong retrieves the “dynamism of Heaven” from lower part of the body to the upper part of body and finally spread all over the human body. He says:

Guard the One, visualize the True One! The spirit world will be yours to peruse! Lessen desires, restrain your appetite! The One will remain at rest! ... Knowing the One is easy—keeping it forever is hard.

Daoist meditation on the three ones is fundamentally concrete and imagistic. Indeed, the adepts are not to be satisfied with any abstract thinking. They are acutely attuned to the manifestation of the One in the human body. They draw attention to its development, its dynamic nature, and its relationship to the external world. For most of them, the One is manifested by the Three that is the image of the One in relationship with the conscious world.<sup>332</sup>

117. In modern scholarship, Harold Roth has identified a rhetorical structure of spiritual exercise in early Daoism. He argues that it follows a tripartite structure: (i) Preamble stage, (ii) A Sorites-style argument (if x then y, if y, then z...), (iii) A *Denouement*. In the first phrase, a Daoist develops apophatic practices that prepare him to eliminate the worldly influence of the mind: sense perception, disordered desires, social knowledge etc. The second phase includes body alignment and physical exercise. The crucial things in this stage are being purified, having a numinous awareness and attaining completeness in the illumined experience. If the experience is illuminated, the adept attains to the realm of transcendence in which the results of the first two parts are enumerated. These include being able to return to the simplicity or taking effortless action yet leaving nothing undone. <sup>333</sup>

118. In the Daoist tradition, the fundamental elements of the human body are three treasures (the vital essence, vital energy and the numinous spirit). The *qi*, the vital energy is divided by the scale of purity. The *jing*, the vital essence originally meant “bleached and pure rice” and it is the “subtle and essential energy of origin.” According to the Daoist understanding, the vital essence resides in the kidney that is the master of bone marrow, sperm and menstrual blood. The vital essence is classified as the *jing* of former heaven and the *jing* of the latter heaven. The *jing* of the former heaven stored in the kidney (the lower energy field) that is obtained from the parents, this prenatal essential energy decreases by age and cannot be restored. The *jing* of the latter heaven is extracted through various foods, and is stored in the five organs (heart, liver, lungs, spleen and kidneys). They are interdependent and the *jing* of the former heaven is the “parent” of the *jing* of the latter heaven and it should be supported by the *jing* of the latter heaven.

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<sup>332</sup> Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*. p.122.

<sup>333</sup> Harold Roth, “The Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis” in *Religious and Philosophical aspects of the Laozi*. p.70.



119. For Daoists, the task of enhancing the numinous spirit is the proper focus of human thought or consciousness. Daoism maintains that healthy conscious human activity relies on the nourishment of an individual's essential essence. As Engelhardt points out, from this belief flows the Daoist longevity practice that places emphasis on "nourishing the [numinous] spirit." The goal of attaining "peace and purity of spirit" sets the proper boundary to all wishes, desires and outward striving. Engelhardt maintains, "excessive emotions are considered a major factor in the origin of diseases, each harming a particular orb or visceral system of *qi*."<sup>334</sup>

120. Keeping the Three Ones therefore always relates to the notion of returning to Dao. According to the first chapter of the DDJ, therein lies the entry to all wonders, the obscurest of the obscure. When the living experiences are abstracted to essence, when the universe is condensed into signs and metaphors, the danger is to try making use of them. A Daoist writer explains this well:

121. The representations of ecstatic inner vision correspond to a necessary stage, but they ought not to be maintained continuously. True thought is the absence of thought. When the entire inner land is gathered at the hearing with the True One, the great transformation leads us first through the confusion of chaos and then onto the gradual path of liberation. In the beginning, to establish the foundations, one must continually progress, and at this stage meditation is very useful. But once one reaches the Tao, one should abandon and again abandon so as to enter the domain where there is neither sight nor hearing, and thereby eliminate inner vision entirely.<sup>335</sup>

123. Keeping the Three Ones could be a conceptual or imaginative game, Daoists believe that one could articulate the understanding of the obscure mystery well, but the obscurest of the obscure always remains beyond reach. To find the Dao through "union", Schipper reminds us, requires a return, an involution.<sup>336</sup>

### 3.3.3. Returning (*fan*) is the Movement to Dao

124. True Knowledge comes to one who goes through his own spiritual journey and can encounter the Way of Self-so or the "dynamism of the Heaven" in the realm of interiority. Laozi knows that a real understanding of transcendent order corresponds to the way of "Returning." He declares, "returning is how *Dao* moves." (DDJ 40) In his Annotations and Explanations of Lao Tzu, Chiang Hsi-ch'ang interprets the meaning of "returning" as follows:

From action and many words, reverse to non-action (effortless action) and speechlessness; from knowledge and intention, reverse to no knowledge and no

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<sup>334</sup> U.Engelhart, "Longevity Techniques and Chinese Medicine." In L.Kohn (Ed.), *Daoism Handbook* Leiden: Brill. p.100.

<sup>335</sup> *The Transmission of the Tao to Lu Tung-pin* quoted by Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, p.155.

<sup>336</sup> Schipper, p.156.

intention. All this refers to the meaning of *fan* or reversal.<sup>337</sup>

125. In her discussion on intentional bodily practice, Kasulis provides an example to illustrate the experience of “returning” as a spiritual exercise. Using an illustration of driving a motor car, Kasulis claims that her reactions to avoid running over a dog by steering, braking, or timing, were not “something of which she was self-conscious.” The argument is that those unconscious reactions are based on conditioned responses, which Kasulis explains follows:

The motorist’s impulse is a learned response, the result of months of disciplined training and years of practical experience. The driver’s response is conditioned, but not passively by external social factors. Rather, years ago the driver self-consciously decided to condition herself.”

126. Based on this bodily experience, Kasulis develops an argument that our bodily discipline establishes the connection between bright and dark consciousness. She says: “the initial step in all these disciplines is the mind (the bright consciousness) deliberately places the body into a special form or posture. Whether learning a golf swing or learning to sit in meditation, the beginning phase is awkward. The body is uncooperative or inert and one feels, we say “self-conscious.” The self-conscious bright consciousness is imposing its form on the dark consciousness. Gradually, thought, the posture becomes natural or second nature. It is *second nature* because the mind has entered into the dark consciousness and given it a form; it is an acquired naturalness. Once the transformation takes place, however, there is not further need for the self-reflective bright consciousness and one can act creatively and responsively without deliberation.”<sup>338</sup>

127. The Daoist notion of returning is the fundamental discipline for approaching Dao. D.C.Lau notes that the concept of returning means to “return to one’s root.” While some thinkers ask, “what is this root?” for Laozi, the root is nothing, the Way of Self-so, more practically the belly, the low energy zone of the human body. However, knowing Dao is one thing, experiencing Dao through bodily practice is another thing. While the world suffers from the neglect of intentional bodily practices so aptly reflected in the modern acceptance of the Cartesian dichotomy between body and mind, the Daoist practice of returning to Dao sheds new light on the relationship between mind and body in a holistic way. In fact, Daoists strive for the perfect bodily alignment so that the exercise becomes second nature allowing for the experience of the chaotic unity of the three energy zones attained through breathing meditation.

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<sup>337</sup> Chiang His-chan’g, Annotations and Explanatons of the Lao Tzu, p.265. quoted by Chang chung-yuan, *Tao: A New Way of Thinking*. p.112.

<sup>338</sup> Kasulis, “Introduction” in Y.Yuasa. *The body: Toward an eastern mind-body theory*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press. 1987. p.

128. Returning to Dao is a decision; it is a matter of trust to follow the cyclical movement of the Dao or to depart from it. (DDJ 38) For Daoism, disorder exists in social reality because it consistently loses sight of transcendence. Human beings focus on a multitude of social activities rather than embrace a radical “conversion” to follow the naturalness of the Way. Ceaseless political and military combats cause the declines in quality of life. The loss of Dao results in disorder; therefore, the DDJ instructs people to turn away from their present social condition to pursue instead their authentic human nature. The DDJ declares that when we contemplate the movements of the myriad things, it shows that they are merging together and reversing to their origin. “Turning back is how the Way moves,” (DDJ 10) When we return to the state of our primordial ground, we attain unrestricted freedom and life forever, a goal frequently expressed throughout the DDJ.<sup>339</sup> Laozi articulates this desire in different words, all of them signifying the act of returning, recovering, moving around, going back.<sup>340</sup> Wing-tsit Chan notes that these words in the Dao suggest a cyclical movement by which myriad creatures in their limited state can return to their source of life, unlimited and forever.<sup>341</sup> Sung Peng Hsu argues that the notion of returning in the DDJ, although recognizing physical death as part of life, expresses a deep concern for how to nurture a long and creative life without sufferings. Returning to Dao, by keeping the three ones, does not mean one dies in the womb of Dao, but rather that one becomes reconnected to the source of vitality.<sup>342</sup> Ellen M. Chen speaks of that returning as “the hope of the world,” as fulfillment of the promise of “life returning to earth in the spring after the trials and tribulations of winter.” And that “even in the midst of death and despair there is hope of new life that never fails.”<sup>343</sup> Keeping the three ones implies this dynamism of hope, returning through a symbolic complex, paradoxically, to a promise ahead. By fidelity to the inward search, the Daoist realizes that Dao remains always present in human life, ever ready to respond to anyone in naturalness and tranquility. Returning to Dao involves a conversion that radically changes our thinking and living style.

129. In Daoist thinking, theory cannot be separated from practice. As Yuasa says: “the very characteristic of Eastern thought lies in its stance of approaching the world from an empirical viewpoint based on the bodily experiences.” That is, in the Daoist tradition the hermeneutics of consciousness must be integrated with certain psycho-physiological practices rather than remain mere intellectual activity.<sup>344</sup> The notion of returning is particularly relevant to this issue. Returning focuses on the

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339 See. DDJ 14, 16, 25, 28, 30, 40, 52.

340 : fan?, fu?, huan?, zhou?, guei?

341 Wing-Tsit Chan, *The way of Lao Tzu*, p.173.

342 Sung-peng Hsu, “Lao tzu’s Concept of Evil,” *Philosophy East and West* 26 (July 1976): p.309

343 Ellen M.Chen, *Tao Te Ching*, p.152.

344 Y. Yuasa, *The Universality of the Body*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 1994. p.76-86. quoted in

practice of the vital energy, the Qi: meditation, breathing, and stretching. Yuasa points out that the vital energy can not be observed through ordinary consciousness in daily life, but manifests only when certain conditions are satisfied, e.g. through mind-body training in meditation and breathing methods. From the Daoist perspective, human bodies are born through the coagulation of the vital energies, and this coagulation follows a transformational dynamic inscribed in time. When we are children, these energies are floating and free. When we become older, the energies become stagnant and fixed. Humans are inclined to slide downward without resisting the attraction of the world, carrying people along the path of death. To resist the downward slide, the practice of returning cultivates the divine energy of vitality.<sup>345</sup>

130. In Daoist history different scholars have interpreted this calling for returning and its imagery; however, one common ground has been the physical practice of involution.<sup>346</sup> The DDJ asks for concentrating the *qi*, the vital energy, and making it pliant. (DDJ 10) Vital energy circulates between the realm of transcendence and the realm of human experience even as these two worlds are created by *qi*. Life and death are functions of vital energy. All things are moved by this mysterious dynamic energy of the Cosmos. Not an empirical subject to be examined through objective observation like atoms in physics, vital energy possesses an invisible energy that can be grasped through a participatory knowledge and practical experiences. Isabelle Robinet explains this difficult understanding well. In clarifying how vital energy is different from the Western concept of energy, she states:

Thus, on the one hand, we have an energy distinct from concrete forms, without their exterior existence; it is the source of these forms, that is, it is indefinite and infinite potential, remaining when these concrete forms disappear. On the other hand, the concrete forms that this energy takes are nothing but *qi*, because *qi* gives from to (*zao*), and transforms (*hua*), everything in a two-sided operation, since it defines the fixed form but also changes it constantly. *Zhohua* is the Chinese equivalent of our word “creation,” but it is a creation without a creator. The only constant reality is *qi* in its transformation, the continuous coming and going between its undetectable, diluted state and its visible state, condensed into a defined being.<sup>347</sup>

131. Returning to Dao activates the animated human body: not the static or dead body but the living and pliant body. Engelhart said that Daoists view the human body as the residence of luminous spirits. Their goal was “to refine the body to a point where it overcame its ordinary limitations and turned into part of the Dao,

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<sup>345</sup> Kristofer Schipper, *Taoist Body*. p.157.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>347</sup> Isabelle Robinet, 1997. p.8.

encompassing the symbolic body of the entire universe.”<sup>348</sup>

132. From a technical point of view, the practice of returning imitates the breath of a baby nurtured in a mother’s womb. The DDJ sees that a baby represents the height of potency; a perfect image of the manifestation of the Dao (DDJ 55), In the same sense, returning to Dao indicates a return to the potency of a baby, As one commentator states:

Inhale slowly and deeply through the nose, when your mouth is full [with saliva] swallow [the breath], then exhale all at once. Try to decrease progressively [the amount of air] exhaled and to increase the amount inhaled. In fact, this method of swallowing the breath is called Embryonic Breathing. This means that this breathing is like that of the embryo in his mother’s womb. For ten (moon) months he goes without eating and yet during this long period, he is fed and becomes whole. “His bones are soft, his tendons weak, but he tightly clenches his fists.” Keeping the One implies no more thinking, no more reflecting.<sup>349</sup>

133. A baby’s breathing is perhaps the closest we can come to describing Embryonic Breathing, a term that signifies the method of returning to Dao. But we should note that Embryonic Breathing points to inner breathing, as opposed to outer breathing, a a process of interiorization, a reversal of the exhalation process that leads toward the path of death. To breathe as a baby does, one should suppress all luminous spirits, all images and thoughts. Only one thought, Schippers reminds us, that “of the union of *yin* and *yang* and of the great cosmic landscape, has now taken possession of the adept, and no other could possibly match this vision.

134. Finally, the practice of returning to Dao is to heighten our consciousness of the three energy fields, to unify them is a creative process. Chang Chung-yuan noted that “[Dao] is achieved through profound understanding, penetrating insight, and the attainment of non-attainment. The attainment of non-attainment may be understood in more familiar term as *wu-wei*, or [effortless action].”<sup>350</sup> Laozi suggests that a creative life is freeing our energies from the bondage of concepts. The fusion of the three ones can be compared to the process of artistic creation. Once freedom is accomplished, the fist relaxes, the chaotic unity comes undone.<sup>351</sup> The path of return is to become “useless,” to take life “as it is,” to be the master of effortless action (*wu wei*) or the disciple of the Way of Self-so.

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<sup>348</sup> U. Engelhardt, “Qi for life: Longevity in the Tang.” In L. Kohn (Ed.), *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. pp.263-296.

<sup>349</sup> ????? quoted by Schipper, *Taoist Body*. p.157.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p.xxv.

<sup>351</sup> Kristofer Schipper, *Taoist Body*. p.159.

### 3.3.4. The Spiritual Ideal of as practicing the effortless action (Wuwei)

135. *Wuwei* (effortless action) is the outcome of the Daoist spiritual exercise, practical knowledge displayed in actions rather than rational argument. The difference between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge can be understood in terms of a difference between an ocular and an action-based metaphor for human existence.<sup>352</sup> Ocular experience stresses a “mentalistic” reading of human consciousness. Action, on the other hand, stresses performative human acts. According to David Hall and Roger Ames, Chinese thinking is “not to be understood as a process of abstract reasoning, but is fundamentally *performative* in that it is an activity whose immediate consequence is the achievement of a practical result.”<sup>353</sup> Reading from my point of view, however, we argue that the operations of human consciousness are on a continuum, we can differentiate the operations of mind on different levels of consciousness, but we cannot separate them or place them in contradiction to each other. Doing so would cause us to fall into the bias. True *ming* can be called an illumined experience of inner consciousness that guides our understanding tied to action. The spiritual practice of Wuwei, (comma) also is a performative act, must be understood within an intellectual framework developed by Daoist religion. According to Li Shenglong, the concept of *Wuwei* played a central role in Daoism, but has been generally ignored by modern scholarship. He notes that:

“Wu-wei” is an extremely rich concept, including within itself views concerning nature (*Ziran* or Self-so), government and human existence. It has never ceased to develop, grow increasingly complex and rich, and become increasingly perfected. The scholarly world, however, has yet to systematically address either its content or course of development.<sup>354</sup>

136. The paradox of *Wuwei* implies an internal tension of the concept. Many scholars have noted that there are various salvific paths suggested to deliver people from their current situation of “effortful” actions to a state of effortless action. The question is: how is it possible not to do. How can an action of spiritual fight be based on a condition that lies beyond fighting? David Nivison contends that this tension is possible only because of the *productive* quality of *Wuwei*. In his argument of the “paradox of virtue”, Nivison notes that the paradox of *Wuwei* is similar to the paradox of the *virtue* that the virtue is possible based on a situation that it can be acquired only by those who do not intentionally strive to acquire it. A person who practices virtue by

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<sup>352</sup> Jean-Francois Billeter, “Pensee occidentale et pensee chinoise: le regard et l’acte,” quote in Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action: Wu-wei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*. p. 4.

<sup>353</sup> Hall & Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press 1987 p.44.

<sup>354</sup> Li Shenglong, “A Brief Discussion of the Concept of ‘Wu-wei’ in the Pre-Qin Period,” ???????. *Huan Normal University Journal of Social Sciences* 52.2: pp.7-13. translated by Edward Slingerland.

doing virtuous actions intentionally, is not yet virtuous. Mencius and Xunzi, second-generation Confucians, who attempted to resolve the paradox, have discussed this problem. Attempts to resolve this issue extends far beyond early Chinese history. In Zan Buddhism, for instance, the debate between the “sudden” enlightenment and “gradual” cultivation caused the issue to resurface. From a comparative perspective, Nivison notes that the problem in Platonic thought that “to be taught, one must recognize the thing taught as something to be learned” or the puzzle in Aristotle’s thought that “to become just we must first do just actions and to become temperate we must first do temperate actions,” share the similar concern with the *Wuwei* discussion.<sup>355</sup>

137. The literal meaning of *Wuwei* means, “doing nothing” or “in the absence of/without doing exertion.” However, it refers not to what is happening in the observable realm but rather to a decision of living style associates to the state of mind. In Francois Billeter’s terms, *Wuwei* refers to a state of “perfect knowledge of the reality of the situation, perfect efficaciousness and the realization of the perfect economy of energy.”<sup>356</sup> A person who reaches the state of effortless action, will take action instantly and spontaneously as the condition contains the harmonious operations of consciousness and physiological training. *Wuwei* integrates the inward training of the body, the emotions and mind. As Zhuangzi illustrates that the Cook Ding is an embodied figure of the *Wuwie*, he states:

Cook Ding was cutting up an ox for Lord Wen-Hui. At every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee-*zip!* Zoop! He slithered the knife along with a zing, and all was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Ching-shou music. ‘Ah, this is marvelous!’ said Lord Wen-Hui, ‘Imagine skill reaching such heights!’ Cook Ting laid down his knife and replied, “What I care about is the [way], which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now-now I go at it by spirit and don’t look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are”<sup>357</sup>

138. When the *Wuwei*, the effortless action, represents a state of

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<sup>355</sup> David Nivison, 1997. *The Ways of Confucianism*, edited by . Andrew Ortony, Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press. pp.342-356.

<sup>356</sup> Jean-Francois Billeter, “Pensee occidentale et pensee chinoise” p.50. Quoted in Edward Slingerland, *Efforless Action*, p.7.

<sup>357</sup> Watson, *Zhuangzi* pp.46-47

distinterestedness within human consciousness, it belongs to a skill-knowledge that gives up any external purpose and focuses on internal law or natural law, it is skillful not in the sense that a skilled musician plays an instruments excellently, but in the sense of fully realized human nature and to embody the Way of Self-so in the full range of one's actions.<sup>358</sup> It focuses on the nature of the Dao and finds harmony in and by itself. As Cook Ding explains to Lord Wen Hui:

[In cutting up an ox] whenever I come to a knot, I perceive the difficulties, adopt an attitude of careful awareness, focus my vision, slow down my movement, and move the blade with the greatest subtlety, so that [the ox] just falls apart effortlessly, like a clump of earth falling to the ground.<sup>359</sup>

139. Slingerland calls the *Wuwei* the “embodied mind.” It requires a decision of one's embodied mind to conform to the something bigger than the individual: the mandate of Heaven or the Order of the Dao. An individual realizes that his or her proper place in the cosmos accords with the Dao. For this reason, it should be counted as a religious ideal. This spirituality serves as a Daoist vision of the fulfillment of humanity.

140. To understand the ideal of effortless action a few questions should be highlighted in order to clarify the issue well: First, who is the subject of the effortless action? Second, what is the goal of the effortless action? Third, what is the real implication of the effortless action? Fourth, what is the inner experience and external performance of the ideal Wuwei? Liu Xiaoguan in his book *Laozi* contends that in the DDJ effortless performance typifies the ideal sage.<sup>360</sup> However, when Laozi refers to the sage as the subject of the effortless action, his words should not be misinterpreted to limit the practice of the Wuwei to a circle of elites. Furthermore, it is not also applied to the ordinary people. For Laozi, effortless action implies a social critique of the pervasive power of mimetic violence. It functions as a spiritual ideal of social life and a kindly exhortation to the ruling clans to restrict disordered desires. For Laozi effortless action is the best way to settle the mimetic conflicts among the social parties. According to Liu Xiaoguan, the sage does not hold a place equivalent to the ruler, but is rather an ideal figure who has attained the most profound wisdom, and achieved his highest virtue and accomplishments. In fact, nobody in this world has become a true sage, but the sage offers a model for all as the image of the Way of Self-so, an ideal to invite people to follow the Way.<sup>361</sup>

140. In the DDJ, no real person, nor even a fictitious figure, is described as a

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358 Slingerland, *Efforless Action*, p.8

359 Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi*. p.51.

360 See the DDJ 2; 3; 57; 63; 64;

361 *Ibid.*, p.119



sage. Differing from the Confucianism, the DDJ does not project any ancient rulers as sages. The image of sage serves as a theological concept to convey Laozi's vision of fulfillment for humanity. Thus, the subject of the effortless action is not human being, but as a life model in which all are urged to participate.

92. The goal of effortless action is to realize the power of the Self-so. Because the triadic reality of Self-so is the power of the effortless action, the purpose of the effortless practice should be understood as noncoercive action to achieve nothing undone. The DDJ 43 states this goal clearly, when it says:

The softest things in the world ride roughshod over the hardest things. Only the least substantial thing can penetrate the seamless. This is how we know that doing things noncoercively (*wuwei*) is beneficial.

141. The goal of effortless action therefore can be associated with the performance of softness and weakness and the best image to represent this ideal is the flow of water. "Water excels benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them." (DDJ 8) "There is nothing more submissive and weak than water. Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong nothing can surpass it." (DDJ 11) DDJ stresses the image of water as a symbol for the power of effortless action, representing the order of the self-so of reality, the harmony of totality.

142. The goal of effortless action also advocates the idea of minimalism. Laozi expresses that doing things noncoercively means "take account of the difficult while it is still easy or deal with the large while it is still tiny." (DDJ 63) Effortless action does not mean to do nothing. Liu Xiaogang contends that it means do thing beginning from the tiny part. The principle of effortless action is to embody the Way of the Self-so; the goal of action is "do things noncoercively in order nothing is left undone." (DDJ 37& 48)

95. Another goal of effortless action is to protect human vitality against damage. Laozi realizes that human beings live in a turbulent world full of mimetic competition. In principle every movement is dialectical, good and bad, bright and darkness, secure and danger, soft and strong. The best way to prevent moving towards the opposite side is to be the opposite side. Mimetic desire cannot function if no contention happens. "It is only because there is no contentiousness in proper way making that it incurs no blame." (Ames, DDJ 8) No contention, no anxiety and worrying. The spirit of effortless action acts on behalf of things but does not lay claim to them, sees things through to fruition but does not take credit for them. "It is only because they do not take credit for them that things do not take their leave." (DDJ 2) The effortless action is sagas who "in leaving off desiring", "in studying not to study." "They are capable of helping all things follow their own course, they would not think of doing so." (DDJ 64) Effortless action aims at bringing harmony and peace in itself.

143. To consider the implication of the effortless action, Liu Xiaogang suggests dividing it into external and internal aspects. The external and visible side of effortless action is observable as the manner of no contention. In the DDJ, the term “non-contentiousness” appears eight times.<sup>362</sup> The efficacy of no contentiousness is “one who excels as warrior does not appear formidable; one who excels in fighting is never roused in anger; one who excels in defeating his enemy does not join issue; one who excels in employing others humbles himself before them.” (DDJ 68) Liu argues that the efficacy of non-contention is the power of the effortless action. In principle, it matches the sublimity of the Way of Self-so. Indeed, effortless action manifests the highest principle of the Way, because as the DDJ discloses “the way of heaven excels in overcoming though it does not contend” (DDJ 73) and “benefits and does not harm; the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.” (DDJ 81)<sup>363</sup> The effortless action is non-contention, it doesn’t means do nothing but advocates a more radical way of living to cease the mimetic mechanism that exists in human nature.

144. The internal implication of effortless action refers back to the realm of transcendence. According to the DDJ, the mysterious power of the Dao is to “give life yet claim no possession”, “benefit yet exact no gratitude”, “to be the steward yet exercises no authority.” Sages keep this cosmic power and serve but do not entail coercion. Roger Ames writes that sages are catalytic in facilitating the flourishing of the process as a whole.<sup>364</sup>

They act on behalf of things but do not lay any claim to them,  
They see things through to fruition but do not take credit for them. (DDJ 2)

145. To cultivate the inner space is always emphasized in the DDJ.<sup>365</sup> The practice of effortless action stresses non-possession or taking no credit for fruition. Disordered desires, such as domination or conspicuous consumption, should be resisted by cultivating “having no body” (DDJ 13), “unselfishness” and “objectless in one’s desires” (DDJ 1, 3, 34, 37, 57). Human misfortune always comes from desires to own, to get, to possess, and warfare maybe is the most extreme outlet of mimetic desires that expresses the common consequences of greed and avarice. Real inner self originates in effortless action by which one knows when enough is enough. The DDJ 46 states that: “knowing when enough is enough is really satisfying.” Feeling satisfaction is a psychological quality, but this level of consciousness is relied on value judgment and spiritual cultivation. By *via negatio* effortless action aims at restricting the prevailing power of mimetic desires,

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<sup>362</sup> See the DDJ 3; 8; 22; 66; 68; 73; 81.

<sup>363</sup> Liu Xiaogan, Laozi. p.126.

<sup>364</sup> Roger T. Ames and David Hall, Dao De Jing. p.81.

<sup>365</sup> See the DDJ 10; 34; 77

146. Summarizing the study, effortless action can be understood as spiritual resistance when Laozi ponders the world to marsh in the violence and disordered desires. It is a soteriological way of calling people back into harmony with the Dao. Effortless action manifests the nature of the Dao of Self-so, to practice effortless action means to participate in the circular movement of the Dao and cultivate one's inner space to self, social relationship and the world. Effortless action also relates to the spiritual cultivation of the *qi*. Keeping the One as a search in the realm of interiority looks for the illumined experience, it seeks to verify the authenticity of ultimate reality and the achievement of true human nature.

147. Laozi criticizes excessive desires as one of the basic causes of violence and agitation. "There is no crime more onerous than greed, no misfortune more devastating than avarice." (DDJ 46)<sup>366</sup> Therefore, the practice of Wuwei refers to the state of quiescence or tranquility as a discipline to restraint desires that confuse our judgment. As a social practice, it advocates a small government with minimal control of people. As Laozi states:

We do things noncoercively (Wuwie) and the common people develop along their own lines; we cherish equilibrium (quiescence, tranquility) and the common people order themselves." (DDJ 57)

148. A sage is he who decides to resist the power of the Bright Hall religious-political ideology. By discarding the adornments of complicated rites, music and dance, hunting and warfare, a sage ruler can reach a state of both non-controlling (Wuwei) and non-regarding (wuyiwei). To imitate the way of Nothingness, he could lead the world in a return to simplicity in a "non-meddling" fashion (Wushi). (DDJ 48)

149. Furthermore, a person who embodies the Wuwei models also the Way of Self-so. According to the Daoist vision, the triadic reality of the Dao is a fountain of life and the ground of freedom. Early Daoism celebrates life. As Laozi mentions, the Dao constantly takes non-coercive action". A Daoist is one called to match the sublimity of Heaven. (DDJ 68) This imitation of the way of Self-so can be expressed as participating in the returning movement of the begetting Dao.<sup>367</sup> Slingerland

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<sup>366</sup> An anonymous commentator of the DDJ in a chapter of the Hanfeizi explains that the competing powers take the lead in "robbery." As he states: Whenever one embellishes one's knowledge [zhi?] and thereby brings harm to the state, one's own clan will necessarily be enriched. This is what the text means by being "possessed of too much wealth." When there are people like this in the state, then the ignorant masses cannot but artfully imitate their behavior, and it is imitation of this behavior which gives rise to petty thievery. Looking at it this way, when great criminals arise, petty thieves will follow; when the great criminals sing, the petty thieves will chime in. Gao Ming, Boshu Laozi Jiaozhu. Translated by Slingerland. Beijing: Zhouhua Shuju. 1996.

<sup>367</sup> Using common sense is to be accommodating, being accommodating is tolerance, being tolerant is kingliness, being kingly is *tian-like*, being *tian-like* is to be Dao, and the Dao is enduring. To the end of one's day one will be free of danger. (Ames & Hall, DDJ 16 slightly modified)

describes the Dao as “the natural causation is motion out of itself”.<sup>368</sup> Its nature is “originally so” in the primordial state of being. “Uncoerced” or “uncaused,” it cares for the world but without putting value judgment (“regarding”) or external forces on it. Because of the Dao, “the myriad things are having within them some behavior-determining essence that naturally “comes out.”<sup>369</sup>

150. The Dao uses images like a mother giving birth to animals or the germination of plants, which emerge “effortlessly” and “naturally” from deep inside. Effortless action, therefore, is one who makes a life decision to participate in the “internal strength” of the Dao and imitate the characteristics of the Dao. When Laozi, for instance, use the metaphor of the “infant” “ravine” and “the uncarved wood” to portray the nature of the Dao of the Self-so (e.g. DDJ 28; 32; 66), he stresses the “lower” qualities of life, a notion of humbleness and openness on the valley-like condition of humanity. The DDJ 16 presents effortless action, as symbols of “coming home to the root” and “returning to fate,” and the application of the vision of the returning movement to real life. These images arise out of a primitivist agrarian community in a preliterate time (DDJ 80).<sup>370</sup> The life of effortlessness connects to a more speculative thinking of tranquility and the state of self-so. (DDJ 37) The power of effortlessness has no name to describe its boundary. At the same time, a myriad things share its manner of self-so in every way.<sup>371</sup>

151. Moreover, effortless action searches for the originally-so experience and makes a decision to harmonize one’s internal essence in connection with the Way of Self-so. To recall the discussion above of the notion of returning, that which comes first (e.g. lower) named the ground or ruler of what comes later (e.g. higher). Generally speaking, the power of the effortless action is based upon the theoretical priority of the humble Triadic Reality over the economic manifestation of the Heaven-Earth-Humanity. The metaphorical expressions of this primordial ground are various, but the message is clear that the danger of human existence is “the farther one goes, the less one knows.” (DDJ 47)<sup>372</sup> In effortless action as illumined knowledge

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<sup>368</sup> Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.97.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Roger Ames states that “Contrary to the Analects, the *Laozi* literature idealizes antiquity not because of its culture but rather because of the lack of it.” Ames 1994, p.8

<sup>371</sup> This connection between the effortless action, tranquility, and spontaneous power of transformation is illustrated clearly in the DDJ 57: Hence the sage says: “I take no action and the people are transformed of themselves; I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves; I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves; I am free from desire and the people of themselves become simple like the uncarved block.” (Lau, DDJ 57). The effortless action, the power of tranquility is presented in the DDJ as the still water that can be used to “settle” the world (DDJ 45). It is also manifested as the “root” (*gen ? ben ?*).

<sup>372</sup> We have already discussed the experience in search of the primordial ground of being above. As a journey, it requests returning, returning home, reverting; as simplicity, it asks for the unadorned, the uncarved wood; as vegetative, it looks for the root, the stem; as an image of construction, the foundation; as a social relationship, the Mother, Babe, the ancestor etc. see Slingerland, *Effortless*

once the inner self is emptied and humble, an internal force of the tranquility of the Dao wells up. Thus a prominent metaphor is well received by the later Taoist practice: to shut off the openings of five senses and to eliminate the insidious influence outside and to keep the vitality of the Dao inside, the practice of the effortless action is to save the energies--

Block up the openings, shut the gateways, soften the glare, bright things together on the same track, blunt the sharp edges, untangle the knots. This is what is called the profoundest consonance.( DDJ 56)

152. In summary, with the empowering energies of the Dao, the real self will not be exhausted. (DDJ 52) Ames reminds us that leaking away of vitality without cautious thinking reflects a lack of insight into the empirical world.<sup>373</sup> Effortless action invites people to grasp the determinate world in light of the power of tranquility and purity. The soteriological paths promoted in the texts intend to put things in order so that the original or “natural” self might be recovered.

#### Chapter 4. Trinitarian Faith as a Spiritual Exercise

1. After our study of early Daoism, now we turn our attention to Augustine of Hippo and see how his Trinitarian faith serves as a spiritual exercise in his life. Eric

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*Action*, p.105.

<sup>373</sup> Roger Ames & David Hall, *Tao De Jing*. p.159.

Voegelin, one of the twentieth century's more provocative philosophers, reminds Christian theologians that religious doctrines do play an important role in society and human history. The Christology of Nicaea and Chalcedon, for example, can be seen as a protective device, shielding the Christian experience of the mystery of the Triune God. For Voegelin, it functions to guard "against confusion with the experiences of divine presence in the myths of the intra-cosmic gods, in mytho-speculation, and in the noetic and pneumatic luminosity of consciousness."<sup>374</sup> The primary function of Christian dogma as existentially acquired insight is to preserve and/or clarify that insight, and to resist the prevailing influence of indifference or bias. At the same time, doctrines can be easily separated from those existential experiences connected to them. When that happens, they tend to suffer stagnation, coming down through the tradition as abstract and empty propositions. Augustine's *de Trinitate* might be one of the most infamous examples of this. It is too often read as a kind of theological textbook, a set of stiff theological propositions, instead of what it is: a careful record of insights gained by Augustine in the course of his own spiritual quest. This kind of theological deformation happens when persons encountering the doctrines without the benefit of experience treat the insights they contain as objective statements—whether literal or metaphorical.<sup>375</sup>

2. Pierre Hadot's retrieval of the "spiritual exercise" tradition in the philosophic schools of late antiquity (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism, Aristotelianism) has also contributed to a fresh reading of the *de Trinitate*. According to David Tracy's reprise of Hadot:

Each school maintained itself (and its fidelity to its founding sage) by a specific training in intellectual and spiritual exercises. Each school possessed its ideal of wisdom and a corresponding fundamental attitude or orientation.... These orientations, of course, differed depending on the ideal itself: for example, a tensive attentiveness for the Stoics or a relaxation or letting-go for the Epicureans. Above all, every school employed exercises to aid the progressive development of its philosophical proponents to the ideal state of wisdom. At that ideal state the transcendent norm of reason ultimately coincides with

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<sup>374</sup> Eric Voegelin, "Immortality: Experience and Symbol" in *The Collected Works*, Vol.12. p.52-57. See also *Order of History*, Vol. 4. p.240.

<sup>375</sup> Voegelin observes: "It is the guilt of Christian thinkers and Church leaders of having allowed the dogma to separate in the public consciousness of Western civilization from the experience of 'the mystery' on which its truth depends. The dogma develops as a socially and culturally necessary protection of insights experientially gained against false propositions; its development is secondary to the truth of experience. If its truth is pretended to be autonomous, its validity will come under attack in any situation of social crisis, when alienation becomes a mass phenomenon; the dogma will then be misunderstood as an "opinion" which one can believe or not, and it will be opposed by counter opinions which dogmatize the experience of alienated existence." see Eric Voegelin, "A Response to Professor Altizer's 'A New History and a New But Ancient God.'" in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 12: Published Essays 1966-1985*. p.191.

God.<sup>376</sup>

3. The term “spiritual exercise” should not be read superficially as a manual for guiding devotees to achieve moral perfection. Rather, drawing on the experiences of earlier practitioners, as well as our guide’s own experiences, it is intended to lead us into “a field of experiences and symbols which is neither an object to be observed from the outside, nor does it present the same appearance to everybody.” The result is a heightening of awareness that helps us to appropriate our inner self, in its social and historical realities, in relation to the divine reality.

4. As a Christian bishop, theologian, and philosopher, Augustine’s primary concern in all of his writings is the quest for a rightly transcendent order for human life. His meditation on the mystery of Trinity is no exception. *De Trinitate* does not seek to address many of the conventional questions that have arisen concerning the Trinity, such as the division of the person and work of the Son, the *filioque* problem, etc. His reflections on the Trinity, and on the restoration of the *Imago Dei* in human life, cut to the essence of the doctrine, as he understands it: whether and to what extent the Trinitarian faith makes possible a rightly ordered existence.

5. Our present age as characterized by “the loss of the question.”<sup>377</sup> Augustine has bequeathed us a spirit of inquiry through theological meditation—a spiritual quest for truth and happiness guided by the mind. For him, human consciousness moves from the non-articulate to the articulate, from unexpressed experience to experience uttered and made explicit. The condition of unexpressed experience is for him a kind of “Babylonian” captivity dominated by the *libido dominandi*: the pre-conceptual, non-articulated condition of a soul driven by concupiscence. Because concupiscence creates a mimetic mechanism of *libido dominandi*, (analyzed in some depth in the City of God), human beings badly need soteriological “knowledge” to reopen the gateway of salvation. This salvific knowledge, for Augustine, relies on the classical concept of *anamnesis*. Anamnestic knowledge makes mystagogy integral to the spiritual movement by the procession of the Spirit, who, according to the Christian witness, is sent anonymously to all human beings.<sup>378</sup>

6. This non-articulated condition of *libido dominandi*, this “subconscious” of our violent nature, can be overcome, Augustine believes, only by a process whereby the mind questions its existence, recalling itself through encounter with the historic reality of the humility of the Word. The Trinitarian faith is an act of understanding to recollect and respond to the missions of the Triune God, who reaches into our temporal

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<sup>376</sup> David Tracy, “Bernard Lonergan and the Return of Ancient Practice,” in *The Legacy of Lonergan*, vol. 10 of Lonergan Workshop, ed. Frederick G. Lawrence. Chestnut Hill, Mass.: Boston College, 1994, p.326.

<sup>377</sup> Voegelin, “Gospel and Culture” in *The Collected Works*. Vol.12. p.175.

<sup>378</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, “Son of God, Holy Spirit and World Religions: The Contribution of Bernard Lonergan to the Wider Ecumenism,” in *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, edited by Michael Vertin Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989, pp.324-43.

reality to redeem creation and draw in back into intimate relation with the divine. There is always an invitation through the mediation of the incarnate Word to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so to reorient the human will to God's will.

7. Augustine's *de Trinitate* (399-422/426), though written earlier than another great work *de civitate Dei* (413/427), no doubt is a view of the historical framework as "Christ written large."<sup>379</sup> If human historical existence is a movement of the heart, which departs from Babylon, as Augustine maintains, two features of this departure should be noted: resistance, and the search for salvific knowledge. The *libido dominandi* is associated with the realm of common sense as we follow my methodological demarcation, and with the vicious mechanisms of violence that afflict the earthly, or temporal, city. In contrast, Trinitarian spirituality seeks a transcendent vision, expressed beautifully by Augustine in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 64:2.

They begin to depart who begin to love. Many there are who depart and not know it. For their walk of departure is a movement of the heart. And yet they depart from Babylon.<sup>380</sup>

8. Babylon symbolizes the derailment of human society and history. In Augustinian language: Man can live either *secundum Deum* or *secundum hominem*.<sup>381</sup> Babylon is always present in human consciousness. *Libido dominandi* and *imago Dei* are not simply alternative types of existence or a sequence of mental stages of mind that each person and society must pass through. In this earthly life, both are ever-present possibilities within the structure of consciousness.

9. Augustine's search for a deeper understanding of Trinitarian faith begins with the experience of departing from Babylon, and with it, from the vicious mechanism of violence in human history. Human concupiscent desire, the prideful self, must yield to the humility of the Triune God. Pondering the disorder of the human soul, Augustine comes to the conclusion that only by the restoration of the image of God within them will human beings ever come to eternal peace. No doubt his historical situation helped to shape this view. Living in the turbulent world of the Roman Empire, Augustine set his hope upon the restoration of the *Imago Dei*, and the power of the salvific knowledge of God to overcome the prevailing power of *libido dominandi*.

10. In *de Trinitate*, Augustine shows that prideful human history can only be overcome by the humility of God. The restoration of the image of God in humankind relies on remembering, understanding, and loving God. This anamnestic process begins

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<sup>379</sup> Voegelin, "Immortality: Experience and Symbol" in *The Collected Works*. Vol.12. p.78

<sup>380</sup> St. Augustine on the Psalm, trans. S.Hebgin and F.Corrigan, vol. 29, Ancient Christian Writer ed. Johannes Quasten and Walter J. Berghart, S.J. London: Longmans, Green. 1960.

<sup>381</sup> Voegelin, "Wisdom and the Magic," in *The Collected Works*. Vol.12 p.329. See also. "What is history" in the *Collected Works*. Vol. 28. p. 32.



with meditative exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, with particular attention to its accounts of Jesus Christ. Out of this comes the recognition that the greatest manifestation of the Divine is found in the humility of the Christ, the divine wisdom to which the New Testament bears witness. Only this wisdom of humility is able to correct the derailment of human philosophy and logic and rebuild the *imago Dei* in the mind by self-remembering, understanding, and willing.

11. Through Trinitarian spiritual practice, the mirror of the human mind may gradually recover from its wounded condition and begin to recognize the mystery of the Triune God through the mediation of the kenotic Christ. The healing of the Spirit through his self-giving love reorients human's wounded desire to the Divine will. Through the participation of the faithful in the divine grace (by means of baptism, meditative exegesis, Eucharist, fasting, prayer, almsgiving etc.) the eyes of faith become bright and finally, by the power of resurrection, see God face to face.

12. Augustine's *de Trinitate* is not a standard theological textbook. Although he makes use of rhetorical models and theological arguments in speaking of the trinity of the mind, he knew quite well that there is no perfect image for the Trinity in earthly life.<sup>382</sup> His readers are, nevertheless, the beneficiaries of this theological project. Every act of meditative exegesis, every intellectual clarification, reminds Christians that we are in the presence of a profound mystery. As human beings, we exist, in Paul's famous phrase, "between already and not yet." We can ascend from creation to the godhead, but in this earthly life, full knowledge of God is fleeting at best.<sup>383</sup> In the end, the dawning insight of the Christian spiritual transformation is God's sheer incomprehensibility: the radical self-emptying in which we are also invited to participate. Through this insight, the seeker may be lifted ever higher toward God, and find his satisfaction through the tireless search of faith.<sup>384</sup>

#### 4.1. Augustine on the Vicious Mechanism of Violence in Human History

##### 4.1.1. Biblical Violence in Contemporary Discussion

13. Augustine of Hippo (Aurelius Augustinus, 354-430), one of the greatest of the church fathers, struggled to bring peace and harmony to the violent world in which he lived. He regarded the problem of violence as a fundamental challenge for human fulfillment, arguing that the desire for transcendent order should be interrelated with the work of taming and transforming the vicious mechanism of violence in human nature and history. He was, at the same time, a realist, with no illusions about the complexity and pervasiveness of violence. For him, the ultimate resolution for the problem of violence could only be found in the eternal realm, beyond human history.

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<sup>382</sup> *De Trinitate* 14.18

<sup>383</sup> DT 8.6-8; 15.6;13

<sup>384</sup> DT 15.2

Augustine's journey to Christian faith began with the Scriptures, which he first encountered (in Latin translation) as a young rhetoric student in Carthage. This early experience with the Bible disappointed and indeed repelled him. Scripture, he exclaimed, "seemed to me unworthy to be compared with the nobility of Cicero"<sup>385</sup> The Hebrew Scriptures were full of polygamy, rape, incest, and violence. The Books of Moses and in particular Genesis he found especially abhorrent.<sup>386</sup>

14. Augustine was not the only reader to be troubled by the Hebrew Scriptures. Their language of sacrifice and killing, their violent plots, created tremendous problems for the early church fathers. How can the Scriptures be considered free from error or inspired by the Holy Spirit when so much of what they contain seems to run contrary to Christian teaching? Origen dismissed the suggestion that the fault lay with scribal or other literary error. Rather, he argued, the problematic texts are purposely created by the Holy Spirit to remind readers not to depend on a purely literal reading.<sup>387</sup> What may appear as errors to us are intended by the Holy Spirit, to call the reader's attention to "the impossibility of the literal sense," thereby signaling the need for "an examination of the inner meaning."<sup>388</sup> The passages that dealt with war and violence, which he found so distasteful, were not simply to be understood in a literal sense, but pointed the reader to a higher, allegorical interpretation.

15. Augustine underwent a conversion to "philosophy" at the age of nineteen. In his ardent search for fulfillment and happiness, he embraced the goal of intellectual and moral purification through worldly detachment. From Cicero's *Hortensius*, an exhortation to love of wisdom, he turned to the Bible, expecting to find the same ideals. What he read there horrified him.<sup>389</sup> With no clue how to handle the complexity of the biblical messages, Augustine turned to Manichaeism and the enlightenment it

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<sup>385</sup> *Confession*.3.5.9

<sup>386</sup> *Confession*.3.7.2-5

<sup>387</sup> Origen writes: [T]he divine wisdom has arranged for certain stumbling-blocks and interruptions of the historical sense to be found therein, by inserting in the midst a number of impossibilities and incongruities, in order that the very interruption of the narrative might as it were present a barrier to the reader and lead him to refuse to proceed along the pathway of the ordinary meaning: and so, by shutting us out and debarring us from that, might recall us to the beginning of another way, and might thereby bring us, through the entrance of a narrow footpath, to a higher and loftier road and lay open the immense breadth of the divine wisdom. *On First Principles*, IV.II.9, p. 286

<sup>388</sup> Origen, *On First Principles*, IV.II.9, p.287.

<sup>389</sup> Bonner summarizes Augustine's thoughts at this first stage of encounter: "The first was the problem of evil: where does it come from and why does it persist? Secondly there was the problem of the Scriptures. How are they to be understood, when many apparent contradictions exist between the Old Testament and the New? And if we are taught—as we are certainly taught by Christian tradition—that certain passages in the Old Testament, notably those dealing with ritual purity and the observance of the Law, are no longer literally binding upon baptized Christians, how are we to decide what these passages may be? Finally, and arising from this, is the whole question of understanding the Bible. In many matters the Church tells us to believe, even though our intellect remains dissatisfied. What then is the relationship between authority and reason? The question ushers in the vaster one of the nature of the Church and her authority over her members." Gerald. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Norwich, England: The Canterbury Press, 1986. pp.193-194.

promised.<sup>390</sup>

16. Today's readers might well turn to biblical scholarship and the insights it offers into sacred violence in the Hebrew Scriptures. Raymond Schwager is one scholar who has been especially concerned about violence in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>391</sup> Mark McEntire identifies at least set seven important turning points in the Hebrew Scriptures that explain how violence is related to human's sacred desire: (i) Violence enters the human community (Gen 4:1-16); (ii) God's people oppressed by violence (Exodus 1:8-22); (iii) God's people liberated by violence (Exodus 11:1-12:39); (iv) God's people acquire land by violence (Joshua 6:1-27); (v) God's people become a nation because of violence (1 Sam 4: 1-22); (vi) God's people divided by violence (1King 12:1-20); (vii).God's people destroyed by violence (2 Chronicles 36:15-21). McEntire's division may be too artificial, but it certainly cannot be claimed that the Hebrew Bible ever intended to avoid violence as a central issue in human experience. On the contrary, the Bible boldly exposes the vicious mechanisms of violence regardless of whether it is practiced in the name of God or others.

17. Mark McEntire comments that, according to Genesis, the first family consists of four members (Gen 4:2). Within fifteen verses, twenty-five percent of the human community has committed homicide, twenty-five percent are victims of homicide, and the remaining fifty percent are immediate family members of both a victim and perpetrator. After the first murder, the invasion of violence has changed the world dramatically.<sup>392</sup> What is God's relation to violence? How does violence affect the human family? And how does violence change creation? The first murder, McEntire argues, arose from jealousy concerning God's favor.<sup>393</sup> The text does not conceal a feeling that Cain receives unfair treatment by God, who accepts Abel's offering but refuses Cain's (Gen.4:4-5). For modern biblical scholars, these first appearances of violence, and the Bible's handling of it, are of acute interest. McEntire writes: "[Violence] is sudden, it is anti-relational, and it stands at the center of human existence."<sup>394</sup> Violence occurs when all relationships are broken for the perpetrator,

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<sup>390</sup> Anne-Marie La Bonnardiere, "Augustine's Biblical Initiation" In *Augustine and the Bible*. Edited & Translated by Pamela Bright. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. pp. 9-15.

<sup>391</sup> Schwager mentions, "approximately *one thousand passages* speak of Yahweh's blazing anger, of his punishment by death and destruction, and how like a consuming fire he passes judgment, takes revenge, and threatens annihilation. He manifests his might and glory through warfare and holds court like a wrathful avenger. No other topic is more often mentioned as God's bloody works. A theology of Old Testament revelation that does not specifically deal with this grave and somber fact misses from the very start one of the most central questions and thus will hardly find the right perspective for a profound understanding of the revelation event." Raymond Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats: Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, trans Maria L. Assad New York: Harper & Row, 1987. p.55.

<sup>392</sup> Mark McEntire, *The Blood of Abel: The Violent Plot in the Hebrew Bible*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1999. p.25-30.

<sup>393</sup> Augustine has drawn the connection between Genesis 4:1-16 and the story of Romulus and Remus. See *City of God* Book 15.5. Rene Girard argues in each case, an antagonism arises between two brothers. See also Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the Earth*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer. Stanford: Stanford Univeristy Press, 1987. pp.38-39.

<sup>394</sup> Mark McEntire, *The Blood of Able*.p.26.

and the presence of God is pushed to the margins of the world.

18. A further complication in the plot arises from sacrificial performance. If sacrifice, as Rene Girard claims, is a mechanism of victimization by which human beings find an outlet for releasing violent aggression, then the story suggests that Abel had such an outlet while Cain did not. For him the only outlet for his violent drive was to attack his brother. In Genesis 4, the text does not say explicitly that Yahweh requires or demands sacrifice, but his “favor” toward the offering certainly seems to suggest as much. If Yahweh demands a requirement that Cain is unable to fulfill, is Yahweh then responsible for the instigation of the homicide? On this point the text is silent. It offers only Yahweh’s mysterious encouragement to Cain to “do well.” How shall we understand the theological questions posted by the text? What theological strategy might we employ to save the Scriptures from their violent narratives? Bernard Lonergan advocates the “Law of the Cross” as the hermeneutic principle for resolving the apparent contradictions within the Bible. He takes the empty Cross as the real sacred which expresses the solidarity of the Triune God with the oppressed and the victims of violence. Rene Girard develops an anthropological understanding of the Cross, seeing the salvific power of the Cross as arising from its capability to expose the vicious mechanisms of scapegoating violence.<sup>395</sup> Augustine, for his part, took the “rule of faith” as his hermeneutical principle. The Scriptures, he wrote in *de Trinitate*, reveal both the catastrophic effects of disordered human desire and God’s salvific plan—a plan manifested in numerous theophanic events and finally illuminated by the most powerful theophanic event of all, the crucifixion of the Holy Son, which becomes the witness of the Divine’s sacrificial love for the world. This insight can only be verified by the restoration of the *imago Dei* in the human soul. The Christian spiritual exercise is to achieve communion with the Triune God through humility of spirit.

19. That Augustine was particularly concerned with violence is no surprise, given the tumultuous events of his lifetime. These included the invasion of Adrianople by Goths in 375 C.E., when Augustine was twenty, and the siege of Hippo in 428 C.E., two years before his death. These events foreshadowed the collapse of imperial Rome in 476 C.E., and the removal of the last remnant of the Western Roman Empire to Constantinople. Confronting the problem of violence, for Augustine, was no idle theological exercise. In his *Confession*, he traced the various forms of violence back to what he regarded as their roots in the disordered condition of human desire. In the *de Civitate Dei*, he wrote that the Hebrew Scriptures disclose the “archetype” of human violence and call people to return to the city of God. In the *De Trinitate*, Augustine meditates on the restoration of the human soul (*Imago Dei*) and the search for communion with the Triune Love. This progress of restoration as a transcendent journey finds its ground in the sacrificial love of the Incarnate Word.

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<sup>395</sup> Rene Giard, *The Scapagoat*, (footnote needs to be added)

#### 4.1.2. Chronology, Structure and Purpose of *De Trinitate*

20. In this section, I will focus on Augustine's understanding of the unfolding progress of the transcendent order and his view of the role of Christ, before turning to his meditations on the triadic structure of human consciousness and his notion of spiritual discipline. These are the crucial factor in his vision of the way of grace can overcome violence.

21. *De Trinitate* is thought to have been written sometime between 400 and 416 C.E. TeSelle's dating is as follows: Books 1-4, 400-406 C.E.; Book 8, 407 C.E.; Books 5-7 and 9-12, 413-416 C.E.; and Books 13-15, 418-421 C.E.;<sup>396</sup> Following A-M. La Bonnardiere, Robert J.O'Connell prefers to date the whole work later, arguing that the incomplete version was pirated in 418, and completed possibly as late as 426.<sup>397</sup> In the past, the work was commonly divided into two basic parts: a meditation on the Christian doctrine of God (Books 1–7), and a speculative presentation of the same faith (Books 8–15). Modern Augustine scholarship basically abandoned this traditional structure. Edmund Hill, for example, has developed a more historical account of the work. He proposes a chiastic structure for DT:

- A. Book 1: The absolute equality of the divine persons, argued by way of scriptural proof.
- B. Books 2-4: The mission of the Triune God, examined by scriptural evidence.
- C. Books 5-7: A rational defense of faith. The language of relationship.
- D. Book 8: The center book. The “storming” of God; breaking the surface and emerging from the mirror world.
- C' Book 9-11: Constructing a mental image of God by rational reflection.
- B' Book 12-14: The history of this image in everyone, from Adam to Christ, in the light of scriptural texts.
- A' Book 15: The absolute inadequacy of the Trinitarian *imago* to express the divine Trinity.<sup>398</sup>

22. Using the same system of division, Hill detects a second dynamic at work in DT: a descent-ascent curve which moves from a scriptural discussion (Book 1) to the missions of the Holy Son and Holy Spirit (Books 2-4) to a linguistic and logical analysis (Books 5-7; then a transition in Book 8 to an “inward mode,” an ascent to the mental (Books 9-11), with the human *imago* linked to the divine missions (paralleling the story of the fall and redemption), and finally a biblical meditation in Book 15. Hill recognizes that this chiastic structure “is a little too neat”: “To speak plainly the six books (Book 8-14) we are here concerned with do not have the clear-cut structure of

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<sup>396</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* pp.294-309.

<sup>397</sup> Robert J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in Augustine's Later Works*. New York: Fordham, 1987, pp.1-16.

<sup>398</sup> Edmund Hill, *The Mystery of the Trinity*. P.81.

the six in the first half of the book (book 2-7).”<sup>399</sup>

23. Borrowing from Lonergan’s analysis of realms of meaning as a heuristic clue, Neil Ormerod suggests in a recent article that Augustine’s *De Trinitate* can be naturally divided into four realms of meaning: the realm of common sense, the realm of theory, the realm of interiority, and the transcendent realm. It is not, he writes, that Augustine had something like modern transcendental analysis in mind, or intentionally structured his work in this way. Rather, it is “general” and “natural” for unfolding human consciousness to ask questions and order thought in this way. Ormerod suggests that Books 1-4 should be read as an exploration of the Christian understanding of the knowledge of God within a scripturally informed world, an example of Christian “common sense.” In Books 5-7, the terms substance, essence, person, accident, and relation dominate the discussion. In this phase, Augustine shifts to the realm of technical, theoretical meaning. In Books 8-11, Augustine introduces his readers to the realm of interiority. Book 8 serves as a general introduction to the discovery of the inner man, while Book 9-11 represents his search of the *imago* of the Triune God in inner human being. Book 12-15 returns to the Holy Scriptures. Through this progression, Augustine brings readers back to the salvific drama of human beings and the saving actions of the Divine.<sup>400</sup>

24. Modern Augustine scholarship gives particular attention to the conversation among various levels of the *De Trinitate*. Human beings become like God by knowing and loving the Triune God. Dynamism plays an essential role in the image of God. If the image loses its dynamism, it virtually ceases to exist. Human being both is and becomes image: for “*the imago* is a datum and a task, the task of the ‘homo interior’, but the *imago* is always different from God.”<sup>401</sup> For Augustine, the *imago* is the meeting point between human existence and divine reality. It is the “place” where human consciousness “sees” God. *De Trinitate* can be read as the emergence of the transcendent order in the human image when its movement is progressing in likeness to God. The work explores this dynamism of the image character in human life.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Edmund Hill,

<sup>400</sup> Neil Ormerod, “Augustine’s *De Trinitate* and the realms of meanings” *Theological Study* (???) Modern Scholarship gives particular attention to the conversation among various levels of the DT. John Sullivan suggests that the basic purpose behind DT is the “gradual renewal of the inner man, the divine image, [which] is simply progress in the knowledge and love of God, with love as the effective principle in the progress.” John Edward Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* Dubuque: Priory, 1963, p.196. Guido Maertens writes that DT differentiates human interiority, in its fullness, from the Triune God. This is the theme that runs all through Augustine’s pastoral theology, and includes a call to moral action. Guido Maertens, “Augustine’s Image of Man” *Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought*. Edited by .F.Bossier et al. Leuven: Leuven University, 1976, p.196.

<sup>401</sup> Guido Maertens, “Augustine’s Image of Man” *Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought*. Edited by .F.Bossier et al. Leuven: Leuven University, 1976, p.196.

<sup>402</sup> Robert Markus concludes that the work’s final part studies God’s image as impressed on the human soul, and the soul’s “progressive reformation in the course of the soul’s renewal (*renouation*), beginning in baptism and consummated only in the perfect likeness to God in the perfect vision of God.” See Robert Markus, “‘*Imago*’ and ‘*similitudo*’ in Augustine,” *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 10 (1964):

25. Augustine's *De Trinitate* is a spiritual pilgrimage in search of the manifestation of transcendent order in the human soul. I suggest that his basic spiritual and theological concern in this work is the overcoming of the *libido dominandi*, the root of violence in the world. Taking an approach similar to Ormerod's, I use my approach of hermeneutics of consciousness to differentiate Augustine's search for transcendent order in the realms of experience, understanding, interior reflection, and contemplative action. My argument, however, focuses on Augustine's use of "soteriologically differentiated consciousnesses" to overcome the diabolic experience of human existence. Especially I pay attention to the period of nine years during which the composition of DT and CD overlapped (413 C.E.-427C.E.). For Augustine, I will suggest, the order of the soul and the order of history are interlocked. Human salvation means the realization of intellectual and spiritual "detachment" from the world of *libido dominandi*. Transcendence of violent impulses can only be achieved through true knowledge of the Triune God. Augustine identified this true knowledge as that confessed by Nicene Trinitarian faith: a faith that enables the seeker to differentiate the Christological theophany from the Hebrew Scriptures (DT, Books 1-7), verify the manifestation of the Triune God in the interior world of the human being (Book 8-11), and develop an effective spiritual exercise in the humble Spirit of Jesus Christ (Books 12-15).

#### 4.1.3. Augustine's Meditations on the Vicious Mechanism of Violence

26. It would be anachronistic to claim that Augustine's theological meditations began with what we could term "experience." His understanding of experience is not the same as that of, say, Schleiermacher. Nor would Augustine wish to separate his experience from his theoretical meditations.<sup>403</sup> For me experience is inseparable from the workings of the human mind. Augustine never undertook a single work which dealt specifically, exhaustively, or exclusively with the problem of violence and the sacred. Nevertheless, warfare, both foreign and internal, was a frequent and a bloody fact during Augustine's time. He was twelve months old when Julian Caesar fought against the Germanic Alamanni and Franks (356 C.E.), seven years old when Julian lost his life in battle against the Persians at Ctesiphon (363 C.E.). Julian's successor faced a very desperate situation some eight months later.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Armstrong said: "It was an activity embracing the whole of human life, an attempt not merely to direct but to bring man to his goal through an understanding of the whole of reality....If this is what philosophy meant, it is easy to see that for Christians the only true philosophy could be nothing else but a lived and living theology, a reflection on the mysteries of faith, using all the resources of a Greek-trained intelligence, which determined the Christian way of life." See A.H. Armstrong, "St. Augustine and Christian Platonism" in R.A. Markus, *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1972.

<sup>404</sup> "When Valentinian was declared emperor on 26 February 364, at Nicaea in Bithynia, the army of Julian's Persian expedition had been badly mauled and had just extricated itself from a precarious

27. In 378, when Augustine was twenty-three, the Roman army of the east suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Tervingi and Greuthungi near the city of Adrianople. Valens, the Emperor's brother, and two-thirds of his army were killed. Responding to the terrible news, Augustine's mentor, Ambrose, noted that several widows had died after the event—a gift sparing them the troubled times ahead—and presented a prayer for the Emperor's military victory.<sup>405</sup> In 410 C.E., Alaric and his Goths sacked Rome, causing tremendous shock waves throughout the Empire. Twenty years later, near the end of Augustine's life, he experienced the horrors of violence first-hand. Augustine's biographer describes the devastation inflicted by the Vandals.<sup>406</sup> Within a few months of Augustine's death in 430 C.E., the invaders were battering down the gates of Hippo. Throughout this period, the Empire suffered almost continuous civil war and rebellion from inside its borders.

28. Following Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 C.E., the Emperor legalized Christianity. Hereafter, there was a growing opinion that participation in war was not only perfectly permissible for Christians but could even be considered a Christian duty. In the Council of Arles, bishops dealt specifically with military service: "Concerning those who throw down weapons in peace, it is fitting that they refrain from communion."<sup>407</sup> During the reign of Theodosius, Vegetius wrote in a military training manual that the army was commanded to swear their *sacramenta* (military oath) "by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by the majesty of the emperor which second to God is to be loved and worshipped by the human race."<sup>408</sup> Robert Markus, in a provocative article, argues that Augustine had a consistent attitude toward war and violence traceable through three phases of his thought, despite dramatic shifts in his political theology.<sup>409</sup>

29. Augustine did not treat the problem of violence in a political, cultural, and literary vacuum. He struggled with a problem rooted within the Biblical texts and his own social context, working diligently to find a proper theological framework for

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position. The frontiers were everywhere threatened "as if trumpets were sounding the war note throughout the whole Roman world" (Ammianus 26.4.5-6). The Alamanni were devastating Gaul and Raetia, the Sarmatians and Quadi attacking Pannonia, the Goths plundering Thrace. Britain was subjected to raids by Picts, Scots, and Attacotti, and Moorish tribes were harassing the African provinces." Pat Southern & Karen R. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996. p.40.

<sup>405</sup> N.B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. p.68; pp.102-105.

<sup>406</sup> "In their rage they displayed an utterly atrocious cruelty and laid waste to everything with looting, slaughter, and all kinds of tortures, fire, and countless other unspeakable enormities. They had no pity on either sex or age, or even on the priests and ministers of God, or on the ornaments or furnishings or buildings of the Churches." See. Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 28.5 Translated by O'Connell in *The Life of Saint Augustine by Possidius*, Villanova: Augustinian Press 1988

<sup>407</sup> Hornus, Jean-Michel. *It is not Lawful for Me to Fight*. Translated by A Kreider and O.Cobum. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980. p.172.

<sup>408</sup> Vegetius, *Epitorna Rei Militaris* 2.5. Translated by N.P.Milner. Liverpool, 1993.

<sup>409</sup> Markus, Robert A. "Saint Augustine's Views on the 'Just War.'" In *The Church and War*, Edited. W.J.Shields. London: Basil Blackwell, 1983, pp.1-13.



tackling the problem. In many ways, Augustine is a realist. His attitude to war and violence is complex and holds unresolved tensions in his search for transcendent order. Although Augustine never wrote a comprehensive book on the problem of violence,<sup>410</sup> Scripture and his own historical context drove him to treat the question as a basic theological concern. His reflections on the subject are scattered through several works. In this limited space, we will focus on selected passages of the *De Civitate Dei*.

30. In considering Augustine's attitude towards violence in the *De Civitate Dei*, it is important to remember that he was working in moments snatched from numerous distractions. The work's initial intention was to answer a definite challenge—the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth. But over the course of a year it grew to include attacks against pagans, exhortations to Christians, and instruction to the uneducated, and abstract argument for philosophers.<sup>411</sup> The work was first conceived as a Christian apology whose purpose was to reconcile Christianity with the legitimate demands of the political life. The issue, however, soon became not whether civil society could survive Christianity but whether Christianity itself could survive its integration into civil society.<sup>412</sup> *De Civitate Dei* argues for the spiritual dynamism of the manifestation of the transcendent order (the city of God) in human history (the earthly city). Taking the perspective of progressive revelation, he criticizes both the social experience of the Roman Empire and Platonic philosophy. He revises the ethical and theological teachings of his predecessors, establishes a theological argument for understanding the Divine plan in human history, and explores an intellectual framework for understanding the nature of political life. Thus, in part one (Books 1-5), Augustine develops a critique of the political and moral character of the Roman Empire. In part two (Books 6-10), he repudiates the foundation of the Empire's civil theology and confronts the Platonists. In part three (Books 11-14), he begins to develop his political theology and argues that the most fundamental cleavage in humanity is between the City of God and the Earthly City. Here he develops his theological understanding of will and explores the nature and consequences of the Fall. In part four (Books 15-18) he traces, through scriptural exegesis, the development of the two cities from Cain to Christ. In part five (Books 19-22), he focuses on the “ends” of the two cities and considers the nature and origins of political domination and how Christians carry out their social responsibility.<sup>413</sup>

31. Augustine takes the Hebrew Scriptures not as sources of spiritual “promise”

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<sup>410</sup> These works includes *De Libero Arbitrio*, *Contra Faustum*, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, *Epistles 47, 138, 189*. *De Civitate Dei*.

<sup>411</sup> Baynes, Norman H. *The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei*. London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1936. pp.3-4.

<sup>412</sup> Ernest L. Fortin, “Augustine's City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness” in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by Dorothy F. Donnelly. New York: Peter Lang. 1995. p.313

<sup>413</sup> A detail study of Augustine's notion of *Libido Dominandi* sees Brian T. Harding, *Libido Dominandi: Augustine's Genealogy of a Fallen World*. Ph.D. dissertation. Fordham University. 2004.

(*promissiones*) but as a repository of “foretellings” (*praenuntiationes*) of the Christ event.<sup>414</sup> The basis whereby the Christian church is able to accept the Hebrew Scriptures as “holy” is a hermeneutical one. Only in the proper theological framework—namely typological interpretation—can the texts be accepted as authority and canon. For Augustine, “Every [word] contained in those books is spoken about [Christ] or because of him.”<sup>415</sup> This typological interpretation implies three significant intellectual/spiritual efforts. The first is the differentiation of *factum* from *dicta* (lessons). By allegorizing those violent and offensive texts, readers learn new lessons for their soul formation.<sup>416</sup> The second is that God, who changes nothing of his Divine nature, reveals his precepts or methods according to the developmental stages of human life. Those sayings of Hebrew Scriptures that we find offensive are simply God’s accommodations to human naivety.

32. In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine develops a theory of progressive revelation, noting that from that time of Abel the Church has gone forth on pilgrimage, amid both the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.<sup>417</sup> Finally, Augustine emphasized the role of human free will in relation to evil. Violence in the Hebrew Bible visibly discloses the disorder of human desires in the “fallen” context. Contrary to the widespread view of him as a theologian of war, Augustine hated war but understood it as an objective and inherent mechanism of a “fallen” world. He saw no glory in violence, but lamented, on the contrary, its cruelty. For him, warfare was the tragic price for restoring peace. The real evil was not violence itself, he argued, but the desire for violence: bloodlust and the *libido dominandi*. It is the distinguishing mark of the Earthly City in a human world.

33. G. Bonner regards Augustine’s concepts of *libido* and *concupiscentia* as interchangeable.<sup>418</sup> Invariably negative, they refer to the perversion of the good created order of love that causes the destruction of the order of nature. In *CD*, Augustine combined the words *civitas diaboli* (“the city of the Devil”) directly four times and indirectly three times; he used the word *civitas terrene* (the earthly city) 55 times. As a sociological concept, “earthly city” refers to the commonwealth (*CD* 5,1:30-31; 5,19:50-51; 5,19:58-60; 10,25:25; 17,3:24). As a dialectical concept, it symbolizes, first, evil structures hostile to the divine truth; second, the symbolic presentation of the heavenly city. (*CD* 15, 2:27-29, 38-41). Thus, for Augustine, the people of Israel are constituents of a fallen human race and of the earthly city, but they are also an earthly image and a symbol of the city of God (*CD*.15, 2:29-36). Above all,

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<sup>414</sup> *Contra Faustum* 4.2.

<sup>415</sup> *Contra Faustum* 12.7.

<sup>416</sup> *De Genesi ad litteram* 11.39 Translated by Markus “Saint Augustine’s Views on the ‘Just War.’” (1996).

<sup>417</sup> *De Civitate Dei* 18.51.2. See also Ernest L. Fortin, “Augustine’s City of God and the Modern Historical Consciousness” p..

<sup>418</sup> G. Bonner, “*Libido and Concupiscentia in St. Augustine*” in *God’s Decree and Man’s Destiny*.

Augustine treats *civitas terrene* as spiritually or metaphysically opposed to the naturally good being of rational beings.<sup>419</sup> It is an integral part of his doctrine of original sin, whereby every human being is heir to Adam's sin; every human being belongs with the fallen angels to the earthly city and as such remains without the grace of God (CD 14, 9:150-151). The earthly city is founded on "error and perverted love."

34. Summing up his reflections on the collective sin brought about by the first sin, Augustine writes: "all these evils belong to man in his wickedness, and they all spring from that root of error and perverted love which every son of Adam brings with him at his birth."<sup>420</sup> Augustine conceives the earthly city as originating in the conflict between Cain and Abel. Babylon is its significant symbol; he translates the term "Babylon" as *confusion*. His analysis of the structure of human existence foreshadows Rene Girard's analysis of the mimetic mechanism of violence. The most typical characteristic of Babylonian culture, Augustine exclaims, is that of humans generally it is the division of human beings against each other into factions battling for power and domination.<sup>421</sup>

35. The idea of *libido dominandi* is at the center of Augustine's theological reflections on the mechanisms of war and violence. By *libido*, he means the carnal lust which is a part of the fallen condition of every human being. *Dominor*—a verb in frequent use in CD—usually refers to problems in the inner order of the soul. The noun *libido* and the verb *dominor* appear as a phrase seven times in CD (1,30:29; 3,14:50-54; 5,13:14-15; 14,15:74-82; 14, 28:7-9; 19,15:29-31), each time to describe human social experience.<sup>422</sup> The lust for domination is a basic characteristic of human existence in the earthly city—one to which the Romans, with their drive for empire, were especially subject. *Libido dominandi*, he writes, is the basest of all the vices.<sup>423</sup>

36. In his great theme of the two cities, Augustine argues the earthly city is based on pride and *amor sui*. The city is committed to the search for vainglory; the desire to subdue nations and their rulers is the power of *libido dominandi* (14, 28: 7-9). The primordial condition of humanity, as Ruokanen explains, is social, but it is not to live

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<sup>419</sup> Miikka Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine's De civitate Dei*. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1993. p.90-91.

<sup>420</sup> CD 22, 19-21

<sup>421</sup> "And since this is not the kind of good that causes no frustrations to those enamored of it, the earthly city is generally divided against itself by litigation, by wars, by battles, by the pursuit of victories that bring death with them or at best are doomed to death. For if any section of that city has risen up in war against another part, it seeks to be victorious over other nations, though it is itself the slave of base passions, and if, when victorious, it is exalted in its arrogance, that victory brings death in its train." See. CD 15, 4: 4-11

<sup>422</sup> In CD, we got several synonymous expressions of *libido dominandi*. For example, *libido vincendi* (14,, 15:76), *dominationis cupiditas* (5,, 19:1-2,34), *dominandi cupiditas* (15, 7:45; 19, 14:54), *amor dominandi*(5, 21:23), *regni cupiditas* (4, 6:26-27, or *dominari adpetire* (I, praef.:20).

<sup>423</sup> "The man who despises glory (lesser vice) and is eager only for domination is worse than the beasts, in his cruelty or in his self-indulgence. Some of the Romans were men of this kind, who while caring nothing for the opinion of others, were possessed by the passion for domination (*dominatini cupiditas*). See. CD 5, 19:31-35

under the rule of other human beings. The inequality, coercion, and violence inherent in human existence point to the annihilation of the primitive order of good nature: “In regard to its origin, coercive social power, expressed as the lust for domination and subjection, has nothing to do with the good nature created by God.”<sup>424</sup> In Augustine’s critical realistic vision, the lust for domination is both sin and the punishment for sin. It is a basic characteristic of the earthly city—and a perversion of the order of love.

#### 4.1.4. Human History and the Archetype of the Enmity between Abel and Cain

37. Cain’s earthly city is typical of the terrestrial city in that here even the desire for transcendence can serve to extend the lust for domination. To return to our thesis that the desire for false sacralization is to be relinquished, in Augustine’s understanding, the false sacred builds upon the lust for domination. This distortion of the desire for transcendence originates in the enmity between Abel and Cain. The city of God and the earthly city are each founded on love. The difference is that the foundation for the city of God is love oriented toward God, while that of the Earthly city is prideful love oriented toward the self. <sup>425</sup> Augustine writes:

The true cause therefore of the bliss of the good angels is their adherence to him who supremely is. When we ask the cause of the evil angels’ misery, we find that it is the just result of their turning away from him who supremely is, and their turning toward themselves, who do not exist in that supreme degree. What other name is there for this fault than pride? “The beginning of all sin is pride.” Thus they refused to “keep watch for him who is their strength.” They would have existed in a higher degree, if they had adhered to him who exists in the highest degree; but in preferring themselves to him they chose a lower degree of existence.<sup>426</sup>

38. False sacralization is the result of self-love or pride; with this disordering of desire the first earthly city is established. According to Augustine, Adam and Eve did not found the earthly city, but Cain found it by following his murder of Abel. Cain’s earthly city is important to Augustine’s argument for three reasons: it explains the origin of the earthly city; it establishes the epistemic priority of the earthly city; and it offers a parallel between two fratricides—Cain and Romulus—thus preparing Augustine’s representation of the Roman Empire as the epitome of the earthly city.

Now Cain was the first son born to those two parents of mankind, and he belonged to the city of man; the later son, Abel, belonged to the City of God. It

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<sup>424</sup> Miikka Ruokanen, *Theology of Social Life in Augustine’s De Civitate Dei*. p. 101.

<sup>425</sup> CD,14,28:1-7

<sup>426</sup> CD 12, 6:1-10

is our own experience that in the individual man, to use the words of the Apostle, it is not the spiritual element which comes first, but the animal; and afterwards comes the spiritual, and so it is that everyone, since he takes his origin from a condemned stock, is inevitably evil and carnal to begin with, by derivation from Adam; but if he is reborn into Christ and makes progress, he will afterwards be good and spiritual. The same holds true of the whole human race. When those two cities started on their course through the succession of birth and death, the first to be born was a citizen of this world, and later appeared one who was a pilgrim and stranger in the world, belonging as he did to the City of God. He was predestined by grace, and chosen by grace, by grace a pilgrim below, and by grace a citizen above.<sup>427</sup>

39. In Augustine's reading, post-lapsarian humanity is initiated by the first citizen of the earthly city. It is the "natural" (as well as fallen) condition of humankind. Knowledge of the earthly city is an *a priori* condition of the city of God. Although, ontologically speaking, the city of God is prior; epistemologically speaking the earthly city is prior. Human life finds beginning in the earthly city, which is founded by Cain. The city of Abel exists only in pilgrimage and is achieved only within an eschatological hope.<sup>428</sup> Augustine's parallel reading of biblical history and the history of Roman Empire informs his understanding of the violent plots in the Hebrew Scriptures. For Augustine, the Roman Empire is the extension of the earthly city originated by Cain.<sup>429</sup> If Abel and Cain represent the conflict between the earthly city and Eternal city, Romulus's killing of Remus demonstrates the rivalry within the earthly city; a reminder that the "natural" condition of human beings is violent conflict rather than peaceful coexistence.<sup>430</sup>

40. The evil caused by envy is the diabolic *superbia*, which finds expression in *dominandi cupiditas*, the lust for domination. Reflecting on Cain's crime, Augustine writes that the characteristic of the earthly city is "to worship a god or gods so that with their assistance it may reign in the enjoyment of victories and an earthly peace, not with a loving concern for other, but with lust for domination over them."<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> CD 15, 1: 35-48

<sup>428</sup> CD 15, 1: 55-56 and 15, 5:19-32.

<sup>429</sup> "The first founder of the earthly city was, as we have seen, a fratricide; for, overcome by envy, he slew his own brother, a citizen of the Eternal City, on pilgrimage in this world. Hence it is no wonder that long afterwards this first precedent—what the Greeks call an *archetype*—was answered by a kind of reflection, by an event of the same kind at the founding of the city which was to be the capital of the earthly city of which we are speaking, and was to rule over so many peoples. For there also, as one of their poets says when he mentions the crime, *those walls were dripping with a brother's blood*. For this is how Rome was founded. When Remus, as Roman history witnesses, was slain by his brother Romulus, the difference from the primal crime was that both brothers were citizens of the earthly city. Both sought the glory of establishing the Roman state.... In order the the sole power should be wielded by one person, the partner was eliminated." See. CD 15, 5:1-20

<sup>430</sup> CD 15, 5:32-38

<sup>431</sup> CD 15, 7:51-54

Human history, presented by the biblical narrations, is full of struggle and violence, the lust for ruling over one's fellow human beings. The perversion of God's created order lies in human beings' distorted mimesis of God's power in trying to be "gods" over their fellows. For Augustine, the Biblical revelation exposes human history as a history of disorder and confusion.

#### 4.1.5. An Analysis of *De Civitate Dei* Book 19.

41. Augustine's argument on the "appointed ends" of the earthly city and the city of God finds its climax in CD book 19, in which the prevailing focus is violence—its purposes, limits, and necessity. Peter Brown cautions us to read these reflections in context, he said:

We should never isolate Augustine's reflections on the state and society. They are part of an anxious search for at least some echo, for some stunted analogy, that might lead men, in the misery of this life, to share with him some appreciation of the fulfillment of the human being that will be achieved beyond the *saeculum*. Anyone who reads the whole of Book Nineteen of the City of God...will realize this immediately.<sup>432</sup>

42. Augustine devoted his life to striving for the greatest happiness (*summon bonum*). As a realist, however, he put this happiness in an eschatological perspective. True peace and justice, he maintained, are impossible for any earthly state. In this earthly life, even consoled by the best of philosophical thought, happiness remains more speculative than substantive. Indeed, human philosophy, according to Augustine, is really just the *stadium gloriandi*—the desire for glory—a refined form of the *libido dominandi*. This desire drives every philosopher to try to appear wiser and more precise than the others. Spurning one another's opinions, they insist on inventing their own teachings and ideas.<sup>433</sup> According to Pierre Hadot, ancient philosophical schools contained not only sets of theoretical systems, but, more importantly, differing spiritual exercises designed to change the consciousness of their followers and school them in the direction of true happiness.<sup>434</sup> Each school developed its particular understanding of human fulfillment.<sup>435</sup>

43. Philosophical thinking and practice thus were understood as a form of

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<sup>432</sup> Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine*. New York: Harper & Row 1972. pp.39-40.

<sup>433</sup> CD 18, 41:9-13

<sup>434</sup> Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Translated by Michael Chase. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp.172-175.

<sup>435</sup> Pierre Hadot continues to say, "philosophical discourse takes the form of an appeal, not only as an exercise designed to develop the intelligence of the disciple, but also the of an exercise designed to transform his life....The propositions which they [philosophers] compose do not always express adequately the theoretical thoughts of philosophy, but they are to be understood in the perspective of the effect which they aim to produce in the soul of the auditor." See. Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* pp.211-212.

spiritual athleticism, with the sage as the champion—the representative of the fullness of human life and potential. For Augustine, all philosophical and theological arguments advanced by moral human beings arise from the search for happiness amidst the unhappiness of this life.<sup>436</sup> Such philosophical exercises create only “hollow realities,” however, because they fail to recognize and take account of the mechanism of *libido dominandi*. Using Marcus Varro’s *De Philosophia* as a background knowledge, Augustine deconstructed and refuted all 288 of the philosophical schools Varro identified except one: the Old Academy of Plato (CD 19: 1-3). This he thought to be the most true and useful, although still unable to provide the substance of human salvation from the violent world.

44. Deane accurately observes that Augustine’s analysis of violence parallels his discussion of punishment and earthly justice within the state.<sup>437</sup> He discusses the vulnerability of domestic peace (*domus*) in chapter 5 and the coercion of civil peace maintained by the legal system (*civitas*) in chapter 6. In chapter 7 he broadens the issue to one of human society (*orbis*), suggesting that the uncertainty of peace comes from the diversity of languages and the weakness and variability of human affections. Throughout this analysis, the focus is on evil’s ability to overwhelm life. In chapter 5, he calls the poet Terence as a witness to this misery of life:

Think of the disorders of love, as listed in another quotation from Terence: “Wrongs and suspicious, enmities and war—then, peace again.” Have they not everywhere filled up the story of human experience? Are they not of frequent occurrence, even in the honorable love of friends? The story of mankind is full of them at every point: for in that story we are aware of wrongs, suspicions, enmities and war—undoubted evils, these. And even peace is a doubtful good, since we do not know the hearts of those with whom we wish to maintain peace, and even if we could know them today, we should not know what they might be like tomorrow.<sup>438</sup>

45. Augustine, who practices what today we would call a hermeneutic of suspicion, is fully cognizant of the limits of peace. In chapter 6, he raises the question of how a “wise man” as a judge can make a just decision. For Augustine, it is immediately clear that he is unable to fulfill his duty:

What of those judgments passed by men on their fellow-men, which cannot be dispensed with in cities, however much peace they enjoy? What is our feeling about them? How pitiable, how lamentable do we find them? For indeed those who pronounce judgment cannot see into the consciences of those on whom

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<sup>436</sup> CD 19, 1:4-5

<sup>437</sup> Herbert Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1963. p.156.

<sup>438</sup> CD 19, 5:12-20

they pronounce it. And so they are often compelled to seek the truth by torturing innocent witnesses in a case which is no concern of theirs. And what about torture employed on a man in his own case? The question is whether he is guilty. He is tortured, and even if innocent, he suffers, for a doubtful crime, a punishment about which there is no shadow of doubt and not because his is discovered to have committed it, but because it is not certain that he did not commit it. This means that the ignorance of the judge is often a calamity for the innocent.<sup>439</sup>

46. O'Donovan comments that it is marvelously characteristic of Augustine to regard the civil life "as revolving around its judicial task... and to conceive those tasks as virtually impossible for mortal men to discharge."<sup>440</sup> The ignorance of the judge reflects the limitation of human judgment. Thus Augustine writes that if by ignorance and by duty a judge is constrained to misuse the legal system, he should cry to God: "Deliver me from my necessities!"<sup>441</sup> In this life, genuine justice is out of reach. Panel notes, "the issues raised have a wider significance. They underline the imperfect character of human justice always and everywhere, the necessity under which it operates, and our necessary dependence on such an imperfect instrument as positive justice."<sup>442</sup> This is the case because the role and duty of the judge are under the auspices and on behalf of the earthly city. In chapter 7, he discusses the cost of *Pax Romana*: "at what a cost has this unity been achieved, all those great wars, all that human slaughter and bloodshed!"<sup>443</sup> Augustine recognizes that violence is an ever-present reality of life. He was aware of violent episodes that had taken place in various corners of the world. It is indisputable that there are wars; the crucial thing is that what people think about them. Augustine encourages his readers to recover their humanity by responding to violence with sorrow:

And so everyone who reflects with sorrow on such grievous evils, in all their horror and cruelty, must acknowledge the misery of them. And yet a man who experiences such evils, or even thinks about them, without heartfelt grief, is assuredly in a far more pitiable condition, if he thinks himself happy simply because he has lost all human feeling.<sup>444</sup>

47. Augustine was not a "pacifist" as we would understand it. War for him was

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<sup>439</sup> CD 19, 6:1-13

<sup>440</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, "Augustine's city of God XIX and Western Political Thought" *Dionysius* 11 (1987), p.107.

<sup>441</sup> CD 19, 6:44.

<sup>442</sup> Anthony J. Panel, "Justice and Love in the Political Thought of Augustine" in *Grace, Politics, and Desire: Essays on Augustine*. Edited by Hugo Meynell, Calgary: University of Calgary 1990, p.79.

<sup>443</sup> CD 19, 7:20

<sup>444</sup> CD 19, 7:37-41



a tragic necessity, even as he recognized that the reality of violence is “so horrible and so cruel,” no one who feels its effects, even a wise man can call himself blessed. Augustine therefore, presents a paradoxical picture of human reality. The “necessity” of violence involves every human person directly or indirectly, and yet the only truly human response to violence is sorrow. Peace is the goal of life, but it is unattainable in this transient life. Only in the *Civitate Dei* will peace be experienced finally and fully.<sup>445</sup>

48. Despite its incompleteness in the earthly city, peace is still strongly yearned for, even by those beings that live farthest from the human world.<sup>446</sup> Augustine defines it in terms of order. “The peace of the whole universe is the tranquility of order,” he writes, “and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal in a pattern which assigns to each its proper position.”<sup>447</sup> Violence, then, is the displacement of something from its proper position. Human beings in the world of *libido dominandi* are fighting by necessity to meet the ultimate goal of peace. Augustine argues that on either side of rival parties, the basic desire compelling men to war is still peace:

Anyone who joins me in an examination, however, slight, of human affairs, and the human nature we all share, recognizes that just as there is no man who does not wish for joy, so there is no man who does not wish for peace. Indeed, even when men choose war, their only wish is for victory; which shows that their desire in fighting is for peace with glory. For what is victory but the conquest of the opposing side? And when this achieved, there will be peace. Even wars, then, are waged with peace as their object, even when they are waged by those who are concerned to exercise their warlike prowess, either in command or in the actual fighting. Hence it is an established fact that peace is the desired end of war. For every man is in quest of peace, even in waging war, whereas no one is in quest of war when making peace. In fact, even when men wish a present state of peace to be disturbed they do so not because they hate peace, but because they desire the present peace to be exchanged for one that suits their wishes. Thus their desire is not that there should not be peace but that it should be the kind of peace they wish for.<sup>448</sup>

49. Augustine is confident that whatever the causes for war and violence are, peace is the goal. If peace is the order of tranquility, those who disturb the existing order do so out of the desire to reestablish a new order favorable to them, a new peace whose balance they can manipulate. God has placed that desire for peace in the human heart, and although it can be perverted, it cannot be eliminated. And while its

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<sup>445</sup> CD 19, 11:26-29

<sup>446</sup> CD 19, 12:17-19; 39-55.

<sup>447</sup> CD 19, 13:10-12

<sup>448</sup> CD 19, 12:1-14

fulfillment can be achieved completely only in the eternal city, nevertheless, there is a value for any partial and incomplete peace that people should treasure in the present. Viewed from this perspective, the mechanism of *libido dominandi* loses its deterministic character and becomes rather a “process,” a potential pedagogical tool—albeit often terrifying and painful—whereby the Divine may lead people toward the Eternal city.

50. At the end of Augustine’s life, the Vandals came across the strait of Gibraltar into Numidai, causing extensive destruction and acting with open hostility toward both Donatists and Orthodox Christians. In his last writing, a letter to Honoratus, Augustine reiterated an attitude toward violence consonant with his position in *De Civitate Dei*:

But love has its origin in God. Let us pray, therefore, that he who commands love may also bestow it. And let this love make us fear more the sword of spiritual wickedness that kills the hearts of Christ’s sheep than the sword of iron that kills their bodies; in body, after all, they must someday suffer one or other kind of death. Yes, let us fear more that the interior sense be perverted and lose the purity of faith than that women may be raped in the flesh; for chastity is not destroyed by violence as long as it is preserved in intention; in fact, even bodily chastity is not destroyed when the will of the sufferer does not deliberately use the flesh shamefully but only endures the action of another without giving consent to it. Let us fear rather that the living stones may be deprived of life if we abandon them, than that the stones and wood of earthly buildings may be burned in our presence. Let us fear rather that the members of Christ’s body may be slain through deprivation of their spiritual food than that the members of our own bodies may be overwhelmed by the attack of the enemy and subjected to torture.<sup>449</sup>

51. The rhetorical tone in this letter may strike some as rather “cool.” But that detachment toward the violent world should not be understood as indifference to its reality. Rather it reflects the theological priority given by Augustine to inward transcendence. In his letter against Faustus, the Manichean, he writes that the evil of violence is not that people suffer and die. Physical death is unavoidable in our life, whether by natural course or by “the sword of iron.” Augustine’s concern is to preserve the “*hearts* of Christ’s sheep,” not their bodies. This position is likely to provoke fierce criticism today from those who prefer to emphasize bodily and this-worldly experience. For Augustine, however, mindful of the unavoidable calamity confronting human’s destiny, security can only be found in the tranquility of Eternity. Critical, realistic, he takes a stand in resistance to the vicious lust for domination in human history—but

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<sup>449</sup> Ep.228.7 Translation by M. O’Connell in *The Life of Saint Augustine by Possidius*, Villanova: Augustinian Press 1988.

grounds his hope in God, in the crucified One, and in transcendence of the limitations of human existence. To be on the spiritual pilgrimage is to look forward the completeness of the restoration of human *Imago Dei* in the city of God, trusting that the enjoyment of eternal happiness can only come through communion with the Triune Love.

#### 4.2. Augustine's Dogmatic "Purification" of Christian Experience

52. Augustine's *De Trinitate* can be called a meditative exposition of the "dramatic history of God." The program underlying the work was shared by few even among his contemporaries, and in the medieval period was ignored altogether. The Scholastics mined *De Trinitate* for metaphysical arguments and psychological analogies, but the central point, Edmund Hill contends, "was missed entirely, and that is that Augustine is proposing a quest for, or the exploration of, the mystery of the Trinity as a complete program for the Christian spiritual life, a program of conversion and renewal and discovery of self in God and God in self."<sup>450</sup> It is unfortunate that the Doctrine of the Trinity has been alienated from the daily life, devotion, and spirituality of Christians in the West—regarded as an esoteric kind of intellectual luxury for highbrow theologians. It was not so for Augustine. To him, the doctrine of the Trinity contained the spiritual essence of Christianity. To study the doctrine, he would have argued, is to recognize the missions of the Triune God in history to overcome the disordered desires of human beings and open a new way to restore the *Imago Dei* in the innermost human self.

53. We pointed out in the last section that Augustine's search for the transcendent order in the self should not be separated from his historical experience.<sup>451</sup> If *De Trinitate* is Augustine's speculation on the dramatic history of God, we should pay careful attention to what he said and what he did not say. What he said is what is presented to us as a finished work; what he did not say is represented by his own experience, his own participation in the dramatic history of God. The word "participation" does not imply that a human being can comfortably locate himself in the landscape of being, look around, and take stock of what he sees as far as he can see it. Human beings are not self-contained spectators at the center of a horizon of being. They are actors playing a part in the dramatic history of God through the brutalities of existence—committed to play it without knowing what that history is.

54. Augustine, as a Christian actor, plays his Bishopric part in this dramatic

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<sup>450</sup> Hill, Introduction to *The Trinity*, pp.18-19.

<sup>451</sup> Eric Voegelin remarks this well: God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being. The community with its quaternarian structure is, and is not, a datum of human experience. It is a datum of experience insofar as it is known to [human beings] by virtue of his/her participation in the mystery of its being. It is not a datum of experience insofar as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it. Eric Voegelin, *Order of History*, Vol.1. p.1.

history of God. That is why we should not take his reflections as the last word on God, but always as a heuristic clue, pointing readers toward the mystery of the Divine. Quoting Paul, Augustine wrote that existence is seeing through a poor reflection in a mirror (I Cor.13:12). Yet human participation in existence is not a game of partial engagement. The human being is involved in the whole of his life, for participation *is* our existence. From Augustine's perspective, there is no vantage point outside human life from which we can contemplate the meaning of our existence or plan a course of action without commitment. We have no blessed island to withdraw to in order to recapture ourselves. *De Trinitate*, and Augustine's speculations on the finality of human history, should be read as the adventure of a masterful mind on the edge of freedom and necessity.

#### 4.2.1. Rule of Faith as Spiritual Resistance to the Proudful World

55. Book 1-7 of the *De Trinitate* is a biblical and dogmatic understanding of Augustine's Trinitarian belief. Augustine takes this process of understanding as a meditative exegesis and logical discussion of human language. Human transformation can only progress by praying with the sighs of transcendental desire. From such prayer comes the increase of understanding and loving that marks spiritual progress (DT 7.31). Human desire is inherently connected to eternal happiness, a happiness that can be attained only by fulfilling two basic conditions. First, the operation of the mechanism of *libido dominandi* is finally cancelled. Second, human beings can live in authenticity and in the fulfillment of the true knowledge of God. These two factors are mutually conditioned. One who gains the true knowledge of God is able to escape from the bondage of *libido dominandi*, and one who escapes from the mechanism of *libido dominandi* will see the light of the truth.

56. The problem is, where do we start? Augustine takes faith in the incarnate Word as the beginning for human liberation. His favorite quotation is Isaiah 7:9, where the prophet Isaiah declares that unless you believe, you shall not understand (his Latin version of the Greek *LXX* translation). Faith is a spiritual journey that is called to participate in the salvific missions of the triune God. It also aims to restore the original image of God and to live in the Spirit of Jesus Christ eternally. For Augustine, both the rationalists and the heretical schools fall prey to the same error: exercising their lust for domination—albeit in a refined manner, by materialistic, rationalistic or logical methods—by seeking to control the Divine knowledge. According to Augustine, “orthodox” Christian knowledge functions as medicine to heal wounded souls. The Trinitarian faith invites people to join with the life of the Incarnate Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, to find the transcendent order manifested in the restored *imago*, and to return to the Triune mystery in a Christ-like spirit of humility.

57. Sin interferes with our ability to know God. This is the dilemma of the

human condition. Pride, bias, and the lust for domination cloud the Divine revelation and human intellectual and spiritual understanding. Thus, Augustine prays:

O Lord “let us look upon the heavens of yours, the work of your hands.” Clear away from our eyes the cloud with which you have covered your firmament... Above the firmament of your Scripture, I believe that there are “other waters,” immortal and kept safe from earthly corruption....Now we see your Word, not as he is, but dimly, through the clouds, “in a riddle, through the mirror” of the firmament, for though we are beloved by your Son, “what we shall be hereafter is not known as yet.”<sup>452</sup>

58. Reading the history of ancient Israel requires a spirit of discernment to “decode” the salvific message framed in a blemished human history. Augustine studies the divine missions in order to learn to recognize God’s theophanic messages in the midst of the human fallen situation.<sup>453</sup> According to Augustine, human language and the Word of God are in a symbiotic relationship. The theory of signs, the practice of figurative exegesis, and Christological reflection are all in correlation. In mid-380 C.E., Augustine had broken free from a so-called “materialist” worldview to the realization that the ultimate reality is not corporeal but immaterial and immutable<sup>454</sup>—an intellectual and spiritual breakthrough that released him from Manichaean dualism.

59. Augustine’s embrace of Platonist philosophy, in which the spiritual world is seen to be in disjunction with the empirical world, became embodied in his practice of biblical exegesis. Old Testament events, characters, rites and texts were seen as empirical signs pointing either to eternal realities or the future advent of Christ Jesus. His Christology of that period likewise emphasized the distinction between the world in heaven and the assumed man Jesus on earth. The Divine Word used the man Jesus didactically as an exemplar of humility to open the way to the realm of transcendence. Gradually Augustine adjusted his disjunctive worldview, as he came to understand that it could explain only in part the purpose of the incarnate Word’s assumed created mutability and weakness. Jesus Christ is not only exemplar but also mediator. His “two natures” are the medium of a saving exchange between divine immutability and human mutability. It was this discovery that produced his conjunctive theory of signs acknowledging the malleability of Divine power for human history and language, and that led to his notion of mediated immediacy—the idea that angelic mediation

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<sup>452</sup> *Conf.* 13

<sup>453</sup> In *On Christian Teaching*, he presents a schema of communication of the Divine by a theory of signs and things (*signa et res*): All teaching [*doctrina*] concerns either signs or things, but things are learned through signs. Strictly speaking, I have here called a “thing” that which is not used to signify something else, such as wood, stone, cattle, etc., but not that wood, which we read Moses cast into the bitter waters to rid them of bitterness, nor that stone, which Jacob placed at his head, nor that beast [ram] which Abraham sacrificed in place of his son. These are things in such a way that they are also signs of other things. *On Christian Teaching* 1.2.2

<sup>454</sup> *Conf.* 7.17.23.

discloses the Divine missions in ancient Israelite history.<sup>455</sup>

60. The first four books of *De Trinitate* (hereafter DT) focus on theophanic events in ancient Israel in order to explore the question of the true knowledge of God—the liberating power in a world of *libido dominandi*. DT represents for him a very personal search (*inquisitio*), one that embodies *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding).<sup>456</sup> Merriell draws reader's attention to two basic questions which Augustine raises in the *De Trinitate*, and which function as pivots through out the work: "First how are we to understand that Father, Son and Holy Spirit work indivisibly as one God, yet play distinct roles within the created world? Second, how can we understand the distinction of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity since we cannot say that the Father or the Son or both have begotten Him?"<sup>457</sup> These questions sound abstract, but they are closely concerned with the assurance of human salvation. Responding to these two basic questions calls for a meditative exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, read through a Nicene lens. Only in this way will the seeker will be able to grasp the true knowledge of the Divine and gain his/her salvation.

61. In DT book 1, the faith is explicitly identified with the Nicene Confession and the Christian teaching on Trinity. This will be the starting point of his religious quest, and his armor against the prideful thinking (*libido dominandi*) of rationalists, philosophers, and the various heretical schools. Thus Augustine's first rule of faith is as follows:

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are revealed to be one God, who works in the world without any division between the three Persons, but the missions of the Son and the Spirit, to which the New Testaments clearly witnesses, manifest the eternal processions which clearly distinguish these two divine Persons from God the Father."<sup>458</sup>

The second rule is this:

Jesus Christ is to be understood to be God's Son, both equal to the Father by the form of God in which he is, and less than the Father by the form of a servant which he took. In this form indeed he is seen to be not only less than the Father, but also less than the Holy Spirit, less, what is more, than himself—and not a self that he was but a self that he is.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Kari Kloos, *Preparing for the Vision of God: Augustine's Interpretation of the Biblical Theophany Narratives*. PhD. dissertation. Indiana: University of Notre Dame 2003.

<sup>456</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp.258-260.

<sup>457</sup> D.Juvenal Merriell, *To the Image of the Trinity* Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 1990, p.18.

<sup>458</sup> Merriell, *To the image of the Trinity*, p.20.

<sup>459</sup> DT 1.

62. For Augustine, the Trinitarian understanding is critical for the intellectual and spiritual purification of the human mind. First, it purges the mind of the falsities of heretics and rationalists,<sup>460</sup> cleansing it so that it is free to seek the ineffable God.<sup>461</sup> Rationalists and heretics claimed that their intellects could attain the knowledge of God without the Trinitarian faith. Augustine critiques this position as pride, the result of *libido dominandi*. The error is that they “promise themselves cleansing by their own righteousness.”<sup>462</sup> Augustine’s criticism of Arian Christianity highlights his alertness to the prevailing power of pride at various levels of human consciousness, even in its pietistic form. The fatal flaw in heretic belief is lack of “humility.” Similarly, in his critique of Neo-Platonism (DT Book 1), Augustine attacks his anti-Trinitarian opponents as “reason mongers”<sup>463</sup> and “sophists” who scorn the starting point of Trinitarian faith on account of their “unreasonable and misguided love of reason.” To overcome humankind’s prideful nature demands a long process of intellectual and spiritual purification. For Augustine, the divine revelation through angelic mediation found in both Old and New Testaments, accessible through meditative exegesis, is the basic foundation of the spiritual quest.

#### 4.2.2. Theophanies as Angelic Mediation in the Hebrew Scriptures

63. Augustine’s Trinitarian hermeneutics are embodied in his examination of the various missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Books 2-4), culminating in Book 4 in his meditation on the mediation of Jesus Christ for human salvation. Many symbols (*figurae*) in the Hebrew Bible point to the ultimate theophany of the Christ event—theophanies being the source of knowledge of God mediated through created and visible forms. Two sensible mediations—scriptures and creation—draw human attention back to God. This direction inspires people to search the transcendent order and to fall in love with Divine. This leads to the transformation of human consciousness, fitting it for the City of God. In the prologue to Book 2, Augustine declaims:

I will not be idle in seeking out the substance of God, either through the scriptures or through creation. For both these are offered us for our observation and contemplation in order that in them he may be sought, he may be loved, who inspired the one and created the other.<sup>464</sup>

64. Augustine developed a specific understanding of Divine manifestations in the

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<sup>460</sup> DT 1.1.2.

<sup>461</sup> DT 1.1.3.

<sup>462</sup> DT 4.15.20.

<sup>463</sup> DT 1.1.4.

<sup>464</sup> DT 2.1.14

Hebrew Scriptures as he pursued the question of how God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have acted in history according to the personal distinctions in the Godhead. He believed that these distinctions are visible in the divine missions, in which Holy Son and the Holy Spirit are sent into the world to signify God and to demonstrate that it is proper for God to be signified “in a manner suited to human sense.”<sup>465</sup> Theophanies are signs of the divine which point to the divine substance revealed in the Christ event.

65. As we have seen, Augustine introduces a second rule in Book 1, “*forma Dei, forma servi*,” derived from Philippians 2. This “two natures” theory guides his interpretation on verses that contradict the Son’s equality with the Father.<sup>466</sup> It is not, however, sufficient to resolve every contradiction of Christological exegesis he encounters in the Bible. He therefore introduces a third hermeneutical rule—the mission of the Son—as a scriptural key.<sup>467</sup> The Son is sent from the Father. The missions, including but not limited to the Incarnation, are the work of the whole Trinity.

The Father and Son have but one will and are indivisible in their working. Let [people] therefore understand that the incarnation and the virgin birth, in which the Son is understood as sent, were accomplished inseparably by one and the same working of the Father and the Son. Yet, certainly this does not separate the Holy Spirit, of whom it is said in so many words that “she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>468</sup>

66. The mission of the Holy Son as a sign signifies sending is achieved by Father, Son, and Spirit working together. Such biblical manifestations must be understood as Trinitarian acts, for to believe otherwise jeopardizes our understanding of the equality of the Divine nature of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Here Augustine differs from his theological predecessors, for whom theophanic events in the Hebrew Bible were automatically interpreted as appearances of the Son. Augustine established two principles for discerning the meanings of theophanic events in the Hebrew Scriptures: (i) The purpose of those theophanic events was to signify God “in a manner suited to the human senses” (DT 2.12). (ii) Any act of sending of the divine persons engages the whole Triune God in the act of sending (DT 13). Having established these hermeneutical principles, Augustine begins to address the concerns of his predecessors: Who “appeared” in the theophanic events in the Hebrew Scriptures (Book 2)? What are the functions of creatures and/or angels used in the theophanies (Book 3)? And were

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<sup>465</sup> DT 2.11-12.

<sup>466</sup> TeSelle argues that Augustine learned this rule from Hilary or Ambrose. *Augustine the Theologian*, p.226.

<sup>467</sup> There are, however, some statements in the divine utterances of such a kind that it is uncertain which rule should be applied to them; should it be the one by which we take the Son as less than the Father in the created nature he took on, or the one by which we take him as equal to the Father....there are other [passages] which mark him neither as less nor as equal, but only intimate that he is from the Father. DT 2.2-3

<sup>468</sup> DT 2.9.14-18



the Son and the Holy Spirit sent before the age of the Christ's Incarnation (Book 4)?<sup>469</sup>

67. The polemical context of DT Book 2-3 is Augustine's refutation of the "materialist" worldview whose contenders argued that the Son was visible by nature before the Incarnation.<sup>470</sup> In DT, Augustine criticizes those "materialistic theories" as obsessed by "carnal" thinking on the nature of God (DT 2, 14). He recalled all too clearly how anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Hebrew Scriptures had once blocked him from accepting the Christian knowledge of God (DT 2, 15).<sup>471</sup> In these studies, the theophany in Exodus 33 provides Augustine with his most important evidence for explaining the manifestation of divinity through visible forms.

68. As Barnes and others point out, the polemical context of DT book 2 is Augustine's argument against Latin Homoianism, which identified the Son as inferior because of his visible mediation in the world. Insisting on the invisibility, equality, and unity of the triune God, Augustine argues that the "appearances" of God in the Hebrew Scriptures are not "God's substance." A particular person could be signified but not seen. Such visible works were effected through the whole Trinity, and did not specially pertain to any particular person's nature (e.g., the Son's).

69. Taking Exod.33 as an exceptional case study, Augustine argues that Moses' desire to see God proves that previous signs of God's manifestations—the cloud and fire, smoke and mist—were merely physical signs, not real manifestations of the Divine substance. The textual context of Exodus.33 is the golden calf narrative (Exod.32), Moses' destruction of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and his re-ascent to Mount Sinai to receive a new set of tablets (Exod.34). In between the loss of the tablets, the central sign of covenant, and the renewal, Moses requests to see the Lord openly. According to the narrative, the Lord's glory passed by while Moses was covered by God's hand in the cleft of a rock; then the divine hand was removed, and Moses saw God's back, but not God's face. For Augustine, the tension in this narrative, which describes the highest degree of historical revelation of God, lies in the utter impossibility of such a vision in this life. This becomes the most significant understanding in Augustine's study of theophany. Moses' desire to see God exactly as God is illustrates that God cannot be seen in any physical sense:

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<sup>469</sup> DT 2.13

<sup>470</sup> See Michael Rene Barnes, "Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine's *De Trinitate* I," *Augustinian Studies* 30:1 (1999): 43-59, and "The Arians of Book V, and the Genre of *De Trinitate*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1993): 185-95.

<sup>471</sup> Turning to concrete biblical exegesis, Augustine examines various visual and aural communications of God in creation: God's dialogue with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), his dialogue with Abraham (Gen. 12), the three guests at Mamre (Gen 18), Lot's communication with the Lord (Gen. 19), the burning bush (Exod. 3), the pillar of cloud and fire (Exod. 13), the giving of the Ten Commandments and Moses' reception at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19-20, 24), and most importantly, Moses' vision of the "back" of God (Exod. 33). Of these theophanic cases, two involve aural experiences (Gen. 3 and 12); the others involve some visual experience, either of seeing angels (Gen. 19. 1; Exod. 3.2) or earthly objects (Exod. 3:2; 13:21), or of a mysterious vision of God (Gen. 18:1; 33:19-23).

How then, please, are we to suppose that in all that had happened up till now God appeared in his own substance, which is why these wretched people believe the Son of God is not just visible by means of created things but in himself; and that Moses went into the mist, so it seems, in order that while the people's eyes were shown only fog and mist he himself might hear God's words within as he gazed upon his face; and that, as it says, "the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend," and yet here he is, saying "If I have found favor in your sight, show yourself to me openly." Surely he knew that he was seeing corporeally, and he was spiritually seeking a true vision of God.<sup>472</sup>

70. Augustine makes two points here: first, even miraculous signs seen by Moses and the people were seen with the corporeal eyes, and second, Moses' desire to see God "openly" is a desire to see God spiritually. Such spiritual vision offers the only true knowledge of God, because God's substance is spiritual and not physical. That God is "seen" in various narratives in Hebrew Scriptures occurs only by the mediation of visible creatures, not through the divinity itself.

71. For the remainder of his reflection on Exodus 33, Augustine shifts the focus. Obviously, he concedes, when speaking of the theophanies of ancient Israel, it is difficult to identify with any certainty which divine person is present in any given event (see DT 2.13). Setting aside the "who" question, he turns instead to the "how" question—and in so doing, shifts the focus to the reader's own spiritual encounter with God. Employing figurative exegesis, he identifies the "back" of God as prefiguring Christ's flesh, and the invisible "face" of God as pointing to Christ's divinity (DT 2.28). The rock symbolizes the Catholic Church (DT 2.30), and Moses represents the people of God who follow Christ after his resurrection (DT 2.31). Augustine's purpose is not only to correlate the Biblical narrative with later Christian experience, but to take the narrative as a pointer (or sacrament, in his terms) guiding readers to see God. "This then," he wrote, "is the sight which ravishes every rational soul with desire for it, and of which the soul is the more ardent in its desire the purer it is; and it is the purer the more it rises again to the things of the spirit; and it rises the more to the things of the spirit, the more it dies to the material things of the flesh."<sup>473</sup>

72. Augustine next turns to the role of angels, which are often visible and audible in the theophanies of Hebrew scripture.<sup>474</sup> Guarding against the Arian belief in the creatureliness of Christ, Augustine rejects the tradition that regarded these angelic theophanies as manifestations of Christ. Angelic appearances, like other theophanic phenomena—miracles, signs, prophetic words and deeds—bring together what Augustine calls "demonstration" and "signification." God is encountered and "seen" in

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<sup>472</sup> DT 2.27

<sup>473</sup> DT 2.28.

<sup>474</sup> DT 3.6.

the created order only through the mediation of creatures. All creation is governed by the supreme Creator, he writes in Book 3.<sup>475</sup> All creatures and their motions, even “ungodly” acts such as witchcraft (DT 3.12) and demonic deeds (DT 3.13) derive from God’s will and rely on his providence. God governs both natural phenomena and miraculous deeds. Therefore angels who perform miraculous signs and wonders are also empowered by God (DT 3.19). The theophanic events in Israel’s history, Augustine concludes, were revelations by God through the medium of created beings and objects (DT 3.22).

73. The interpretation of previous Christian writers—that such theophanies were in reality manifestations of the Son —is to be discarded by Augustine. Rather, angels were the Son’s own messengers, as suggested in the book of Hebrews, where it is written that angels spoke God’s word before the incarnation, and Moses’ law was given through the ministry of angels (Heb.2:1). Thus the theophanies are differentiated into two levels of reality: the Word and angels. In them, the Word is not merely represented by angels but present through the mediation of angels:

He, as God’s Word, was present in a wonderful and inexpressible way in the angels through whose proclamation the law was given. So he says in the gospel, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me too, since he wrote about me” (John 5:46). So the Lord used to speak in those bygone days through angels, and through angels the Son of God, who would come from the seed of Abraham to mediate between God and human beings, was preparing his coming.<sup>476</sup>

74. Of course, Augustine goes on to say, the mediation of angels in history does not concern the Word alone; it is always the triune God who acts. Sometimes it is the Father represented by angels, sometimes the Son, sometimes the Holy Spirit, and sometimes the whole Trinity without distinction of person.<sup>477</sup> In Augustine’s hermeneutical circle, the theophanies of angels in the Old Testament are to be understood according to the authority of the New Testament, in which angelic mediation is seen as playing a crucial role in salvation history (e.g. Hebrew 1-2; Acts 7). In turn, these angelic mediations point to the divine presence in Jesus Christ.

#### 4.2.3. Participating in the Mission of the Incarnate Word

75. The Christian experience of the transcendent order is a journey that participates in the missions of the Triune God. For Augustine, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, in contrast to that of other human beings, is that Jesus’ life is a human life

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<sup>475</sup> DT 3.9.

<sup>476</sup> DT 3.26

<sup>477</sup> DT 3.26

which “bears the person” of the Wisdom of God. It is different from the reception of the power of that Wisdom by other human beings. Jesus possesses the Wisdom *naturally*; other humans can only *participate* in the energy of the Wisdom. Augustine’s knowledge of Christ was to undergo different stages of growth. TeSelle argues that his Christology is mainly in lineage with “Origenist Christology,” in which the soul of Christ is seen as the medium of union between the Word and the flesh. The soul of Jesus is inseparably united to the Word to a degree that it becomes completely like the Word, just as iron heated in fire becomes fiery itself.<sup>478</sup>

76. For Augustine, the human mind of Jesus is joined to and mixed with the Word in unity of person.<sup>479</sup> In his various works he constantly refers “the man” assumed by the Word, a view that is clearly present throughout DT. In a letter to Nebridius (Ep.11), he states:

Form, which is attributed specifically to the Son, pertains to instruction, and to artistry (if we may use that term in this connection), and to understanding, in which the soul is formed by knowledge. And because in his case the assumption of a man insinuated into our minds, through the majesty and clarity of the thoughts conveyed to them, instruction in living and at the same time an example of those same precepts, it is not without reason that all of this is attributed to the Son. In many matters, which I leave to your own reflection and insight, there may be a number of factors and yet only one of them so stands out that everything can, without absurdity, be ascribed to it in particular. In this case the primary purpose was to exhibit a certain rule or norm of instruction. That was accomplished through the dispensation of the man who was assumed, and it is to be attributed properly to the Son, in order that there might be knowledge *of the Father*, the one Source from whom all things exist, *through the Son*, and an inward, unutterably sweet enjoyment in remaining in this knowledge and shunning all mortal things, which is a gift properly attributed to the *Holy Spirit*. Therefore even though all things are done inseparably, in supreme harmony, still they needed to be exhibited distinctly because of our lack of perception; for we had fallen from unity into diversity and change.<sup>480</sup>

77. This passage cannot be counted as a completed version of Augustine’s Christology, but it does illustrate two significant principles: The persons of the Trinity operate distinctly but inseparably, and the divine Trinity operates in all things and in all human beings. In this passage, the search for transcendent order becomes a way of participating in the Divine missions. Questions remain, however, in what sense does the Triune God act toward the world? Is there hierarchical order inside the Triune God?

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<sup>478</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine The Theologian*, p.148.

<sup>479</sup> DT 4.13:16 and 20:30.

<sup>480</sup> Ep.11.4.

How can we understand the identity of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity, since we cannot say that the Father has two sons or that the Father or the Son or both have begotten him? What is the different between the Son and the Spirit as processions from the Father?

78. Such questions are addressed in Book 4-7 of *De Trinitate*, in which Augustine undertakes a dogmatic and logical clarification of the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in the human world. Book 4 mainly focuses on the soteriological significance of the mission of the Son, while books 5-7 distinguish that mission from the mission of the Holy Spirit. The four books are best read as a continuous movement in which Augustine focuses on the equality of the Triune God and the distinctions of the processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>481</sup> The incarnation of the Word in Augustine's eyes is a divine mission to heal the trauma of *libido dominandi* in human history. The incarnate Word is also divine medicine to restore the image of God in the human soul, and a divine teacher seeking to persuade human beings to return to our divine origin: "We needed to be persuaded how much God loves us, and what sort of people he loves; how much in case we despaired, what sort in case we grew proud."<sup>482</sup> Under the pressure of the Homoians' insistence on subordinationism, Augustine highlights the sacramental natures of Christ and announces his intention to show "why and how Christ was sent in the fullness of time by the Father on account of those who say that He who sent and He who was sent cannot be equal in nature."<sup>483</sup>

79. The fancies of the human heart hinder human beings from finding their happiness in God. However, although human existence is in exile from the eternal happiness, we are still not totally cut off from the desire to seek eternity, truth, and happiness in the fallen world—for we do not want, "to die or to be deceived or to be afflicted."<sup>484</sup> The angelic mediations of the Divinity are those signs which accommodate the Divine to human corporeal eyes: "to admonish us that what we seek is not here, and that we must turn back from the things around us to where our whole being springs from—if it did not, we would not even seek the things here."<sup>485</sup> The purpose of the theophanies, then, in their manifestation under "creature control," is to point to the coming mission of the Son and illuminate the wretchedness of the human condition.

80. In DT book 4, Augustine explains why the incarnation of the Word is more than these angelic mediations of the Divine nature. Jesus Christ is both example and sacrament, leading human beings into the fathomless mystery of the Divine reality. His incarnation, death, and resurrection communicate the profundity of eternal truths. If

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<sup>481</sup> D.Juvenal Merriell, *The image of the Trinity*, p.22.

<sup>482</sup> DT 4.2.

<sup>483</sup> DT 8.25

<sup>484</sup> DT 4.2.

<sup>485</sup> DT 4.2.

those angelic mediated signs in history pointed to the mystery of the Trinity, the incarnate Word is the signified reality that bears the final mediation of the Triune God for human salvation. In DT book 4 Augustine discusses the necessity of Christ's mediation for human transformation. For Augustine, Christian faith means the acceptance of the incarnate Word through whom all things are created:

So because there is but one Word of God, through which all things were made, which is unchanging truth, in which all things are primordially and unchangingly together, not only things that are in the whole of this creation, but things that have been and will... To cure these and make them well the Word through which all things were made became flesh and dwelt among us.<sup>486</sup>

81. Augustine takes the mission of the Word's incarnation into historical existence as the climactic encounter between human history and eternity. It enables God's saving works to cross over historical divisions (past, present and future) and raise human beings to eternal beatitude by temporal means. Augustine considers the mission of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection as both sacraments and examples that enable seekers to understand and love eternal truth. He uses the terms "sacrament" and "mystery" (*mysterium*) interchangeably to refer specifically to God's Trinitarian nature and to the mission of the Word. To accept the sacrament of the Triune God and of the incarnation is to receive divine grace; by receiving this grace, we participate in the divine mystery.<sup>487</sup> This participation depends upon the divine presence to exert a therapeutic, non-verbal influence on the human mind.

82. The condescension of the Word, Augustine writes, cleanses and heals people from sin and its effect—the lust for domination. The redemption he offers works through similarity by dissimilarity: He is human, as we are, but innocent and sinless, as we are not.<sup>488</sup> His death and resurrection function as both sacrament and example: as sacrament for the inner self, in its deadly peril, and as model for the perishable outer self.<sup>489</sup> The *sacramentum* of Christ predicates the death and resurrection of the inner self: "By the crucifixion of the inner man is to be understood the sorrows of repentance and a kind of salutary torment of self-discipline, a kind of death to erase the death of ungodliness in which God does not leave us." By this means the inner self is renewed from day to day. "The Lord's bodily resurrection is a sacrament of our inner resurrection," he writes, enabling the inner self to be lifted to God. At the same time, the death of Christ in his flesh contains the *exemplum* of the death of our outer self. This death of outer self encourages his followers not to fear those who kill the body but

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<sup>486</sup> DT 4.3-4.

<sup>487</sup> DT 13.24.

<sup>488</sup> DT 4.4

<sup>489</sup> DT 4.6;17.

cannot kill the soul (Mt 10:28). “The resurrection of his body serves as the model for our outer self’s resurrection,” which will be fulfilled at the end of time.<sup>490</sup> The Christic event, different from other angelic mediations in the biblical narratives, is the Word become mediator. Augustine reads Christology from a soteriological perspective. Christ the true mediator effects genuine reconciliation with God as well as with people. He is mystery (*sacramentum*) and model (*exemplum*) showing us the only way of salvation. As our priest, his true sacrifice purifies our minds and reconciles human beings to God.<sup>491</sup>

83. Augustine contrasts Christ’s role as mediator with other paths to salvation that have been put forward. He attacks as “blasphemous symbols” those demonic works in human history that create “godless curiosities” and “magical consecrations” in human disillusion (4.15).<sup>492</sup> Meanwhile, God’s goodness has remained constant in history, expressed first through pre-incarnation theophanies and finally through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, guiding those who seek the divine salvific plan through the purification of our faith and mind.

84. Augustine has strong criticism for any and all forms of self-promotion in the name of spiritual exercise. The neo-Platonic practice of achieving spiritual purification by means of theurgy (4.15), he writes, brings ridicule on the Christian faith by its philosophical speculation (4.20). Similarly, Augustine criticizes those philosophers who mix theurgic practice with philosophical imagination and claim to have attained a vision of mind beyond that of other created things. While they say they have penetrated the light of unchanging truth, in reality they are defiled by the lust for domination.<sup>493</sup> Augustine concedes that a philosophical gaze of vision on eternity is possible. No philosopher, however, can maintain this gaze continuously (4.23). For Augustine, the core of Greek theoretical philosophy is the question of knowledge of God; that of practical philosophy, the movement toward happiness in participation with God. However, this kind of “do-it-yourself” philosophical purification constitutes a tacit admission that philosophy cannot fulfill its own promises. As Rist puts it:

[Augustine sees that] mere introspection will not provide the way [to philosophic happiness], so in desperation the Platonists indulge in sacrilegious rites (i.e. theurgy) and impious “curiosity” in their arrogant desire to “return” by their own effort. For opposed to both *sapientia* and *scientia* is

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<sup>490</sup> DT 4.6

<sup>491</sup> DT 4.4

<sup>492</sup> Wicked spirits, he says, can create phantasms and images by means of their bodies and the physical elements to jeopardize the transcendent quest of human beings (4.14). Unlike the true mediator, the demonic mediator (the devil) leads humans astray, far from eternal life (4.13-18), and causes the death of humanity without himself going there (4.15).

<sup>493</sup> DT 4.20

“curiosity” which appears as their “shadow.”<sup>494</sup>

85. We discussed in the previous section the mechanism of the lust for domination on various levels of human consciousness. For Augustine, the prideful desire of Neo-platonic philosophers comes through in their interest in theurgy and the desire to manipulate spirits and deities for their own purposes. The obstacle to achieving the true knowledge of God, he points out, is the prideful self. “Christ is humble,” he writes, “you [Porphyry] are proud; perhaps you do not like to be corrected: this is a vice only for the proud.”<sup>495</sup> He rejected the claims of Platonic philosophers (possibly Porphyry and his followers) who claimed to be able to escape the materialistic bondage of this world and gaze with the light of intellect upon unchanging truth, like a man who climbs a tower to gaze from afar on the home country across the sea. Such transcendence is impossible in our current human condition, Augustine insists:

We were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things, and which had become almost a natural growth on our mortal stock; so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means like those we were already bound to in a servile adaptation.<sup>496</sup>

86. The Christian knowledge of God, by contrast, relies on the missions of the incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit. Through the humble mediation of the Word, the Triune God reaches into human world, leading humanity to transformation in the divine life. The incarnate Word, as both example and sacrament, stands with and between God and humanity. If Augustine, as TeSelle argues, is in lineage with “Origenist Christology,” his own contribution is to stress the dynamic side of Christ’s two natures. To use Edmund Hill’s terms, Augustine’s understanding of the structure of the human psyche looks like a cooling tower at a power plantation: above and within the psyche, it is open to and in contact to God; below and outside the psyche, it is open through the five senses to the empirical world.<sup>497</sup> Or, drawing on Lonergan’s cognitional theory, the fourfold levels of consciousness (experience, understanding, judgment, and decision/action) interpenetrate with each other to form a hermeneutical circle connecting the divine and human relationship.<sup>498</sup>

87. Augustine’s three hermeneutical principles, as I stated earlier, were absolute

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<sup>494</sup> Rist, *Ancient Thought Baptized*, p.90.

<sup>495</sup> CD 10.29:70-80.

<sup>496</sup> DT 4.24

<sup>497</sup> Augustine, *The Trinity*. pp258-264

<sup>498</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. Edited by Frederick E.Crowe and Robert M.Doran. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1992. See also Terry J.Tekippe, *What is Lonergan Up to in Insight: A Primer*. Colleagueville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press. 1996.



equality among three persons, the two natures of Jesus Christ, and the missions of the Triune God. In his Christology, the third principle—and in particular the notion of the Son’s sending from the Father—becomes a bridge linking the first two together. Christ’s mission has taken place in the “fullness of time” (Gal.4:4).<sup>499</sup> In this soteriological framework, Augustine is careful to distinguish the Son’s absolute equality with the Father from his mission (4.27). In his eternal origin from the Father, the Son is fully divine and absolutely equal to the Father, but as *sent*, as manifested in the flesh, he is less than the Father as regards his humanity (4.28).

88. The incarnation as the Son’s mission has two significant implications. The first concerns his dual natures. That the Son comes from the Father signifies his divinity; that he is sent into the temporal world by the Triune God points to the man Jesus Christ who became the model for our humanity. The second implication concerns the Trinity. In his incarnation-centered mission, Christ became the sacramental presence of the Triune God to the world (4.29), a bridge between inner wisdom and outer knowledge. Through the incarnation, it becomes possible to know God in temporal things:

Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col.2:3).

#### 4.2.4. The Limitation of the Human Categorical Language

89. For Augustine, in discussing the Divine nature, the principle of simplicity dominates. How this principle applies to the relation between one and three becomes the core issue in his meditations. There are two problems to be solved regarding the doctrine of Trinity: the problem of being and relation, and the problem of genus and species. The logical purification, or more accurately, linguistic clarification of Augustine’s Trinitarian belief is found in Books 5-7, where he argues that God is One in substance and Three in persons because of the mutual relations of paternity, generation, and procession. Here he explores the categorical meanings of Trinitarian language that had developed over time. The early Christian tradition of calling God *substance* or, better, *essence* implied that every created thing by nature is “accidental” (changeable), and therefore excluded from God. “God cannot be modified in any way,” he writes, “and therefore the substance or being which is God is alone unchangeable, and therefore it pertains to it most truly and supremely to be, from which comes the

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<sup>499</sup> DT 4.25

name ‘being.’”<sup>500</sup> However, not everything written of God in the biblical narratives is expressed in terms of substance. Relational language is also used. Augustine contends that neither intra-Trinitarian relational terms, such as “unbegotten,” nor extra-Trinitarian relational terms, such as “origin,” are to be understood, as Arian Christians did, as accidental in regards to God’s substance. Relational statements in the Scriptures in no way imply this, he insists:

The chief point then that we must maintain is that whatever the supreme and divine majesty is called with reference to itself is said substance-wise; whatever it is called with reference to another is said not substance- but relationship-wise; and that such is the force of the expression “of the same substance” in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, that whatever is said with reference to self about each of them is to be taken as adding up in all three to a singular and not to a plural. Thus the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and no one denies that this is said substance-wise; and yet we say that this supreme triad is not three Gods but one God.<sup>501</sup>

90. TeSelle has drawn special attention to Gregory Nazianzen’s third theological oration (Or.29.16; DT 5.4) as a crucial source for Augustine’s concept of God as self-relatedness.<sup>502</sup> Gregory’s doctrinal insight comes from his answer to the Eunomians’ argument that whatever is said of God must be said according to substance, not according to accident. Following this principle, the assertion that the Father is ungenerated must be said according to substance, and, as a result, the Son, who is generated, must be different from the Father in substance. Gregory argues that the only solution for this dilemma is to transcend the opposition between substance and accident and speak of relation. Following on Gregory Nazianzen’s insight, Augustine pursues his own logical discussion on the distinction between substance and accident, and on the general problem of “predicamentals,” the things that are said of God. An accident, Augustine argues, is a changeable or perishable feature of finite things. God’s nature does not admit accidents, but that does not mean that everything of God must be according to God’s substance. Relation must be lifted out of the set of accidental categories and transferred to the realm of ontology, along with substance. The category of substance, moreover, is not only to be understood according to Aristotle’s definition, as the permanent vehicle of changes; the term must encompass essence or being itself. By giving new definition to “essence” and “relation,” Augustine thus opens a way to a clearer understanding of the mystery of Trinity.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> DT 5.2-3; 7.10

<sup>501</sup> DT 5.5-6; see especially DT 5.9.

<sup>502</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p.296.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

91. The distinction between the Father, Son and Spirit, Augustine maintains, is a distinction not of essence but of mutual relation. Terms that do not pertain to relations among three persons are applied to the divine nature, which they share. Such divine attributes—divinity, truth, greatness, wisdom, omnipotence, love, holiness, eternity, form, and so on—pertain to the divine essence and apply to all three persons. The nature of God, he says, is self-relatedness: “they are each in each and all in each, and each in all and all in all, and all are one.”<sup>504</sup> The formula of “one substance, three persons” is not equivalent to genus and species divisions. It is difficulty for human language to express the total transcendence of the godhead. The problem is we don’t have a satisfactory logic to address the life of Triune God. Augustine recognizes that “God can be thought about more truly than he can be talked about.”<sup>505</sup> If Father and Son and Holy Spirit are three, the question would be immediately asked “three what” which means what do they have in common and why three of them are distinct? Augustine realizes that for human language to speak of one “essence or substance” and three *personae* will not fully answer the question. Christian thinkers need language to think of an “essence” of God which “exists” entirely and exclusively in the three “terms” in which it is concretely realized.<sup>506</sup> Moreover, these three terms are not three cases of genus that can be added to one another in cumulative fashion (as three human beings are more than one human being).<sup>507</sup> The logic of genus and species divisions is unable to articulate the issue. As Augustine recognizes that after exhausting different kinds of logical thinking, we need a higher level of consciousness to take us forward.<sup>508</sup> This new knowledge needs faith and inward self-understanding by which we may go into the realm of interiority to explore the mystery of the Trinity.

#### 4.3. Exercise of the Soul and the Restoration of *Imago Dei*

92. Among Augustine’s numerous metaphors for spiritual transformation, the metaphors of training (*disciplina*) and the exercise of the Soul (*exercitationes animi*) occupy a central place in his thought. Many modern scholars note that the DT does not respond to a specific polemical issue but rather aims at to inspire Christians to know and love the mystery of Trinity better.<sup>509</sup> Hill regrets that in its later development, Western theology lost “the whole point and value of Augustine’s coordinating” in one work a meditation on the relation between the mystery of Trinity and its image in human beings.<sup>510</sup> Recent scholarship on DT has finally begun to focus on the dialogue

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<sup>504</sup> DT 6.8;12.

<sup>505</sup> DT 7.7

<sup>506</sup> DT 7.11

<sup>507</sup> Williams Rowan, “de Trinitate” in *Augustine through the Ages*. p.848.

<sup>508</sup> DT 7.12; 8:1

<sup>509</sup> I benefit this insight greatly from Aaron D Stalnaker’s dissertation, *Overcoming Our Evil: Spiritual Exercises and Personhood in Xunzi and Augustine*. Ph.D. dissertation. RI: Brown University. 2001.

<sup>510</sup> Hill, Trinity, p.20.

among different levels of human consciousness in DT, and on the importance of the intellectual dynamism inherent in the human soul. As I have written, Augustine's fundamental concern is the "gradual renewal of the inner man, the divine image, [that] is simply progress in the knowledge and love of God." Love is the effective principle in transformation. Human beings become like God by knowing and loving.<sup>511</sup>

93. In DT book 8, Augustine urges his readers to "turn our attention to the things we are going to discuss in a more inward manner than the things that have been discussed above, though in fact they are the same things."<sup>512</sup> In this way he signals a new effort, in the new level of the *De Trinitate*, to differentiate the realm of interiority and the realm of transcendent by inward transcendence. According to Lonergan, the realm of interiority is not necessary religious, but it becomes religious once it connects to the realm of transcendent. Lonergan calls this realm of transcendence "being in love with God."<sup>513</sup>

94. DT book 8-15 should be read as an approach to training or exercising the soul in the realm of interiority and the realm of transcendence. The goal of this intellectual/spiritual training is to "fall in love" with the wisdom of the Triune God, means the kenosis of Jesus Christ. The exercise of the soul, Augustine argues, is a process of healing, strengthening, cleansing, and purifying the prideful human self. It is an inward ascent that aims at the "renewal of the innermost self." Specifically, it is a spiritual exercise intended to restore the *Imago Dei* through Trinitarian faith. Augustine acknowledges that this inward ascent is a long healing process that begins Christian baptism and the forgiveness of sins. This is the basic rite for spiritual transformation. Baptism alone does not suffice, however, for spiritual transformation does not take place at the beginning of the conversion process. Further work is needed. "It is one thing to throw off a fever," he writes, "another to recover from the weakness which the fever leaves behind it; it is one thing to remove from the body a missile stuck in it, another to heal the wound it made with a complete cure."<sup>514</sup>

95. Augustine suggests that spiritual growth can be divided into three stages. The first is to receive the baptism. The second is to make progress every day by practicing the holiness of truth and justice by the gifts of the Spirit. The third stage is to be perfected in the image of Christ in the presence of the beatific vision:

The first stage of the cure is to remove the cause of the debility, and this is done by pardoning all sins; the second stage is curing the debility itself, and this is done gradually by making steady progress in the renewal of this image... About this

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<sup>511</sup> John Sullivan, *Image of God*, pp.64, 146.

<sup>512</sup> DT 8.1

<sup>513</sup> "All love is self-surrender, but being in love with God is being in love without limits or qualifications or conditions or reservations. Just as restricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfillment of that capacity." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p.105-106.

<sup>514</sup> DT 14.23

[second stage] the apostle speaks quite explicitly when he says, “Even if our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor.4:16). . . . So then the man who is being renewed in the recognition of God and in justice and holiness of truth by making progress day by day, is transferring his love from temporal things to eternal, from visible to intelligible, from carnal to spiritual things; he is industriously applying himself to checking and lessening his greed for the one sort and binding himself with charity to the other. But his success in this depends on divine assistance; it is after all God who declares, “without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). When the last day of his life overtakes someone who has kept faith in the mediator, making steady progress of this sort, he will be received by the holy angels to be led into the presence of the God he has worshipped and to be perfected by him and so to get his body back again at the end of the world, not for punishment but for glory. For only when it comes to the perfect vision of God will this image bear God’s perfect likeness.<sup>515</sup>

96. Here is summarized the whole of Augustine’s vision for Christian spirituality: catechesis and baptism in the Church; listening and meditating under the authority of the Holy Scriptures; fasting and dedication to liturgy; and prayer in contemplation. The precondition of this spiritual exercise is baptism, which washes away of all previous sins and inaugurates one’s membership in the school of the Lord. Making spiritual progress, however, requires reading and listening to the Scriptures. Augustine likens the Christian church to a house of divine *disciplina*, with Christ as the schoolmaster, Christians as fellow students,<sup>516</sup> and the Scriptures as the texts by which we mediate on the Master’s teachings. In a sermon on Christian discipleship, he urges people to establish a regular habit of listening to the word of God and repeating it every day, to prevent worldly vices from taking root in human hearts and choking the divine seed which has been sown.<sup>517</sup> Augustine encourages serious students to commit to memory as much of canonical scripture as they are able, or at least to become familiar with them.

97. Through reading and listening to the Scriptures, divine illumination is constantly manifested.<sup>518</sup> This notion of grace and divine illumination are, for Augustine, crucial elements of spiritual discipline. He shares his own experience of listening to the Holy Scriptures being read aloud in church, concentrating his mind on what has been chanted, and sharing spontaneously with his congregation what his inner

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<sup>515</sup> DT 14.23

<sup>516</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/10 p.458.

<sup>517</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.216.

<sup>518</sup> For Augustine’s critical views of the history of ancient Israel and the Jews, see my previous discussion. Also Paula Fredrikson, “*Secundum Carnem*: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine,” in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity*. Ann Arbor: Univeristy of Michigan Press, 1999: pp.26-41; and “*Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei*: Augustine on Jews and Judaism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (Fall 1995); pp.299-324.

teacher, Christ teaches him.<sup>519</sup> This practice of spontaneity is based on another spiritual practice, fasting in order to keep his mind focused on the illumination of the Divine words. For Augustine, the purpose of fasting is to eliminate carnal delight in food and to bring the body into submission, thus freeing the mind to submit itself to God. Flesh that has been tamed exerts less pressure on the human mind.<sup>520</sup> In his sermon on the Lord's Prayer, he observes that fasting leads people to feeling hunger for the Lord's Table. We need both physical and spiritual nutrition daily, but the Eucharist in particular provides us with necessary daily spiritual food. As people digest the bread in the Eucharist, the Church will digest recipients into the body of Christ, unified in their love for God and neighbor.<sup>521</sup> For Augustine, the visible sacrifice is the outer form of an invisible sacrifice which is internal and spiritual. The Christian's heart is the sacrifice that God truly desires. The body that comes along with this sacrifice of heart should be disciplined with temperance to be an "instrument of righteousness."<sup>522</sup> When a soul offers itself to God, it will be kindled by the fire of love and lose its worldly desire. The Eucharist is a sacred sign that sustains and enlivens one's spiritual being through the symbolic act of eating the daily bread, transforming human souls into the image of Christ.

98. The exercise of the soul also means the practice of prayer. Augustine divides prayer into three main types: petitionary, confessional, and contemplative. In the DT, he mainly presents to us his practice of contemplative prayer, a spiritual exercise designed to purify the mind to see God face by face. Contemplative prayer, he writes, is directed by divine grace and illuminated by God. It produces a perfect knowledge and everlasting joy by the divine presence.<sup>523</sup> A process of reflection on both self and God, it begins with meditative exegesis and logical purification and ascends toward concerned with wisdom about eternal things, rather than knowledge of temporal matters.<sup>524</sup> To make in contemplation of eternal wisdom and divine truths is a function of the higher mind, the image of God, the human mind possesses "the capacity to use reason and understanding in order to understand and gaze upon God."<sup>525</sup>

99. The second part of the DT is a step-by-step ascent through the realm of interiority to discern the triune structure of Image of God. Augustine calls this spiritual exercise "training the mind...to come in our own small measure to a sight of the trinity which God is"<sup>526</sup> Even with training, he admits, this sight will be limited:

Let us go forward then, walking in hope, hoping for what we do not yet possess,

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<sup>519</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.227. cf. doc.Chr. 4.30.63.

<sup>520</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.473.

<sup>521</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/3, p.112

<sup>522</sup> CD 10.3

<sup>523</sup> DT 1.20

<sup>524</sup> DT 12.4

<sup>525</sup> DT 14.6

<sup>526</sup> DT 13.26 cf. 15.1;10

believing what we do not yet see, loving what we do not yet embrace. The exercise of our souls in faith, hope and love makes them fit to grasp what is yet to come.<sup>527</sup>

100. Spiritual exercises always contain an eschatological dimension. Whatever progress is made through patience and perseverance, it will only reach completeness in the beatific vision.

#### 4.3.2. Discernment of the Operation of Consciousness as an Inward Pilgrimage

101. Augustine's understanding of the mystery of the Trinity is grounded in the concepts of relationship and activity, rather than the more static Platonic concept of the Idea. According to Rowan Williams, his understanding of the human mind search for God is likewise based on the notion of activity.<sup>528</sup> His aim is not, as TeSelle rightly points out, to arrive at an exact terminology, but to clarify the nature of substance and relation in the mind.<sup>529</sup> His study of the human mind is thus not epistemology *per se*, but an exploration of how spiritual completeness may be achieved through the epistemological process of knowing God. His doctrine of Trinity shapes his hermeneutics of consciousness. In the first part of the DT, he establishes a biblical and logical language of Trinity by which we can think and speak of God as Triune in the second part.

102. Augustine realizes that "the whole of our life time is nothing but a race towards death, in which no one is allowed the slightest pause or any slackening of the pace."<sup>530</sup> For him, Christian teaching of the Trinity represents the salvific knowledge of God by which one can be liberated from this earthly city of death to the eternal city of living God by an eschatological hope. To attain spiritual completeness, we must first discipline our human mind by knowing and loving God, then commit ourselves to the humble life of the Incarnate Word, letting our human life become Christ-like. The crucial thing, for Augustine, is to seek to know God first. If we love God in order to see God, our efforts will be frustrated, for we cannot love what we do not know. But can we know God? About the mystery of Trinity, we have no prior knowledge or experience, nothing on which to base an understanding. How we can know God before we don't believe God? Augustine replies this question is by his inward turn, his exploration of the realm of interiority. He analyzes that the operation of human consciousness is a kind of action of love by nature it is not action to love of the unknown, but to love of the known. Human mind provokes question, either by loving knowledge itself or loving some objects of knowledge. Human being by nature loves

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<sup>527</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.185.

<sup>528</sup> Rowan Williams, "The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, edited by Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske New York: Peter Lang, 1993, pp.121-134.

<sup>529</sup> Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p.303.

<sup>530</sup> CD 13.10

some universal truth or value. This kind of knowledge leads us toward God. Knowing God depends on knowing self, and vice-versa.

103. Augustine formulates this basic approach in DT book 8, chapter 4-10. In the created order, he writes, we set our minds to love and search for God because of what we value, that is, the good. It is not simply a theoretical enterprise, but the exercise of value judgments, positive or negative, toward what we perceive. The criteria for making judgments presupposes an orientation to what is comprehensively, non-contingently good. Therefore, he said “God is to be loved, not this and that good, but the good itself.”<sup>531</sup> All changeable good things are sustained by the unchangeable good. And “we have to stand by and cling to this good in love, in order to enjoy the presence of him from whom we are, whose absence would mean that we could not even be.”<sup>532</sup> This is why the mind is restless until it turns “to be before it was.” The reasoning self keeps questioning through “a history of affective and attitudinal responses” to attain to seeing the eternal Good.<sup>533</sup>

104. And still the question remains: since no one has seen God, when we say we love the Triune God as the unchangeable good, what likeness of things known can we believe in order that we may love that Triune God whom we do not know? The question reveals Augustine’s paradoxical understanding of knowing and loving as a spiritual exercise to come to the knowledge of God. The fact that an unrighteous mind is able to love someone who is just, he writes, shows that our mind knows in itself what it is to be righteous. The concept of justice cannot be learned through human bodily experience, but must be gained through introspection. To put it another way, we love justice on the basis of the “form of justice.”

A man who is believed to be just is loved and appreciated according to that form and truth which the one who is loving perceives and understands in himself; but this form and truth cannot be loved and appreciated according to the standard of anything else. We simply cannot find anything else besides this, which is such that from this something else that we know we can love by believing this form and truth, while it is still unknown to us. If in fact you ever observe any such thing else, it is this form and truth, and so is not any such thing else, because this form and truth alone is such as this form and truth is.<sup>534</sup>

105. The knowledge of God relates to the restoration of the *Imago Dei* in human beings. The restoration is affected not merely by uniting the human soul with God, but by loving God and neighbor. For “the more brightly burns our love for God, the more

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<sup>531</sup> DT 8.4

<sup>532</sup> DT 8.6

<sup>533</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate” p.123.

<sup>534</sup> DT 8.9



surely and serenely we see him, because it is in God that we observe that unchanging form of justice which we judge that a man should live up to.”<sup>535</sup> The spiritual exercise of contemplation of the Triune God is for Augustine a practical discipline of love. We are living in the midst of a battle between *caritas* and *cupiditas*. To discipline our mind spiritually is to discipline our mind to love God and neighbors.<sup>536</sup> The paradox of love and knowledge can only be reconciled by the practice of spirituality in love.

106. Love, according to Augustine, is the mind’s nature . “Love means someone loving and something loved with love.”<sup>537</sup> Seeking knowledge of God is not an abstract or esoteric action. As Edmund Hill writes, “

The introduction of love as a value in its own right definitively sets the stage for the books that are to come, because as it is not just a superior or abstract value to which the mind adheres, like truth and goodness, but an act which the mind performs, it means that we can bring the warp of our subsequent investigation right down into the mind itself.”<sup>538</sup>

107. If we want to love God not only as one God but as the Triune God, the only possible way to acquire this knowledge comes from the created world. Since the mind and the inner self are created in the image of God, the search for divine knowledge and love must begin in the realm of interiority.<sup>539</sup> When a person loves, his subjectivity is engaged in a threefold consciousness: the self, its object, and the action of loving. This is not, however, a satisfactory paradigm of the triune *Imago Dei*, because the self in this relationship is relating to something external (the object of love). Neither does the self loving itself provide a satisfactory model, for this collapses the tri-relationship to a relation of two. It is necessary to shift our perspective and modify the model.<sup>540</sup>

108. Readers should not be puzzled by Augustine’s numerous triadic formulas in the DT. The purpose of his experiments is to understand how the mind mirrors the Divine nature of substance and relations in equality and in distinction, and how, through this reflection, Christian life is gradually renewed in the communion of the Triune God. Augustine initially suggests mind, knowledge, and love (*mens, notitia sui, amor sui*) as a trinity of the mind; inseparable from each other, yet having their own performances. The mind, he writes, shows its operations in relation, yet maintains unity in its essence. In the end, however, he finds the parallel unsatisfactory. It is more accurate, he says, to say that mind as substance and its two relations as self-knowledge and self-love.<sup>541</sup> The human mind, he realizes, differs from the eternal God in that its acting and loving occur in the realm of temporality. As Rowan Williams puts it: “[The

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<sup>535</sup> DT 8.13

<sup>536</sup> DT 9.13

<sup>537</sup> DT 8.13

<sup>538</sup> Hill, *The Trinity*, p.239.

<sup>539</sup> DT 9.2

<sup>540</sup> DT 9.2 see also Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate” p.126

<sup>541</sup> DT 9.4

human mind] fully knows itself as a reality that is *not* “full,” not a finished and determinate object: it knows itself as loving.” He goes on: “The more loving it is, the more perfectly in love with itself it is. But perfect self-love can only exist on the basis of perfect other-directedness.”<sup>542</sup> The paradox of self-knowledge is that it arises out of love, yet it is presupposed by love. For the human mind, knowing is a process of loving. The implication of this paradoxical knowledge is that knowing God and the truth can never be static; it is always active.<sup>543</sup>

109. For Augustine, self-knowledge is a fundamental act, not as a cognitional function of our mind, but as an awakening of the self-limitation and conditions of finitude, as well as the ability to live and take action within them.<sup>544</sup> Human existence is a living reflection of our proper position in the universe. We are a creature below God, but in questioning, above the animals. To lack self-knowledge is to lose sight of one’s moral and spiritual position in the universe. It is an unavoidable result of failure in love: The mind misplaces its own nature within a disordered condition. The human mind is a broken mirror which reflects puzzlingly what God’s nature is.

110. God is the most living reality, with the omnipotent capacity to generate images entirely adequate to and identified with their corresponding realities. Only God actualizes being, including human being, with its animal soul and a rational awareness. Human beings are more living and powerful than other animals in the creation. We have the intellectual capacity to generate images, imitating God’s capacity to generate in creation images of what God is not. Our minds, however, cannot generate images that actualize what they present. Instead, they seek to imitate what God’s mind is. Augustine’s best attempt to discover the image of the Triune God in the human mind is finally realized with the triad of *memoria sui*, *intelligentia sui*, *volutas sui* (memory, understanding, and will). Each of the mental acts, he reflects, can be considered at once substantially and relationally.<sup>545</sup> Let us paraphrase his arguments as follows: The nature of mind is unmediated memory, knowledge, and love. These are pre-conceptual, but they are neither potentiality nor unconsciousness. The mind is, rather, self-relatedness. This genuine tri-relation differentiates the mind as remembering and from the life that is remembered; the mind as knowing and from the life that is known; and the mind as willing and from the life that is willed.<sup>546</sup> TeSelle notes that “for Augustine the mind is actuated not primarily by its relation to the “forms,” as in Plato, nor by its relation to sensible things, as in Aristotle, but by its relation to *itself*,”<sup>547</sup> Augustine’s analysis of the human mind is practical. The mind is neither self-contemplation nor self-enjoyment, but action: “remembering and anticipating its

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<sup>542</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate” p.127.

<sup>543</sup> DT 10.5

<sup>544</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self Knowledge in the De Trinitate” p.129

<sup>545</sup> See. DT 10.11;18

<sup>546</sup> DT 14.5;7

<sup>547</sup> TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian*, p.303.

own life, experiencing its own freedom and the responsibilities that go with it, consciously willing its own action. Its presence to itself does not close it off from other beings or from the future.”<sup>548</sup>

111. How does Augustine understand remembering? Does he share the view expressed in Plato’s *Meno*, where Socrates carefully questions a slave boy to reason a sophisticated formula of geometry—thus demonstrating that the soul harbors sleeping memories of its previous existence? Augustine does not commit himself to this Platonic teaching of *anamnesis*, or recollection. In book 10 of the *Confession*, he had already developed his understanding of memory at some length. The memory, he wrote, “is like a great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds which are conveyed to it by the senses.”<sup>549</sup> Memory is the source of the mind’s “great power,”<sup>550</sup> retaining the perceptions of the five senses to present them to human thought when needed. It is from these revived perceptions and remembered emotions that the mind develops its conceptions. Beyond this common-sense understanding of memory, Augustine notes another dimension of memory: the capacity to recognize something as true even when it has not been experienced empirically—a phenomenon he often experienced as a liberal arts student. He is curious where the facts he has assembled came from:

It was my own mind which recognized them and admitted that they were true. I entrusted them to my own mind as though it were a place of storage from which I could produce them at will. Therefore they must have been in my mind even before I learned them, though not present to my memory.<sup>551</sup>

112. Underlying this curiosity is a particular understanding of divine illumination. As Greer points out, Augustine’s doctrine of illumination is in a sense a “demythologization” of Plato’s doctrine of *anamnesis*. It purges the mythological elements of the origin of soul but retains the idea that soul has a transcendental dimension.<sup>552</sup> Remembering is a searching of one’s origin and identity, and thus a searching of God. This quest, which involves knowing, is never ended in this life. Greer writes that for Augustine, remembering and knowing intersect. They are dual operations of the same nature.<sup>553</sup> In DT book 10, Augustine meditates that the mind, while it does not know itself, knows how good that would be:

Can it be that it sees in the canon of eternal truth how beautiful it is to know oneself, and that it loves this thing that it sees and is at pains to bring it about in

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p.304.

<sup>549</sup> *Conf.*10.8

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., cf.10.14;17 “Yet it is my mind”.

<sup>551</sup> *Conf.*10.10

<sup>552</sup> Rowan A. Greer, *Christian Hope and Christian Life*, p.151.

<sup>553</sup> Rowan A. Greer, *Christian Hope and Christian Life*, p.151.

itself, because although it does not know itself, it knows how good it would be to know itself? But this is passing strange, not yet to know oneself, and already to know how beautiful it is to know oneself. Perhaps then the mind sees some excellent end, that is its own security and happiness, through some obscure memory which has not deserted it on its travels to far countries, and it believes it can only reach this end by knowing itself. Thus while it loves this end it seeks knowledge of itself, and it is on account of the known thing it loves that it seeks the unknown.<sup>554</sup>

113. By nature, Augustine argues, the human mind seeks knowledge of itself, for it is present to itself and aware of itself. This would still be true, he assumes, even if the mind were unknown to itself and were seeking itself. A mind afflicted by dementia, for example, would still be aware of itself as not knowing, and so would still continue seeking. It is impossible for the mind to be ignorant of itself.<sup>555</sup> From this irreducible self-presence, mind comes to the acts of seeking (*studere*), thinking (*cogitare*), and conceiving (*verbum gignere*) through which the mind educates itself to achieve a more explicit and precise understanding of itself. The mind always presents itself in knowing and loving, in remembering (searching) and understanding, and in willing itself.<sup>556</sup> This self-relatedness is more basic than our acts of intentionality and the process of conceptualization, for it is the more “inward” and the more “certain.”<sup>557</sup>

114. For Augustine the Delphic oracle “know thyself” expresses exactly the command to reflect upon the mind. Such reflection can occur only in the light of divine Truth, which sets the norm for judgment.<sup>558</sup> A proper self-affirmation, for example, comes only in love by the power of the Spirit.<sup>559</sup> To be *imago Dei*, for Augustine, is to be capable of participating in the mystery of the Triune God—a capacity that is never entirely lost, however deformed or obscured by sin. The image of God in Christian life is not simply the “mind” in and of itself but the mind of the saint—the one who consciously lives out the life of the justice and charity. As Rowan Williams points out, Augustine does not believe it possible to observe the self or mind in a neutral position. What we see when we understand ourselves is desire, and we cannot look at ourselves without having that desire, or associating it with something external. “We are to know and to love ourselves as questing, as seeking to love with something of God’s and to love ourselves as questing, as seeking to love with something of God’s freedom (in the sense of a love not glued to specific objects of satisfaction) and seeking so to grasp this as our nature and our destiny that we continue to growing the skills of loving relation

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<sup>554</sup> DT 10.5

<sup>555</sup> DT 10.5

<sup>556</sup> DT 10.19; 14.9-10; 15.25

<sup>557</sup> DT 10.16

<sup>558</sup> DT 10.7; 12

<sup>559</sup> DT 13. 9;13

and away from *cupiditas*, the possessive immobilizing of what is love.”<sup>560</sup>

#### 4.4. The Necessity of the Healing of the *Imago Dei*

##### 4.4.1. Participation in the Triune Life and Perfection of the *Imago Dei*

115. In DT books 12 to 14, Augustine describes the spiritual process whereby the disordered desires of human life are healed and conformed to the divine image is explored at length. In meditating on the *Imago Dei*, Augustine distinguishes between knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*), between temporal reality and pure contemplation of the eternal and unchangeable reality. The Pauline notion of “outer man” and “inner man” (cf. 2 Cor 4:16) plays a key role in this analysis. “Outer man” and “inner man,” body and mind, example and sacrament, *scientia* and *sapientia*—for Augustine, the sphere of the first category, the outer man, belongs to the “lower” intellectual operations, such as sensory perception and basic function of memory and imagination, while the sphere of the second, the “inner man,” represents the “higher” faculties of reason and the potency of divine illumination, which belongs exclusively to the mind (*mens*).<sup>561</sup> The relationship between these two levels of human selfhood is not mutually exclusive, but the lower part is essential part for the higher.

116. In the early part of Book 12, Augustine uses the language of “fall” to ask whether the *Imago Dei* of the soul may be found in the realm of *scientia*, where knowledge is directed toward guiding actions. He denies this possibility, maintaining that the authentic image of the Triune God can only be found in the realm of wisdom.<sup>562</sup> To illustrate this point, he looks back to the history of redemption and demonstrates by figurative speech that “woman” symbolizes that part of the inner man involved with “realities bodily and temporal.” He warns that “too many advances into this lower territory are dangerous,” and recognizes that both the inner selfhood and the capacity for action, like Adam and Eve in their fallen condition, have “both stripped naked of the enlightenment of truth” that they have previously enjoyed.<sup>563</sup> The fallen soul, Augustine continues to say, struggles to return to the realm of transcendence, where it longs to dwell in “chaste embrace” and in “common” with other souls.<sup>564</sup>

117. Unfortunately, the power of *libido dominandi*—referred to here in terms of “fornication”—entraps the soul in a tangle of errors. As a result, the broken soul resembles the exhausted Prodigal son, “having squandered and lost its strength,” until the grace of Christ liberates the hapless soul from its body of death.<sup>565</sup> Only by the healing power of the Holy Spirit can the broken soul be remade in the likeness of Jesus

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<sup>560</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate” p.131.

<sup>561</sup> Hill, *Trinity*, pp.258-64; O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy*, p.7.

<sup>562</sup> DT 12.4

<sup>563</sup> DT 12.13

<sup>564</sup> DT 12.15

<sup>565</sup> DT 12.16

Christ, and its original image restored. Belief in God, Augustine stresses, is particularly necessary in this mortal life, so full of delusion and distress and uncertainty.<sup>566</sup> The strength of this faith is based on the engagement of the missions of the Triune God with human life. The incarnate Word sets human life free from the power of *libido dominandi* through his sacrificial love in the power of the Spirit. Augustine's argument is pervaded by the Platonic notion of participation in God: "The teacher of humility and sharer of our infirmity has deigned most specially to commend His humility to us, giving us participation in His divinity, descending to that end, that He might both teach and be the Way."<sup>567</sup> Our participation in the incarnate Word, in turn, is initiated by the Holy Spirit, whose mission is love poured into the human heart.<sup>568</sup> Following Plato and Plotinus, who taught that all things exist and are shaped by participation in the world of forms, Augustine declares that the fulfillment of all things comes from their participation in and imitation of the divine realities: specifically, in the 'form of likeness' identified with the Word, the Son, the perfect Image and Likeness of the father God. This likeness to God is the foundation of existence and intelligibility.<sup>569</sup>

118. The meditation reaches its climax in DT book 14, with a reflection on what the soul has and has not achieved.<sup>570</sup> "In the fourteenth book we discuss the human's true wisdom," he writes; "wisdom, that is, which is bestowed on him by God's gift in an actual participation in God himself." When the mind is being renewed to the divine image, it will "achieve wisdom in the contemplation of things eternal."<sup>571</sup> Augustine takes the dynamism of soul as a journey by which he studies the "outer" and "inner" self. Although he traces numerous "outer" and "inner" trinitarian models in the realm of interiority, his discovery in the realm of interiority, he asserts, is not yet the image of God. The answer, arrived at in book 14, is that the journey of human mind is not complete until the human mind participates in the kenotic wisdom of the Triune God.

119. Self-appropriation of the mind is the key to the human spiritual quest. Augustine distinguishes between two levels of human consciousness (*animus*): the lower (*anima*) and the higher (*mens*). Lower consciousness is connected to the empirical world and to finite and temporal materials. Higher consciousness, or mind (*mens*), is pointed toward contemplation of the transcendent realm. Mind is immortal, rational and intellectual. Though human beings have fallen from our primordial condition, so that our minds tend to forget God, the quality of the image is never lost,

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<sup>566</sup> DT 13.10

<sup>567</sup> *en Ps.58*;s.1.7.quoted by Gerald Bonner "Deification, Divinization" in *Augustine through the Ages*, p.266.

<sup>568</sup> DT 13.14

<sup>569</sup> DT 7.12 See also B.Studer, "History and Faith in Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Augustine Study* 28, no.1 (1997): 7-50.

<sup>570</sup> DT 15.4

<sup>571</sup> DT 15.5

because God never ceases to touch the mind by illumination.<sup>572</sup> Moreover, the mind is able to remain present to itself by remembering, understanding, and loving, similarly to the way the Triune God manifests himself and connects himself to us. Although weak and confused, the mind cannot lose its natural memory, understanding, and love of itself.<sup>573</sup> We are indeed elevated above all other creatures, but not simply because of our mental abilities. Our mind's true greatness, Augustine writes, lies in its capacity for God: "Let [the mind] worship the uncreated God, by whom it was created with a capacity for him sharing in that supreme light, and it will reign in happiness where it reigns eternal."<sup>574</sup>

120. Augustine calls for a clear distinction to be made between our mind and our participation in divine life. The human mind cannot rely on its own completeness; it depends on the gifts of God. This is why even the most profound inner trinity, that of the mind remembering, knowing, and loving itself, cannot be considered the image of God, for the image relies only on its relation to God: "It is his image insofar as it is capable of him and can participate in him; indeed it cannot achieve so great a good except by being his image. The highest created trinity is the mind remembering, knowing and loving God."<sup>575</sup> Note that here his trinity of mind is presented in its active quality. Its best expression is one that uses verbs, not nouns.<sup>576</sup> This highest of God's creation has the capacity to participate in God and in various divine attributes, such as wisdom, light and justice. As it does so, the soul turns to itself not only on the level of *scientia*, knowledge of temporal reality, but with *sapientia*, the wisdom of the divine reality. By this divine wisdom, the mind becomes actively aware of itself and of itself as *Imago Dei*.

121. The problem is that the mind has been weakened, darkened, and dragged down, worn out and made miserable by the effect of sin. In its deformed condition it has forsaken and forgotten God, its fall is initiated "by its own willful undoing."<sup>577</sup> Thought it does not lose its capability to remember, understand, and love itself, the mind becomes inactive, unhappy, helpless; a broken mirror. The solution, Augustine says, lies not within the soul. To repair the broken image requires divine action. It is God's incarnation and procession which enable the soul to be "reformed" and "renovated."<sup>578</sup> The Triune God, who created the soul according to his image, engages in human life to restore the image which has been distorted and deformed by sin. The solution to the problem, therefore, is inherently divine. Yet, Augustine continues, the

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<sup>572</sup> DT 14.6

<sup>573</sup> DT 14.8-10; 19

<sup>574</sup> DT 14.15

<sup>575</sup> DT 14.16

<sup>576</sup> Walter Principe "The Dynamism of Augustine's Terms for Describing the Highest Trinitarian Image in the Human Person." *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented to the In the International Conference on Patristic Studies* (18). Edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone Oxford: England. 1983.

<sup>577</sup> DT 14.21

<sup>578</sup> DT 14.22

key still lies in the human mind, which must turn to God to receive healing and be restored in God's by participation in the life of the incarnate Word. While divine grace initiates salvation, human beings must be willing to remember and return to God:

By forgetting God it was as if they [people of nations] had forgotten their own life, and so they turned back to death, that is to hell. Then they are reminded of him and turn back to the Lord, which is like their coming to life again by remembering the life they had forgotten.<sup>579</sup>

122. Through the process of healing and restoration, begun at the divine initiative, the broken image can be "made new and fresh and happy" again.<sup>580</sup> By the consolation of the words of God, the mind starts taking the divine truth into itself, holding it, becoming transformed in the process. All instruction, it learns, comes from within. When the mind is touched by the Spirit, it knows immediately its own sinfulness and the divine love, forgiveness, and missions for its sake. As it receives this insight through the intimate relationship with the Spirit, the inmost self accepts the actuality of renewal, reformation and participation.<sup>581</sup>

123. This exercise of soul, as we noted earlier, is prepared at the moment of baptism. Augustine divides the spiritual growth into two broad phases: forgiveness of sins, and life-long spiritual transformation by divine healing. Baptism, for Augustine, represents the decisive action of divine love in rooting prideful sin from the soul. In his sermons, he frequently drew on the story of the Exodus, speaking of candidates as passing through the Red Sea of baptism—a sea reddened and consecrated by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.<sup>582</sup> According to William Harmless, Augustine's theology of baptism is closely identified with his theology of Eucharist: for him, a moment for humble meditation before the divine grace. He often compared the long catechumenate period of his day with wheat "stored up and watched over in the granary." The Lenten class had "milled and "sifted" catechumens, turning them to pure flour; at the moment of baptism they were "moistened" and made as a doughy mass; with chrismation they were "baked" by the fire of the Spirit. During the Eucharist, he would point to the bread on the altar, saying: "The mystery that you are lies there on the table; it is your own mystery that you receive" and "be what you see, and receive what you are."<sup>583</sup> As the first phase of the spiritual practice, baptism belongs to earthly experience. The second phase, transformation to heal the effects of sin, also belongs to the realm of common sense. At this stage in the process, believers learn to live in a new way, activating the mind's capacity for God and experiencing God through participation in

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<sup>579</sup> DT 14.17

<sup>580</sup> DT 14.18

<sup>581</sup> DT14. 21 cf. 4.2

<sup>582</sup> DT 11.4 cf. s.213; *Jo.ev.en. Ps. 80.38* quoted by "Baptism" in *Augustine through the Ages*. p.88.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*



him.<sup>584</sup> The third phase of spiritual experience, the eternal, extends and fulfills the transformation effected by the second:

In that twinkling of an eye before the judgment what is now being sown as an animal body in weakness, corruption, disgrace, will rise as a spiritual body in power, in incorruptibility, in glory. But the image which is being renewed in the spirit of the mind in the recognition of God, not outwardly but inwardly from day to day, this image will be perfected in the vision that will then be face to face after the judgment, while now it makes progress through a puzzling reflection in a mirror. It is with reference to this perfection that we should understand the words; we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is (1 Jn 3:2).<sup>585</sup>

124. Augustine calls on Paul's famous image of a mirror ("We see now through a puzzling reflection in a mirror, but then it will be face to face,"), to emphasize that human beings will be wholly fulfilled only after death; earthly life must remain a "puzzle." But the beginnings of the third phrase— truth, happiness, wisdom, justice and all the divine attributes—are already present in the second, even if final consummation must await God's future.<sup>586</sup>

125. This is why, for Augustine, spiritual exercises are so necessary. We must begin now to be what we are becoming through participation in the Triune God. He writes: "In pursuance of our plan to train the reader *in the things that have been made* (Rom1:20), for getting to know him by whom they were made, we came eventually to his image."<sup>587</sup> Knowledge of God requires worship, and worship requires devotional love. Worshiping God, in turn, involves a life-long quest to know God, who is and remains a constant "puzzle" to our human minds. This puzzlement, however, is by no means agnosticism, according to Augustine. Rather, it is an exercise of the soul, a discipline of contemplation that strives for wisdom. This is the goal of Christian life: to seek wisdom in order to gain freedom from the power of the prideful self, which clings to temporal knowledge. Augustine offers this summation of the Christian journey in the book 15:

We discuss man's true wisdom, wisdom that is, which is bestowed on him by God's gift in the actual sharing in God himself, something which is distinct from knowledge. And the discussion reached the point of bringing to light a trinity in the image of God which is man in terms of mind; the mind which is *being renewed in the recognition of God according to the image of him who created*

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<sup>584</sup> DT 14.23 cf. 4.4.

<sup>585</sup> DT 14.25

<sup>586</sup> DT 14.20

<sup>587</sup> DT 15.1

(Col 3:10) man to his own image, and which thus achieves wisdom in the contemplation of things eternal.<sup>588</sup>

#### 4.4.2. Kenosis and the Stages of Transformation

126. Contemplative prayer is the activity of the higher level of the human soul. Its concern is with eternal, not temporal things.<sup>589</sup> Augustine pictures the human spiritual journey as an upward climb, step by step through different realms of human existence. In each sphere, triune models may be discerned, including various aspects of the “outer” and inner” self. Even at these lower levels of consciousness, Augustine writes, such models enable us “to come in our own small measure to a sight of that trinity which God is.”<sup>590</sup> The great obstacle in this training is the power of *libido dominandi*, which adheres in human nature as a prideful self, dragging our attention down to the materialistic and temporal realm. Spiritual discipline seeks to activate our awareness by the act of turning and focusing, not just on the mind itself, but on the imitation of (or participation in) God’s own form. It is clear, scholars note, that the kenosis hymn in the Epistle to the Philippians had significantly shaped Augustine’s Christological and Trinitarian thought and spirituality, as well as his spiritual experience and ministerial framework.<sup>591</sup> The Christian hope, as he understands it, is that through communion between the “inner word” of mind and the divine Word “just exactly as it is,” we may become truly wise, as Christ himself.<sup>592</sup> This wisdom of Christ is the wisdom of humility—the only remedy against human pride. In his meditative exegesis of Isaiah 11:2-3 and other scriptures, Augustine developed a sevenfold scheme of spiritual growth beginning with fear and progressing to the final stage of wisdom. For each stage, he shows how the wisdom of humility may be allowed to operate at various levels of consciousness.<sup>593</sup> A few points may be considered especially relevant to Augustine’s vision of embodying the humility of Jesus Christ in the merciful love of the Spirit.

127. Augustine’s vision of purification (*catharsis*), writes Canisius van Lierde, seeks to lift Christian life above temporal experience, bringing the soul closer to God. At the highest point of purification, the believer may rest “tranquilly within the self, wholly elevated above all things.”<sup>594</sup> Reflecting on his own experience, however, Augustine is compelled to recognize that his disordered desires are such that he is

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<sup>588</sup> DT 15.5

<sup>589</sup> DT 12.4

<sup>590</sup> DT 13.26 cf. 15.10

<sup>591</sup> Albert Verwilghen, *Jesus Christ: Source of Christian Humility*. p.301.

<sup>592</sup> DT 14.25-26

<sup>593</sup> The detail study sees Canisius van Lierde’s “The teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2-3.”

<sup>594</sup> Canisius van Lierde, “The Teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2-3” p.21.

powerless to enjoy God until he has embraced the mediator of God, Jesus Christ.<sup>595</sup> He explains this liberating experience of Christ through a figurative interpretation of the seven days of creation. The operation of grace is presented in the light of faith, enabling the soul to find its security in God and God's teaching, and insulating it against carnal temptation. This spiritual struggle, in which the soul turns from sin to truth, leads to a higher level of awareness. By contemplating the form of truth, the soul learns to exercise charity, persevering in love toward others. Gradually the soul learns to be humble toward God and to master the prideful self. As van Lierde puts it: "His intellect and will cooperate in an extraordinary, creative relationship, with the flesh completely subject to the spirit, and all disquiet totally banished. From that point onward, the image and likeness of God, previously deformed by sin, is restored in him."<sup>596</sup>

128. Unlike some spiritual writers, Augustine does not offer a formal plan for Christian spiritual growth. He takes a heuristic approach, seeing the spiritual ascent more as cumulative experience than logical succession. As he differentiates the layers of the Christian spiritual life, he focuses one by one on the gifts of the Spirit bestowed for the healing of the wounded human soul. In his commentary on Isaiah 11:1-2, he enumerates seven such gifts (the number 7 representing fullness). The first gift of the Spirit is given in response to fear; specifically, the dread of death and eternal punishment. Such fear was apparently widespread during Augustine's turbulent time. The Spirit, writes Augustine, responds by drawing people's attention from the fear of death and violence to the fear of the Lord, which is the basis for humility. "Let us put a man about to make an ascent right in front of our eyes.... Whence is he going to ascend? From humility."<sup>597</sup> In the life of Jesus Christ, that "vale of tears," we learn what it is to be humble before God.<sup>598</sup> For Augustine, fear and humility are mutually related. As fear of death is transformed by faith to fear of God, the believer gains the wisdom of God—a transformation made possible only by an act of humility. "Consequently, where there is fear of God, there is also humility."<sup>599</sup> The paradox is that the more humble you are, that more secure and solid you will be. Augustine puts the insight this way:

But let him not fear to remain in this vale. For, in the contrite and humbled heart itself, which God does not spurn, God himself has disposed the ascents by which we rise to him... so that, by grieving, groaning, and weeping in the confession of penitence, we may not remain in sorrow, lamentation, and tears; but, rising from

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<sup>595</sup> Conf. 7.24; 26.

<sup>596</sup> Canisius van Lierde, p.25.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Quote in van Lierde, p.44

<sup>599</sup> Ibid. p.45

this vale unto the spiritual mountain, ... we may enjoy imperturbable bliss.<sup>600</sup>

129. To reach this goal, additional gifts of the Spirit are required. All that we need is given to us at the outset of our spiritual journey, Augustine believes, even if we only discover the gifts of God by stages. The ability to submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture, for example, comes from the gift of piety. When we experience the battle between the flesh and spirit, we do so by the gift of knowledge, and when this struggle forces us to turn our eyes from the mundane and carnal toward eternal law, we are experiencing the gift of fortitude. When the soul finds itself in a process of purification, especially by the daily practice of loving one's neighbor, this comes from the gift of counsel. The gift of understanding enables the soul to purify its inner eye and attain a certain vision of the Divine in faith. Finally, Augustine turns to the gift of wisdom. "There is seventh [stage], wisdom itself, that is, contemplation of truth, which makes the whole man peaceful."<sup>601</sup> This gift of wisdom is God's kenotic love in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are able to learn this wisdom by the imitation of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

130. These seven gifts, Augustine writes, are to be identified with the Holy Spirit. "He is the gift of God insofar as he is given to those he is given to. But in himself he is God even if he is not given to anyone, because he was God, co-eternal with the Father and the Son."<sup>602</sup> In DT book 15, Augustine names the Spirit as the agent of human spiritual transformation and participation in the life of God. For Augustine, it is quite proper to speak of the Holy Spirit as love. The Spirit is "common" to God the Father and God the Son in the active divine giving, but together with the One who gives (God the Father), and the One who returns (God the Son), the Holy Spirit is properly called God because the Spirit imparts the reality of this self-giving divine *sapientia* to creation. In the communion of the Godhead, the Spirit's act of giving implies a profound humility (self-emptying) that is neither God the Father's self-emptiness in begetting the Son, nor the Son's obedience in "returning" to the Father and "sending" the Spirit into the world, but is the act of giving itself—as truly God as are the Father and Son, and in no way inferior to them.<sup>603</sup> As Rowan Williams writes: "what Augustine *does* achieve is the transformation of a concept of the one divine nature as the content of the three divine subsistents (a concept which can suggest a rather static picture of that nature) into the vision of the divine nature as an activity (sapiential love) that cannot but exist in trinitarian relation."<sup>604</sup> This trinitarian "relation" is not merely "sapiential love" *per se* but the sapiential self-emptying love mutually shared among

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<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid. p.56

<sup>602</sup> DT 15.36

<sup>603</sup> Williams Rowan, p.328

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., p.331

the Persons of the Trinity. Through the incarnate Word, the transcendent humility of God has broken upon the world with liberating power, overcoming the mechanisms of human pride and drawing human beings to become partakers in this self-emptying love. This is the essence of Christian spirituality, for Augustine: a lifelong process whereby fear of death is transformed to fear of God through participation in the wisdom of humility through the mediator Jesus Christ in the merciful love of the Holy Spirit.

131. We have seen how, in Augustine's view, Jesus Christ serves as example and sacrament, so that Christian believers seeking this wisdom of humility may be formed in his likeness. Because of Christ's humility, every Christian is called to practice humility in his life and in his community. For Augustine, this spirituality of humility finds its purest expression in Phil.2:6-8, where we encounter the incarnate Word in the form of a servant. Here God identifies himself with the One who has been stripped naked, emptied, renounced, and denied, even to the point of extreme sacrifice. In this tripartite humility-obedience-death of Christ found in Phil.2:8, Augustine finds the greatest manifestation of the merciful love of God. The human problem of *libido dominandi* can only be overcome by imitating the mercy of God, a mercy made known to us in the sacrifice of the Holy Son. To live according to Christ's example is to live by mercy and humility. When it comes to almsgiving, for example Augustine urges that external action find its internal quality: "we are not advised that we should give alms but we are advised in what spirit we should give alms, since instruction is being given about cleansing the heart" (*s.dom. mon* 2.11).<sup>605</sup> Conversely, the purification of the mind is inseparable from the purification of action and habits. Over time, the patient practice of merciful love toward others (such as almsgiving) reorients our *cupiditas* towards *caritas*. It deepens our understanding of the way of God's self-giving love, and increases our inner light so that we can absorb divine humility more readily.

132. Participation in the missions of the Son and the Spirit is at the heart of Augustine's spirituality of humility. In DT book 13, he writes:

There is the point confuted and cured by such humility on the part of God. Man also learns how far he has withdrawn from God, which is useful for him as a remedial pain, when he returns to him through a mediator like this, who comes to aid men as God with his divinity and to share with them as man in their infirmity. And what greater example of obedience could be given to us, us who had been ruined by disobedience, than God the Son obeying God the Father *even to death on the cross* (Phil 2:8)? Where could the reward of obedience be shown to better advantage than in the flesh of such a mediator when it rose to eternal life?<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Quoted in Allan Fitzgerald, O.S.A. "Mercy" in *Augustine through the Ages*. p. 560/

<sup>606</sup> DT 13.22.

133. In his account of God's self-communication in Christ, and Christ's revelation of the Father, Augustine also confirms that the Holy Spirit, being common to both the Father and Son, is properly called "*societas* to them both".<sup>607</sup> This God of "*societas*," the bond of peace, will, and sacrificial love, has been sent by the Father as a gift in his eternal Word to us, the learned ignorant. Our knowledge of God is wholly the gift of the Spirit, who mitigates the ignorance of the saints by giving them the desire for God. While the mind as *Imago Dei* possesses the operations for remembering, understanding and loving, it is the Spirit who directs these operations toward God. Sent by the Father in the Holy Son, the Spirit creates a "catholic" community in which people encounter the humility and wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. When God created Adam and Eve as friends of God, the *imago dei* was given them as gift. This capacity remained, even when the friendship was lost. Through the kenotic mediation of Jesus Christ, who calls us to return to God, eternal happiness has been offered to human beings and unconditional freedom restored. The goal of Christian spirituality, writes Mary Clark, becomes the transformation into a greater likeness of the Triune God by loving God and serving neighbor (conf. 13.32).<sup>608</sup> As Augustine prayed in DT: "Let me remember You, know You and love You. Increase these gifts in me until you have reformed me completely."<sup>609</sup>

134. This prayer for reformation, no doubt, aims at the imitation of the kenotic love of Jesus Christ by the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Many regard the conclusion of the DT as one of Augustine's supreme theological achievements. As he gathers together the threads of the previous chapters, Augustine makes it clear that he is not thinking about the mind simply as a "tool" for conceptualizing the mystery of the Triune God. On the contrary, the restoration of the *imago dei* in us is based on the exercise of soul. We can only "imagine" the eternal and changeless God by reference to our temporal reality: This is the human paradox. We cannot look at human beings with objective detachment and say "God is somewhat like this, or like that." Augustine knows perfectly well that in our space and time, to distinguish the threefold operation of consciousness is not to identify the Father as memory, the Son as intelligence, and the Spirit as will, as if each lacked what the other possessed. The mind is but a dim reflection of the Triune God<sup>610</sup>—a structural analogy for the unity of presence, production, and mutual self-emptiness that is the divine life.

135. The focus of Christian spirituality is Jesus Christ. His humility in the form of servant actualizes the merciful nature of the Triune God. His sacrament offers human beings the sacrificial love of God; his example invites us to participate in his redemptive work. In his death, the self-emptiness of the Divine has been radically

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<sup>607</sup> DT 15.37

<sup>608</sup> Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J. "Spirituality" in *Augustine Through the Ages* p.815.

<sup>609</sup> DT 15.51

<sup>610</sup> DT 15, 12:28

revealed. For Augustine, this death manifests the fullness of God's glory: merciful humility in the power of self-sacrifice. Augustine calls Christians to participate in the wisdom of *kenosis*, for the Word has humbled himself, and invites others to follow his example. Though he never says explicitly that God is humble, or that humility is God, his description of the humility of God in relation to the descent of the Word and His earthly life, the self-giving love of the Spirit as the bond and *societas* of the Father and Son, and the gifts of human spiritual transformation, make clear that *kenosis* is not merely an ethical issue, but a genuine theological issue, pointing to the divine nature as self-emptiness through the love of the Triune Mystery.

### Conclusion

136. Christian journey of faith can be completed only by victory over the *libido dominandi*, the desire which fuels human violence and the various disordered desires associated with it. Many ancient and modern thinkers reflected directly on the consciousness and its cognitional schemata. Many of them have been aware of our human tendency to allow our desires and dark sides to control our mind, but few of them come to an attitude of radical suspicion of human historical existence dominated by disorder desires. Augustine, far before the contemporary discussion of human "mimetic desire", drew attention to the dynamics of desire for domination and to the actions driven by it. This discovery, however, led him not to historical nihilism but to the Trinitarian faith. According to Augustine, the Christian "orthodox" faith enables believers to gain the right medicine--which means love and humbleness—to resist the disease of *libido dominandi*. When a Christian believer participates in the missions of the Holy Son and the Holy Spirit, he is invited to understand and attend the communion of the Triune God. By this participation, he is learning to imitate the humble ministry of Jesus Christ in the self-giving love of the Holy Spirit.

137. It is not easy to attain this goal. Augustine is able to unravel the operation of human consciousness. He draws attention to human disorder desires and to discern through the theophanic events in the Hebrew Scriptures clues that guide our vision to a higher viewpoint. He shows how the Christic events teach us through humility to fix disordered desires. The unconditional love of the Holy Spirit heals the broken image of God in us and illustrates the operation of human consciousness as remembering, understanding and willing God. His famous prayer is "let me remember you, know you and love you. Increase these gifts in me until you have reformed me completely. (DT 14.23)

138. This journey is by all means a spiritual exercise to cultivate real friendship with God through imitating the Holy Son, the only icon of the invisible God (Col.1:15), to return to eternal happiness in the Triune God.

139. Augustine's theological meditation is interesting, because he is so sensitive to our feelings of deficiency and tendency to seek refuge in more substantial and imposing figures, eventually God. Human beings need models or "mediators" (parents, teachers, peers, heroes, movie stars etc.) in the sense that it is through them that we gain access to true power, and become "really real".<sup>611</sup> In the *City of God*, Augustine argues powerfully that an imaginative divinization of human being is an essential feature of violence. Human existence is rooted in a form of sacred violence. As Rene Girard comments further on the desire which "is attracted to violence triumphant and strives desperately to incarnate this 'irresistible force. Desire clings to violence and stalks it like a shadow because violence is the signifier of the cherished being, the signifier of divinity.'"<sup>612</sup>

140. In *de Trinitate*, Augustine found that the sacrificial love of the incarnate Word definitely is the answer to the mimetic mechanism behind collective violence. He realizes that the incarnate Word is the real model who escapes from the violent mechanism which prevails in every religious and social structure. In his struggle with Manichean criticism against the anthropomorphism and presumed immoralities of the Hebrew Scriptures, Augustine realized that plausible interpretation of Scriptures could accord with one's own cultural and intellectual background. He never gives up using the insights of the "books of Platonists" to corroborate Christian biblical faith. Throughout Augustine's ministerial career, the Scriptures were not only a subject not only for academic study but a ladder leading the human soul toward falling in love with God.<sup>613</sup>

141. Modern scholars have not studied details Augustine's biblical theology, but it is clear that Augustine had many difficult times with the Hebrew Scriptures. His silence to the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g. no exegesis on the Torah and prophetic books) and his high regard for the messages of the Gospels provide us the clue in dialogue with modern Biblical study.<sup>614</sup> Augustine's Trinitarian faith implies a radical critique of the notion of sacred violence. The nonviolent God of Jesus is a God who sacrifices his Son in order to cancel our desire for domination. The self-emptiness of God is revealed by the Father who offers everything to the Holy Son. The Holy Son by his total obedience made himself nothing to point of death. The Holy Spirit as the self-giving

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<sup>611</sup> In Rene Girard's term, this desire is "metaphysical" (or ontological), as he states: "If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being." Rene Girard, *Violence and Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. p.53.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151.

<sup>613</sup> James J. O'Donnell, "Bible" in *Augustine Through the Ages*. p.102.

<sup>614</sup> Girard argues that Judeo-Christian traditions subject the mythological notion of the divine to a revision and criticism that lead from a notion of Yahweh as the personification of ultimate violence and coercive power to that of a radical kenotic God, a "God of victims" who "could not impose his will on men without ceasing to be himself." Rene Girard, *La Route antique des homes pervers*. Paris: Grasset, 1985. p.226. quoted in Eugene Webb, *Philosophers of Consciousness*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press. 1988. p.216.



Love of the Father and the Son discloses this sacrificial bond and pours this love in the world. For Augustine, therefore, the Trinitarian faith is a “therapeutic action” which embodies the healing power of the incarnate Word in the self-giving love of the Holy Spirit to the prideful world. The kenosis of the Holy Son (Phil 2:6) is the essential medicine for the sickness of human soul. Christian believers who receive the Holy Son as the savior/healer mean to receive baptism, to listen to the Word of God, to practice contemplative prayer by remembering, understanding and loving God. This learning process is the restoration of *imago Dei*. When one participates in the missions of God by serving God and human beings, the mystery of the Trinity is revealed.

142. Karl Rahner in his famous treaties rightly insists that “there *must* be a connection between Trinity and man. The Trinity is a mystery of *salvation*.” Augustine will have no any difficulty agreeing with him at this point. Rahner further argues that “The “*economic*” Trinity is the “*immanent*” Trinity and the “*immanent*” Trinity is the “*economic*” Trinity.”<sup>615</sup> Karl Rahner in this formula provides a symmetrical understanding of the God-man relationship. Augustine echoes the second part of this formula, but his understanding of the prevailing power of *libido dominandi* prevents him from adopting the optimism to the first part of the axiom.

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<sup>615</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*. Translated by Joseph Donceel New York: Herder and Herder 1970. p. 10.

Introduction:

1. After our long journey of historical and textual study of Early Daoism and Augustine's Christian faith in the last three chapters, we turn to questions of theological understanding in comparative perspective. Some may object to the idea that a theologian should study the religious history of the world before moving to positive theological statement, for this requirement may seem to both impossible undesirable. It is impossible, because it takes a lifetime to study even one religious tradition in depth. A theologian who attempts this preliminary work will end by being nothing but an amateur collector of religious curiosities, as Keith Ward suggests.<sup>616</sup> My comparative theology, following the heuristic scheme of the hermeneutics of consciousness, contends that any theological thinking finds its engendering experience in the human religious world. One cannot understand the historical Jesus unless one studies something about the Judaism of his time. This in turn requires some knowledge of early Judaism. For that purpose, one needs to know about the history of Israel and about Canaanite religion and different cults in Egypt and the Middle East. Similarly, theologians have always been stimulated by religious experiences and philosophical or cultural reflections not confined to the Holy Scriptures or Christianity. For example, Neo-Platonism and Cicero's works profoundly shaped Augustine's thought. Thomas Aquinas used Aristotelian philosophy to reframe Christian doctrines in the thirteen century. John Calvin took Renaissance humanism as his starting point in doing theology. Thus I argue that one cannot properly understand the divine action within Christianity unless one is able to set it in the context of other spiritual quests, for only in that setting can one distinguish the true meaning of our own tradition.

2. Even if we agree that doing theology in a global religious setting is possible, is it desirable? Many theologians, following Karl Barth, argue that theology is a science of the Christian church. The Christian church is called to witness in the world by theological construction. Aidan Nicholas says "theology presupposes the truth of the Christian faith. To be a theologian, one must share the common *fides quae*, the faith of the people of God."<sup>617</sup> In this perspective, theology is essentially a confessional discipline that is related to the mission and work of the Christian Church in the world. Theology is a particular kind of intellectual activity within the community of Christian faith. On this point, Barth's great opponent, Schleiermacher, agrees in his own terms. "Dogmatic theology is the science which systematizes the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a given time."<sup>618</sup> It seems to me this understanding of theology is too restrictive when the world has become a global village. Theologians are not merely

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<sup>616</sup> Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994. p.14

<sup>617</sup> Aidan Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology*. Edinburgh: T. &T Clark, 1991, 32.

<sup>618</sup> F.E.D. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1989, para. 19.

commentators on Scripture or propagandists for bishops or Popes. The history of Christian thought shows that new questions arise and are studied, so that the theologian discovers anew what may be contained in traditional sources.<sup>619</sup> At the very least, the challenge and insights from other traditions are necessary priming components for this inner-Christian task

3. According to the hermeneutics of consciousness, theology can be seen as the articulation of a tacit framework of beliefs. Although we can recognize the validity and sincerity of a particular confessional theology, we must also insist that many other religious forms of life have their corresponding articulations. In tradition, the word ‘theology’ is often limited to reference to the Christian faith, but there is no intrinsic reason to maintain this monopoly usage. As Keith Ward argues, many religions have theoretical modes of enquiry. Theology is not a purely Christian intellectual enterprise, but one shared by different religious traditions, consisting in the theoretical articulation of their own forms of life.<sup>620</sup>

4. Based on my study of early Daoism and Augustinian Christianity, I contend that one of most important tasks of theology today is one of therapeutic or spiritual cultivation. To bring healing into the darkness of human existence, it is necessary to reverse the projection into the divine of our human disordered desires for domination, our feelings of fear and pride. Reading the *DDJ* and the *DT* together, what we gain is not simply a comparative study of the abstract differences or similarities between two religious traditions. Theologians in both traditions sought eagerly for the fulfillment of humanity in light of a transcendent order, regardless of how different they were in terms of historical background, culture, language, theological judgment and practice. This study shows that their differences are complementary rather than competitive. For theologians living in a pluralistic world, it is an ethical imperative to listen carefully to others. It is easy to ignore or demonize others from our own perspective. But we can overcome this bias by studying diligently, with a sympathetic mind and courageous heart.

5. Since the scope of this dissertation is limited to the spirituality of Early Daoism and Augustine’s Christianity, numerous technical details of historical development fall outside our study. In this chapter I want to emphasize that taming violence is a common theme for both writers and traditions. Daoism and Christianity share similar ideals of kenotic love and effortless living though they develop these in very different ways. Keeping differences in harmony is an ideal in the ancient wisdom passed on by ancient Chinese thinkers. My question is what does “difference in harmony” mean for comparative theology today? Respecting differences is important for interfaith dialogue, but maintaining difference need not lead to self-centered parochialism and

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<sup>619</sup> Nichols, *Catholic Theology*, 32.

<sup>620</sup> Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994. 15.

individualism, or a destructive religious narcissism. Instead it can figure in a wide-ranging search for meaning and purpose through the contributions of different perspectives. From the perspective of a hermeneutics of consciousness, human self-transcendence will always find its authentic embodiment in particular human terms. The development of the self always engages the self in a larger reality and that engagement is constituted by elements of tradition and practice. This authenticity must never be strained out of interreligious dialogue or reflection.

6. The encounter with different forms of religious quest is necessary for a sound self-understanding. The dynamics of religious encounter entail some form of appropriation of what we find in another's experience. I am not suggesting that this appropriation rules out theological criticism. But we must recognize that there is indeed an irreducible plurality of life experiences, theoretical constructions, beliefs, judgments, values and practices in different spiritual traditions. However, within the dialogues of irreducible languages, values and judgments and worldview, our further work is to study the possibility that the different voices can be expressed with ever-increasing theoretical adequacy. This is what we talk about a 'higher integration' by the hermeneutics of consciousness. This effort draws Christian theology to rethink its specifically theological propositions in light of human religious experiences and to understand her confessional position in light of global spiritual quests.

7. According to Charles Taylor, a language of perspicuous contrast may formulate different belief systems "in relation to some human constraints at work in both".<sup>621</sup> In such contrast, diversity is mediated and it is the means by which new self-understanding comes to pass. However, the problem in this approach is obvious. How do I avoid a pretentious position of neutralism in this approach but at the same time still take account of real differences? Do I fall into the mistake that natural theology made in the seventeenth century, the mistake of reducing the depth and richness of faiths to the dimensions of the operation of conditioned human rational judgment alone?

8. I acknowledge that the language of contrast must from somewhere, and that it is appropriate for it to be drawn partly from those features that constitute one's own authentic religious experience. In my case, this means drawing on a Trinitarian faith and Christian perspectives as points of reference in interfaith dialogue. My belief is that we can recognize the ineradicable differences among different religious worlds while not becoming frozen by the contrasts. We can move beyond this tension if we

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As he states: "It would be a language in which the possible human variations would be so formulated that both our form of life and theirs could be perspicuously described as alternative such variations. Such a language of contrast might show their language of understanding to be distorted or inadequate in some respects, or it might show ours to be so." See Charles Taylor, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity" p.125.

stress the primacy of practice and understand the role of theology as therapeutic and edifying rather than exclusively systematic and logical. Through comparative study, we are looking for new vocabularies and new frameworks of communication to serve the interest of self-transcendence, the fulfillment of authentic humanity. The effort of the hermeneutics of consciousness is to overcome the contemporary cognitional myth that human knowing is a matter of empiricism or historicism. When we engage ourselves into an understanding of different religious faiths, we can recognize that the human subject cannot be understood exhaustively in those terms. Human being is a mystery that is deepened by the new realities manifested through dialogue. If we understand ourselves as subjects, we are able to deal with differences meaningfully. We are always explorers. All religious practitioners, by virtue of their character as subjects, participate in a drama of inquiry. Religious people are actors who surrender to the transcendent mystery, which always calls us to engagement, and to fulfill authentic humanity.

#### 5.1. Violence and Peace: A Practical-Ethical Concern between Daoism and Christianity

9. Paul F. Knitter in his book *Introducing Theologies of Religions* has analyzed different models for relating Christian faith with other religious traditions. Surveying four models---the replacement model, the fulfillment model, the mutuality model and the acceptance model--- Knitter singles out an ethical-practical concern as the most fertile common ground for communication between different religious faiths. This approach emphasizes that our common problems provide us with a common task and context. Talking after acting together for justice is better than talking in the abstract. Ethical-practical issues turn our attention to things that confront all the religious families of the world: poverty, victimization, violence and patriarchy. The parable of the arrow told by the Buddha might be considered as the most famous example of this “soteriologically differentiated consciousness,” illustrating this ethical-practical concern in comparative theology.<sup>622</sup>

10. This ethical-practical concern for human experience finds deep resonance in human religious traditions, for all religious traditions face a very violent world and struggle to find an ethical-and practical way to fix it. In our textual study of Laozi’s *Dao De Jing* and Augustine’s *de civitate Dei* and *de Trinitate*, we find that overcoming or restricting the mechanisms of violence is a common concern for both religious

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<sup>622</sup> According to the parable the Buddha criticized those scholars who merely fascinated in the conceptual argument in the religious world as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and kinsmen were to get a surgeon to heal him, and he were to say, I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what man I was wounded, whether he is of the warrior caste, or a Brahmin, or of the agricultural, or the lowest caste. Or if he were to say, I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of what name of family the man is -- or whether he is tall or short or of middle height ... Before knowing all this, the man would die. ....And what have I explained? Suffering have I explained, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the path that leads to the destruction of suffering have I explained. For this is useful. *The Seeker’s Glossary of Buddhism*, Edited by Minh Thanh and P.D. Leigh . New York: Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada. 1998.

traditions. Each has a profound theoretical and practical analysis of this issue, and each is discontented with pre-existing religious and philosophical approaches. .

11. For Augustine, God creates the world as a beautiful and harmonious order. It is a free gift yet from the beginning it is distorted by pride and the fratricidal murder of Abel by Cain. Pervasive conflict causes tremendous distortion and collective bias in an original harmony. The DDJ also deals with the problem of violence. We know the *de* belief in archaic Chinese religion embodied the dynamics of hunting and victim sacrifice. The original meaning of *de* is “power.” And this power is understood in relation to the ancient killing practice of the Bright Hall religious world. In the Bright Hall religious world, the notion of the *de* connoted martial practices, the ability to inspire sacred awe, to campaign against enemies and to punish them. Power in ritual performance is directed to feelings of horror and attraction. Blood and human sacrifice occupied the central place in religious offerings. Therefore, the *de* signified an act of sacred communication involving religious violence that is directed at an outward sacrificial victim or the object of hunting.<sup>623</sup> This religious violence is based on a *mana*-like martial power. Religious services in ancient China always connect to warfare, hunting and human sacrifice. Chinese history has a long record of struggle between the power of martial awe and counter balancing efforts to restrict that power.

12. Augustine confesses that the Christic drama requires freedom from various levels of conflict (religious, philosophical, political, social, or psychic) and lights a way of restoration return to the *civitate Dei* through communal practice of kenotic love in Jesus Christ. The Way of the Cross opens up a new horizon in human history through imitation of Christ’s self-giving service in Christian communal life through acts of obedience to God in sharing love with others. The composition of the DDJ also represented a decisive spiritual and intellectual breakthrough to restrict the prevailing power of violence. The spiritual breakthrough of early Daoism began in its departure from the ancient Chinese “rite and music” tradition. Excellency is no more defined by competition for power but by cultivating the way of nurturing power, of motherly compassion, of the infant’s desire to return to Dao. In contrast to Augustine’s Christological turn, early Daoism takes an anthropological turn away from an ancient theological-political tradition. This anthropological turn is by no means to be confused with a modern, humanistic one. For Daoism, this world arises from mystery. Things proliferate from this mystery and each then returns to its root. Therefore, the anthropological turn means tracing human beings back to their true root, starting from our actual bodies and our current experience. In this journey to the mysterious root, human beings are implored to emulate the earth, because earth is correlated to the heavens and the heavens mirror the mysterious power of the Dao

13. Laozi and Augustine express a common concern with violence and peace. In

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<sup>623</sup> Vassili Kryukov, “Symbols of Power and Communication” p.326.

the *civitate Dei*, Augustine argues that the earthly city originated from fratricidal violence, achieved temporary peace by means of a terrible balance, and is continually preparing for new fights. The notion of *libido dominandi* is the key for Augustine's reading of human existence. Human beings struggle for with carnal lust, which is at base a problem in the inner order of the soul. While the desire for domination seems an integral part of human existence, the hope of peace and eternal harmony is waiting within the city of God. Augustine is highly alert to the ruthless operation of mimetic mechanisms. *Libido dominandi* is the basest of all the vices. Human beings are eager for domination. Pride and *amor sui* are the ceaseless motors of the movement of human history. For Augustine the biblical narrative of Cain and Abel is the hermeneutical key for his reading of human history.<sup>624</sup> Human history is moved by the fratricidal murder by Cain. This is the "natural" (or fallen) situation of humankind. We are fallen into a violent world. However, the city of Abel, a symbol of the ultimate symphonic harmony, the most real, most secure human end, figures as the symbolic opposite of the city of Cain. In it, *Libido dominandi* finds meets an opposing spiritual resistance.

14. Laozi doesn't develop a narrative understanding of the root of violence in human history, but gives a philosophical analysis of the violent reality. According to the Daoist criticism of the ancient Chinese religious worldview, human disordered desire comes from mimetic competition by purposeful effort (有為). The Confucian school, desiring to set forth a foundation for the state by attempting to revise a utopian normative system of political ideals, fortified this competition. DDJ challenges this ideal and in contrast to the Confucian teaching, the DDJ points to a non-self-centered life as a source of immense power.<sup>625</sup> A.C. Graham said: "the most characteristic gesture of *Lao-tzu* to overturn accepted descriptions is the reversal of priorities in chains of oppositions."<sup>626</sup> This gesture takes the form of perceiving the natural world as a direct challenge to existing social organization. Society as it is exalts "something," "doing something," "knowledge," "male," "big," "strong," "hard," "straight," and the like, but Laozi calls us to promote the opposites: "nothing," "doing nothing," "ignorance," "female," "small," "weak," "soft," and "crooked." The DDJ makes apparent that its orientation challenges standard society and its ruling powers. Starting from chapter two and going right to the last sentence, the vocabulary of the DDJ is full of the terms for people (民), ruling (治), hundred clans (百姓), state(國), political domain(天下), king(王), political subject(臣), soldiers(兵), troops(士), army(軍). When rulers practice warfare, thieves and rebellions are found everywhere.<sup>627</sup> Social

<sup>624</sup> CD 15, 1:35-48

<sup>625</sup> Anthony Yu, "Reading the "Daodejing": Ethics and Politics of the Rhetoric in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, Vol.25. (Dec., 2003), pp.165-187.

<sup>626</sup> A.C. Grham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p.223.

<sup>627</sup> DDJ 75

development suffers ‘deterioration’ from its original harmony to present disorders.

15. Augustine calls for a vision to break the necessity of mimetic tyranny operating in human history. In his vision, the eternal city represents the charitable flow of the divine in human history and human beings are invited to be artisans cooperating with this divine drama in space and time. As the fountain of agape love, the Triune Love redirects human disordered desires into a creativity of inexhaustible kenosis in Christ. Similarly, Laozi calls people to take a radical turn (or return) in their social relationships as well as their economic activities. This return envisions a politics of softness and weakness, quite contrary to the aggressive desires of nations. He develops a paradoxical statement that the most excellent (*de*) do not strive to excel.<sup>628</sup> People could experience the movement of Dao only by ‘returning’ and encountering this mysterious Dao in the way of ‘weakening’.<sup>629</sup> The power of powerlessness, in softness and humbleness, is the excellent way to understand the manifestation of Dao. This humble manifestation of the Dao is nothing like the glorious awes of the High God in the rituals of the Bright Hall world, but it expresses the charismatic attraction of the nurturing power of naturalness.

16. Augustine’s spirituality challenges the viewpoint in which the assumption of an always *prior* violence drives historical progress. The most important thing is that it indicates “there is a way to act in a violent world which assumes the ontological priority of non-violence, and this way is called ‘forgiveness of sins.’”<sup>630</sup> If the archetypal conflict of Abel and Cain represents the origin of struggle between the prevailing powers in a violent world and the order of transcendence and Romulus’ killing of Remus symbolizes the spreading of numerous rivalries within human history, the city of earth can be described in Augustine’s terms as one committed “to worship a god or gods so that with their assistance it may reign in the enjoyment of victories and an earthly peace, not with a loving concern for other, but with lust for domination over them.”<sup>631</sup> Thus, Augustine calls for unthinking the necessity of violence and requires a contemplative language of human origins as peaceful and harmonious, above all in the new creation of Christ’s resurrection.

17. For early Daoism violence originates from the purposeful action (有為) of human beings, Laozi condemned war not only because it causes tremendous disasters in the world, but also because it is the most assertive execution of the human artificial will to power. Mimetic desires cause a ruler or a state to impose their will by armed force on others. Warlike competition is not only between ruling clans, but also shows up among people, generally for wealth, fame, and power. Violence also applies to the

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<sup>628</sup> DDJ 38

<sup>629</sup> DDJ 40

<sup>630</sup> J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*. p.411.

<sup>631</sup> CD 15,7:51-54



oppression or exploitation of the people by ruling class.<sup>632</sup> And directs human desires against the natural world.<sup>633</sup> Thus, Laozi opposes ambition, political power and human disordered desires strongly: these are the children of mimetic desires. In DDJ, Laozi holds to something like an anarchist political philosophy: the less the better (DDJ 17, 80) The more law, the more law-breakers. When people are ignorant of the Dao, warhorses are found on the fields. Anyone who serves the government with the principle of Dao does not rule the world by violence (DDJ 40) because violent people finally do not die a natural way (DDJ 42). Laozi's theological analysis shows a strong element of compassion. He shows deep sympathy especially for suffering people: "when the casualties are high, inspect the battleground with grief and remorse; when the war is won, treat it as you would a funeral" (DDJ 31). There is a distinct emphasis on peace in DDJ.

18. Reading Augustine and Early Daoism together, we find that both of them stress human disordered desire. Violence is a human problem rather than a divine one. (In contrast to the ancient religious worldviews). The original world is beautiful and peaceful. It is the operations of human will that finally distorted the master plan. Augustine's discussion of violence (as well as evil) as "pure negation" stresses that violence is privative, and lacks being and effects. Evil has no "ontological purchase" by which he means that human desire is always a Godward impulse; a joyous delight in beauty, good and truth. Anything else becomes disordered desire or tragic resignation. For example, since the order of charity alone exists, ecclesial practices that do not match this order are seen as lacunae of charity.<sup>634</sup> The lacunae of charity can be found in every level of human consciousness and activities. Augustine said that the disorders of love filled up the history of human experience. This disordered desire happens frequently even in the honorable love of friends. In the days of peace, our lives are also doubtfully good, "since we do not know the heart of those with whom we wish to maintain peace, and even if we could know them today, we should not know what they might be like tomorrow."<sup>635</sup>

19. Laozi also sees that violence is derived from disordered desires. The inner focus of the vital energy of human beings is overwhelmed by outer distractions. In a living world, the source of agitation comes through our five senses and their liability to tempt us with external diversions. When the wandering heart/mind lands on something, it just wants more. Human desire is not the origin of the problem, for human desire itself comes from a heavenly dynamism and plays a positive role. The problem is when

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<sup>632</sup> DDJ 53

<sup>633</sup> Sung-Peng Hsu said: "since the natural world, for lack of artificiality, does not competition, human conquest or exploitation of it can be called a one-way competition. In this form of competition, human may disrupt the natural world for a while, but, in the end, that which does not compete will win." See "Lao Tzu's Conception of Evil," in *Philosophy East and West*, 26.3. (July, 1976), p.306.

<sup>634</sup> J. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, p.313.

<sup>635</sup> CD19, 5:12-20.

simplicity of life is abandoned and a period of decadence and decline occurs. Laozi highlights the malpractice of religious and political powers in his time, saying that those who observe ritual proprieties act coercively and violently when people pay no heed to the ritual rules. It is a lack of mutual trust and the threat of disorder that makes ritual rules necessary.

20. Augustine is fully cognizant of the limits of peace in the world. He understands that after paradise is lost, human beings are not capable of perfect justice and peace. This limitation becomes a seedbed for the violence. Paradise lost causes the privation of the order of grace and things therefore are displaced from their proper order. In this sense, evil can be “seen” as a disarrangement of order through it is purely negative. The implication of this insight is that since nothing is positively wrong in creation, every fallen scene can be rectified by means of rearrangement, omission and re-contextualization. Thus, ugliness is lack of beauty and inhibition is lack of movement. And violence is lack of divine order. The Augustinian notion of violence implies an affirmation of a primordial harmony and order. This vision of plenitude is an objective truth by which to measure the fullness or lack of well being of humanity. The fulfillment of humanity can be described in terms taken from Julian of Norwich: “That all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”<sup>636</sup>

21. A reading of the Augustinian tradition and the Early Daoist tradition shows that they have a common longing for original harmony and a common interest in overcoming the prevailing power of disordered desire. They envision a similar process of decline in human existence and believe that human beings suffer from losing their original harmony because of a will to power. However, in terms of the solution of the problem of violence, Augustinian tradition is very different from early Daoism. For Augustine, the problem of evil cannot be solved until God reigns fully in the beatific vision, the city of God. He read the problem from a future oriented perspective and argued that sin or evil is related to death and mortality that cannot be fixed in our present life. Only the justice of Jesus Christ and in eschatological hope we can overcome sins, especially in the future when resurrection is realized.<sup>637</sup> The Early Daoist does not share this future-oriented way of thinking. Laozi suspends conjecture about the problem of theodicy and focuses on the practical means of nurturing life. In his rhetorical inquiry, Laozi asks: “heaven hates what it hates, who knows the reason why?” He continues to affirm, “heaven and earth are ruthless,” that they discarded and trampled upon the myriad creatures as soon as they had served a purpose.<sup>638</sup> There is no way to explain evil and the only way to escape from the experience of darkness is to find an inward transcendence within bittersweet existence. Augustine’s future-oriented

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<sup>636</sup> Majorie Hewitt Suchocki, *Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology*. New York: Continuum, 1993, p.67.

<sup>637</sup> DT 13:18

<sup>638</sup> DDJ 5

faith belongs to those who experience God-man encounter in the incarnated Word. But for those who never encounter this special event, the Daoist believes that one should practice self-cultivation and become one's own mediator for salvation. In other terms, existence becomes the field of movement upward and movement downward of the divine energy. One's destiny is realized by witnessing the pervading movement of the Dao<sup>639</sup>, contemplating the mysteries of all things<sup>640</sup>, cultivating one's own person<sup>641</sup>, and returning to the root that is called tranquility.<sup>642</sup> To attain this level of existence, one should reject any dichotomy that thinks of past, present or future experience and merely focus on the "eternal now".

## 5.2. Theoretical Constructions in Augustine and Early Daoism.

23. There is no historical or cultural connection between Augustine's Christianity and Laozi's Daoism: the former traces back to a particular form of Nicene faith, shaped by a Hebraic form of Semitic monotheism and Greco-Roman culture, while the latter is a Chinese philosophical movement and spiritual development arising from ancient shamanistic religion in China. In spite of such drastic difference, both are concerned finally not with rational constructs of ultimate reality but with experiencing ultimate reality. Yet this experience of ultimate reality, for them, consists not simply in bare empirical sensations but also encompasses fundamental levels of what we may call theory, of interior judgment as well as praxis.

24. In the beginning of this dissertation, I maintained that any theoretical reflection could be referred to its engendering experience in the living world. And I also suggested that one of most important tasks of theology today is a therapeutic or edifying one. Reading DDJ and DT together confirm that all societies have had to learn and transmit certain forms of human understanding and cultivation in order to avoid self-destruction in conflict. If Eric Voegelin is right, then the rhetoric of a transcendent order, such as the doctrine of the Trinity or speculation on the Dao of Self-so, offers such a vision by pointing consciousness to a depth "beyond articulate experience."<sup>643</sup> The rhetoric of the sacred always reflects an intellectual transformation that saves humankind from a distorted worldview. This intellectual conversion is "a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge."<sup>644</sup> Lonergan argues that modern myth is the assumption that knowing is like looking, a myth that

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<sup>639</sup> DDJ 16, 25

<sup>640</sup> DDJ 1

<sup>641</sup> DDJ 54

<sup>642</sup> DDJ 16

<sup>643</sup> Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*. Vol. 12, Published Essays: 1966-1985 Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990. p.124.

<sup>644</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*. p.238.

ignores the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning.<sup>645</sup> The goal of theoretical reflection or appropriation, as argued in my hermenutics of consciousness, is an experimental success that consists of a movement in which the mind grasps its own “rational self-consciousness clearly and distinctly taking possession of itself as rational self-consciousness.”<sup>646</sup> This achievement is thus both theoretical and practical at the same time.

25. A common element in Augustine and Laozi’s approaches to taming violence is the way in which both link their understanding of this concrete task with a “theoretical” vision of human origins and destiny. Traditional meanings of theory (theoria), going back to the time of Plato, refer to attendance at public forums and consultation of oracles, expressing this combination of abstract and operational reason. Plato is the first thinker to extend the meaning of theory to the expression of timeless truths. However, he does not give theory a single meaning, focused on pure thinking separated from life experience. He has Socrates exemplify its application dialectically, according to the characters and aspirations of diverse interlocutors. Aristotle likewise develops two meanings for the language of theoria, on the one hand systematically formulating a language referring to cognitional acts while on the other hand referring to a program that reshapes the objects of his disciples’ aspirations and so their lives. In his study of ancient philosophy, Pierre Hadot contends that philosophy is not a body of knowledge or problems, but a way of life. Theoretical discussions should be read in the context of the daily activity of philosophical schools and the pedagogical aim of constituting a particular way of life. The aim of all philosophical schools was to reach a kind of self actualization through contemplative life, which required a radical transformation from ordinary consciousness to a “cosmic” one, going beyond ordinary experience and attaining a “view from above.”<sup>647</sup>

26. According to Hadot, classical philosophers like Plato and Aristotle agree that theoretical contemplation, a form of life and not an object of knowledge, is the highest fulfillment of humanity and the end of philosophical activity. Hence the philosopher as teacher and as spiritual director, having already achieved this profound experience and the inner transformation it presupposes, seeks ways to pass the same on to students. Hadot’s characterization of classical philosophy matches with my understanding of Augustine’s and Laozi’s theologies. For both of them, theological contemplation does not aim at elaborating a conceptual system but at fostering a real way of life. One of the central hallmarks of that life is a capacity to face the concrete challenges of a

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid. “The world of immediacy is the world of sensory perception of the infant: seeing, touching, smelling, tasting, feeling, hearing, etc. The world mediated by meaning is not known by an individual’s sense experience but by the continuously checked and re-checked experience of the community. In the world mediated by meaning, knowing is not just seeing, but experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding.”

<sup>646</sup> Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. xviii.

<sup>647</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp.242-3, 265-6, 273

violent world and ethical action. Theory does not necessarily seek for final answers, but serves as practical wisdom about human possibilities in historical existence.

27. As experienced on the theoretical/contemplative level in Early Daoism and Augustine's Christianity, the divine reveals itself as of a multi-leveled reality. For both Early Daoism and Augustine's Christianity, this world is not the final answer to human destiny. Augustine says that the contingency of world is based on its creation out of nothing. Similarly, Laozi admits that this world is in a changeable condition by virtue of its distance from authentic connection with its true root, and is destined to circulate back to that root. The striking thing is that for both of them this contingency of the world has a very positive meaning. In relation to their concern for the issue of violence, the implication of contingency is that any social reality cannot claim final authority based on its current powers and configuration, as these things have no ontological permanence. Since everything ultimately traces back to its original root, the best way of life is to emulate the ultimate reality that Laozi claims is a "spontaneously so" as opposed to the constructed human reality.

28. Laozi's ultimate reality is nameless. He indicates that the Nameless is what *is* here and what *is happening* from the perspective of his enlightened consciousness. Paradoxically, this nameless ultimate reality at the same time can be named as "something," but it is revealed in a very extraordinary way. Laozi's DDJ employs a rich contemplative language to represent the nameless way. This act of theoretical imagination is at the same time a kind of spiritual exercise, which aims to resist evil and disordered desires in this suffering world by uprooting people's existing ontological assumptions. For Laozi, taming violence means to "rewind" violence backward to the very root of human existence and to nurture a fresh, practical way of living. To imitate the order of the Way of Self-so is the great medicine to overcome the tides of turbulent reality. A radical return means to embrace the ultimate reality that procreates this world through dialectic of self-emptying (Nothing) and life-confirming (Something) energy, The Dao, in metaphorical thinking, is a newborn babe, a mother's womb and living water. These three root metaphors are finally encompassed in the wider concept of chaotic unity (*Hun*) that represents the spiritual ideal for the human quest.

29. With Laozi's vision of reality in mind, we can turn to a parallel understanding of Augustine's teaching about the Trinity as also embodying a path for spiritual exercise. Many scholars agree that Augustine's epistemology mediates various levels of meaning.<sup>648</sup> His exposition of the nature of God as Trinity is at the same time the story of his journey of intellectual/spiritual conversion through passionate participation in the divine drama that calls consciousness toward a depth "beyond articulate

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<sup>648</sup> Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983.

experience.” For Augustine, a division between epistemology and metaphysics is unacceptable. According to him, there is no knowledge of any kind without God. To grasp the transcendent means to differentiate the presence of the divine true light within the disordered world. This differentiation exists even in the incarnation itself. Edmund Hill observes that *De Trinitate* is a theological exposition of the “dramatic history of God.”<sup>649</sup> Augustine’s speculation on the divine nature is Christologically grounded. The Christ event is the identity of God’s being-for-himself and God’s being-for-the-world in his works and person. God has identified himself with the incarnated one and yet we can ‘distinguish God from God.’ This distinction however implies no contradiction within God, but reflects the power of love and relation to retain the coherence and unity of the divine being. Augustine says that the Spirit is the reassertion of this unity within difference. The unity of the self-differentiated God is love. He is related in himself and open to his created works. Augustine’s Trinitarian discourse is developed by confirming God’s relation to the disordered world, supremely exemplified by the crucifixion of the incarnate Word on the cross and his resurrection. For Augustine, Christian knowledge of the divine nature is constituted by a personal relationship with Christ.<sup>650</sup>

30. Augustine’s Christological exposition of the divine reality is in tension with the Daoist impersonal approach to divinity. In the modern period, there has been no lack of critiques of Hebraic theism and of personal concepts of God. But Daoism presents a quite different conversation partner, whose impersonal vision of divinity is religiously positive. For Christian theologians, listening carefully to an impersonal exposition of the Divinity might help us to find a higher integration of our knowledge of God. For early Daoism, Dao as the mystery of mysteries is the origin of the world. The inner movement of the Dao is “elusive and vague”, “vague and elusive” and “dim and dark.” DDJ describes the nature of the Divine as “life force,” the womb of the world, the mother of heaven and earth. These images point to a threefold structure of inner dynamism in the Dao. The Daoist technical term “three and one” (*sanyi*) was formulated very late, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., but the concept has already imbedded implicitly in the DDJ texts. The historical emergence of this term thus has some similarities to the process by which the doctrine of the trinity emerged in Christianity. For example, DDJ 42 opens with the “three and one” account of the Dao in relation to the cosmogony of the world: “the Dao begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures”.<sup>651</sup> The immanent nature of the Dao is the spontaneity of Dao, procreating and generating myriad things in its “nothingness” and “something.” In other terms, the immanent nature of Dao is associated with the idea of change. The Three-One is constantly presented in terms of begetting, transformation

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<sup>649</sup> Edmund Hill, *The Trinity* p.18

<sup>650</sup> DT 13.24.

<sup>651</sup> DDJ 25.

and flux.

31. The primordial mode of Dao is the “Be-ing” of self-so, the supreme reality that encompasses visible and invisible realms. It is the source of the world and the power of transformation. DDJ describes ultimate reality as “itself so.” *Ziran*, the spontaneity of change, is equivalent to the constant Dao. Everyone has experienced this spontaneity because it is present in the occurrence of a thought or an action, or the formation of a preference.<sup>652</sup> As the spontaneity of change implies the totality of the world, it implies a concept of self-causation. It is the center of a moving wheel and the rest of the wheel represents the universe. As Jung Young Lee explains it, this center or axis is the core of the entire wheel, and its motion determines the movements of all of its other parts. This axis, by moving itself, causes the wheel to move and therefore is analogous to change itself.<sup>653</sup>

32. Being sensitive to the mystical and impersonal dimension of the Divine, What can Augustinian faith learn by being sensitive to the mystical and impersonal dimensions of the divine in early Daoist spirituality? According to Augustine, God has identified himself with the incarnated one, and yet we can ‘distinguish God from God.’ Augustine describes the Spirit as the reassertion of this unity within difference within God. The unity of the self-differentiated God is agape love. This love, in Augustine’s view, is the identity of self-relation and self-giving in favor of life. In many ways, this Trinitarian speculation is very “impersonal,” in that it is highly related to the modes of change in the dynamism of the divine nature.

33. Augustine’s personalist discourse about the divine is developed by confirming God’s relation to the disordered world, supremely exemplified by the crucifixion of the incarnate Word on the Cross and his resurrection. From a Daoist perspective, Augustine’s theological language should not be confused by forcing it into a stark dichotomy between immanence and transcendence. Daoist notions of Divinity are quite different from classical concepts like an “unmoved mover” that imply a demarcation between God and the world. A Daoist sees ultimate reality as the “moving mover,” or “changing changer,” the source of all creative becoming. It is not subject to becoming, but it creates and constitutes the essence of the becoming and changing process.<sup>654</sup> The divine manifests itself from Nothing (*Wu*) to Something (*Yu*).

34. Starting from the dialectical movement of Nothing and Something, a Daoist interpretation of Augustine’s Christological exposition of divinity might run as follows: first, the two natures of Jesus Christ dissolve the distinction between the ontological and economic natures of the Divine. Jesus Christ (Something) through incarnation manifests the divine economy as the concrete form of the immanent Trinity (Nothing or Nameless reality) and trinitarian relations. God’s saving work crosses into historical

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<sup>652</sup> Joel Kupperman, *Learning from Asian Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.89.

<sup>653</sup> Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change*, p.40.

<sup>654</sup> Jung Young Lee, *The Theology of Change*, p.41.

process and it raises human beings to eternal happiness by temporal means. Second, in this Christological language, monarchial images of God in the Hebrew Scriptures are reinterpreted as the communion of all three divine persons in difference. In light of the humble mediation of the Word in Jesus' death and in the hope of the resurrection, the knowledge of God is re-oriented to a future dimension where human nature is reconnected with its true root.

35. The Daoist "God" is a "moving mover". The wheel is used as a metaphor to explain the dialectical movement of the Dao, between nothing and something. A dialectical movement of the nameless Dao (Nothing) and the named Dao (Something) is sometimes characterized in the terms *yin* and *yang* modes of being, and refers to the inner dynamism of the Dao.<sup>655</sup> The spokes of a wheel (the "matter" of a wheel) converge at one hub and the wheel works by turning around the nothingness inside the hub at the center.<sup>656</sup> Nothing and something mutually penetrate each other and the inner dynamism of the relation between the two can be seen as a form of self-causation, *ziran*, the spontaneity of change. The Daoist notion of *ziran* focuses on actions taken to maintain quiescence, stability and harmony. Everything carries *yin* and *yang* energies as modes of being, and the blending of these different vital energies is in principle harmonious.<sup>657</sup> This harmonious characteristic, the unitive force, is *ziran*, the ultimate reality *per se*.

36. From Augustine's perspective, he might suggest that this "Something" is the incarnate Word, the new creation of everything, both mysterious sacrament and moral example, who stands with and between God and humanity. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, definitely manifested and communicated God's self-giving love for the whole world. Knowing God is based on spiritual discernment. This discernment is in play in the figurative interpretation of Hebrew scriptural texts, and also in our interpretation of our own lived experience. Thus for instance discernment of a restless longing for God within ourselves points us toward ceaseless participation in the example and sacrament of the incarnate Word, the Last Man.<sup>658</sup> This involves a total reconstruction of our understanding of the divine nature and of our existence in terms of the fundamental contrast between the city of God and the city of Earth, the contrast between the violent, destructive patterns we find here and now and the new life that grows up through participation in the wisdom of the Divine Love. Theoretical construction is not merely abstract thinking but always points toward an authentic and fulfilling way of life.

37. In its theoretical reflection, the DDJ employs many mystical-religious

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<sup>655</sup> DDJ 42.

<sup>656</sup> DDJ 11

<sup>657</sup> DDJ 42

<sup>658</sup> As Augustine states: "the more thing is known without being fully known, the more does the intelligence desire to know what remains." DT 10.2.



techniques and terms to foster this fulfillment. Such reflection sheds new light on the Christian effort to discern the way of the City of God within the disordered world. Daoism stresses a gradual emptying of the operations of consciousness, (desires, feelings and discursive thought) through methods based on an image of the interdependent relationship between an infant in the womb and the mother. DDJ seeks explicitly to limit sense perception in order to disengage from external reality.<sup>659</sup> *Ziran* in its metaphorical form refers to the “mind of a fool” in which a religious believer can gradually experience the “mystery of darkness” through apophatic practice day after day.<sup>660</sup> References to the condition of an “uncarved block” or to “simplicity” represent the status of a person who is aware of a conscious of illumination within, of light in darkness.<sup>661</sup> From this perspective, apophatic practice helps to lay bare our true root relationship with the divine, and thus to provide a plumb line for distinguishing it from our disordered or deformed relations in the earthly city.

38. Augustine argues that epistemologically and metaphysically God is understood primarily through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the narrative formulated and confessed in the Nicene faith. If we consider that story from a Daoist perspective, we can see that it has certain resonances with the Daoist ideals we have reviewed, such as the infant ideal. The incarnation can be seen as an event in which the highest form of Something is constituted by the nameless, absolute freedom of Nothing. God as spontaneously so points to the ultimate ground of Being, where the most infinite freedom (Nothing) shares its inner nature (Something) in spontaneity. This power of change flows outward to the myriad things. In contrast with the monarchical understanding of the High God, Daoism developed an agential turn by which human life and action is taken as a mediation of divine action, an approach with certain points of contact with the idea of incarnation.<sup>662</sup>

39. For Augustine, this agential turn happened not in my body, but in His body, in the mission of God in Jesus Christ who discloses the true nature of God to the world. Augustine’s Christological exposition of divinity implies a resistance present in our existing experience and language to the final answer to human destiny. In his discussion on the nature of God as Trinity, he recognized that human terms we use to refer to one “essence or substance” or to the three persons would not be fully

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<sup>659</sup> DDJ 52& 56

<sup>660</sup> DDJ 20

<sup>661</sup> Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism*. Pp.48-49.

<sup>662</sup> The detailed argument of the agential model is presented in Gordon D. Kaufman’s *God the Problem*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972. Chap.6. See also, John Compton states: “... the agent is not alongside his [sic] actions. God is not alongside the world, inserting himself [sic] into it at special moments, and more than I am behind or alongside my bodily life. He [sic] lives through the history of nature as I live through my body. He [sic] is that history, just as am my body, yet he [sic] is not exhausted in it ... The central point is that the sense of God’s personal transcendence, if we model it on the personal transcendence of the embodied, finite and personal agent, does not require a radical dualism between God and the physical world. John, J. Compton, “Science and God’s Action in Nature,” in *Earth Might Be Fair* ed. Ian G. Barbour Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972, pp.33-47.

satisfactory. We need language to think of an “essence” of God which “exists” entirely, and exclusively in the three terms in which it is concretely realized, but the classical logic of genus and species divisions, the conventional mode of human thinking, is insufficient to formulate the issue. God is purely generative, the ultimate and ultimately unfathomable, source of all beings. Human language can convey the mystery of God but in no way is it adequate to dominate or contain God.

40. In the same vein, Daoism rejects the full competence of language when applied to divinity. For Daoism, the face of God is seen metaphorically an infant. The most High, the spontaneity of change, is understood as manifest in and through the life of infant ideal. It could be experienced but it cannot be described fully in language. According to Laozi, we can find this infantile power in ourselves. To imitate an infant represents an experience that discloses the transcendent order, manifest not in terms of royal awe but in infantile qualities: weakness, namelessness, softness and tenderness. Augustine sees Jesus Christ as the New Adam, an eschatological reality erupting into human history by means of a baby’s birth, a radical break that shatters the continuities of the mechanisms of violence on different levels of meaning. This event disrupts our ways of seeing and participating in reality, including our experiential and linguistic categories. Infant Jesus thus is an image of our human nature and also a mysterious sacrament of the divine wisdom, who establishes a drastic difference between the life of inner man and the life of outer man, the citizen of the heavenly City and the citizen of the earthly City, the latter being a self-centered life in conflict with others following the archetype of Cain. The former is a therapeutic process of future-oriented life, a continuing restoration of the image of God to conform to God’s eschatological self-manifestation in Jesus Christ who guides human beings to experience the love-center reality.

41. Agape love is unitive force. It unites the people of God and perfects intellectual growth. It perfects the intellect because it checks the *libido dominandi* that Augustine fears will often accompany knowledge. Augustine is well known for using the metaphorical triad: lover, loved and the love to unite the three persons of God. He argues that this “unity” of the Triune God is the Love, another term for the Spirit. Early Daoism does not label love as the Holy Spirit or the Holy Son of God. In its terms, the agential turn means to change one’s intention inwardly toward divinity. Spiritual formation aims to vitalize the divine infantile energies in human life. A Daoist aims to resemble a newborn babe because a baby knows when “enough is enough”.<sup>663</sup> The babe symbolizes the supreme human goal of locating and embodying the Dao in our soft and tender body. DDJ argues that by meditating on the infant-like body we become aware of the Dao’s embodiment in our immediate life. The person who has attained this spiritual awareness knows how to manage the unceasing desires of competition. In

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<sup>663</sup> DDJ 46

the DDJ 10, the infant is the image for the perfect circulation of cosmic energy. By “concentrating your *qi* and making it pliant,” Laozi advises, the practitioner will be transformed into a new person, like a newborn babe. In DDJ 28, Laozi assures the reader that the perfection of the infant life can be restored when the real *de* is being kept completely.

42. The Daoist agential turn reminds Christian believers that faith is not only to confess Jesus Christ as the savior and Lord, but it is to live up to the way of Christ by cultivating this infantile energy of Jesus Christ in human life. Re-reading Augustine’s Christology from Daoist agential perspective helps us to question the overemphasis in the Christian West on the recovery of humanity in confessional and moral terms. In Augustine, sin is about the disorientation of our wills. Though we are free to choose our acts, humans are not free to choose the desires that direct our choice. But Western theological imagination immediately jumps from this psychological insight to moral behavior, rather than staying longer with its existential meaning for life growth. If the Daoist focuses on mortality and immortality, corruptibility and healing, the Christian West thinks more of sin in terms of rebellion and trust, righteousness and forgiveness. From a Daoist perspective, however, the first concern of humanity should be to restore the power of simplicity, clarity and purity, the heart of an infant.

43. Since Nothing, Something and spontaneous change are embodied in the image of an infant, DDJ represents an intellectual effort to disclose the threefold immanent nature of Dao that is manifested in the realm of perfect humanity. Keeping the Three Ones is a summary of the Taoist spiritual exercises. Daoist meditation aims to actualize the cosmic qualities of one’s authentic self as “three and one.” The meditation of DDJ focuses on the One, which means “total” and “complete,” symbolized as a circle rather than a numerical number. One is the most profound circle, the singular point of the ultimate reality.<sup>664</sup> This circular emptiness called the Great One is omnipresent in all creation and the adept is called to focus on it. Keeping the One refers to “keeping together” one’s vital energies in order that all of them are conserved and nothing lost.<sup>665</sup> It searches for equilibrium and harmony through a breathing practice. Keeping the One takes the essence of everything in the *wu*-form.<sup>666</sup>

44. While Daoism contemplates the threefold structure of ultimate reality in the terms just described, Augustine describes God as One in substance and Three in persons. The order of divine nature is given in mutual relations of paternity, generation and procession. Early Christian tradition named God as substance or essence, but Augustine contends that the relational terms are also supreme for understanding the divine nature. According to his study, the category of substance should not be understood according to its Aristotelian definition, but opened up as a distinctively

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<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 192

<sup>665</sup> Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*. p.132

<sup>666</sup> By using Ames and Hall’s term, see *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Interpretation*. p.36

Christian way of understanding the divine nature. The order of the divine as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is an order of triune love where mutual relation essentially defines unity. The nature of God is self-relatedness. This new knowledge needs faith and inward self-appropriation to verify its mystery of the divine as Three and One, the ground of being for human existence.

45. Augustine thinks through the mystery of the Trinity using the human mind as an analogy. Early Daoism also places mind in a very central place for understanding the mystery of divinity. But before talking about mind we should treat the foundation of the mind first. Laozi thinks that the Dao manifested as three original energies in the human body.<sup>667</sup> These could be visualized as the upper Cinnabar field, the middle Cinnabar field and the lower Cinnabar field in human body. These three ones are separated distinctively yet are still one in the original Dao. The human body is the focus of a universe; transcendent order is manifested in it.<sup>668</sup> These three--vital essence, vital energy and numinous spirit (the so called 'three treasures')--- constitute the existence of the human being. A Daoist adept builds relationship with the divine through meditation on these three ones in concrete and imagistic modes. Daoism sees the human body as constituted by energy fields (vital essence, vital energy and numinous spirit). The Daoist ideal of immortality involves "nourishing the [numinous] spirit," and was practiced through meditation and breath practices that lead us through the mystery of mysteries to experience the completeness of humanity in the Dao. The goal of "peace and purity of spirit," once achieved, sets a boundary to all wishes, desires and outward striving.<sup>669</sup>

46. Augustine describes how the mind mirrors the divine substance and relations in equality and in distinction, and how a Christian person is gradually renewed as the image of the communion of the Triune God. Augustine initially suggests mind, knowledge, and love (*mens, notitia sui, amor sui*) as a trinity of the mind; inseparable from each other, yet each having its own performance. The mind, he writes, shows its operations in relation, yet maintains unity in its essence. If self-knowledge is a fundamental act, it is an awakening to our self-limitations and conditions of finitude, as well as to the ability to live and take action within them. Human existence is a living reflection of our proper position in the universe: a creature below God, but, in the capacity for questioning, above the animals. Lack of self-knowledge is to lose sight of one's moral and spiritual position in the universe. It is an unavoidable result of failure in love. The mind misplaces its own nature within a disordered condition. The human mind is a broken mirror that then reflects God's nature in a distorted way.

47. To nurture our broken mind requires a therapeutic concern. God has the

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<sup>667</sup> Chang Chung-yuan, *Tao: A New Way of Thinking*. p.33.

<sup>668</sup> DDJ 21, 42 and 39

<sup>669</sup> U.Engelhart, "Longevity Techniques and Chinese Medicine." In L.Kohn (Ed.), *Daoism Handbook* Leiden: Brill. p.100.

omnipotent capacity to generate images entirely adequate to and identified with their corresponding realities. Human beings have the intellectual capacity to generate images, imitating God's capacity to generate in creation images of what God is not. We seek to imitate what God's mind is. Augustine's best attempt to recover the image of the Triune God in the human mind is finally realized with the triad of *memoria sui*, *intelligentia sui*, *volutas sui* (memory, understanding, and will). Each of the mental acts, he reflects, can be considered at once substantially and relationally. Augustine's analysis of the human mind is practical. The mind is defined neither by self-contemplation nor self-enjoyment, but action, in "remembering and anticipating its own life, experiencing its own freedom and the responsibilities that go with it, consciously willing its own action. Its presence to itself does not close it off from other beings or from the future."<sup>670</sup>

48. Remembering plays a central role in the search for one's origin and identity, and thus in the search for God. The human mind seeks knowledge of itself, for it is present to itself and aware of itself. It is impossible for the mind to be ignorant of itself.<sup>671</sup> From this irreducible self-presence, mind comes to the acts of seeking (*studere*), thinking (*cogitare*), and conceiving (*verbum gignere*) through which the mind educates itself to achieve a more explicit and precise understanding of itself. The mind always presents itself in knowing and loving, in remembering (searching) and understanding, and in willing itself.<sup>672</sup> This self-relatedness is more basic than our acts of intentionality and the process of conceptualization, for it is the more "inward" and the more "certain."<sup>673</sup> The Delphic oracle's injunction to "know thyself" expresses exactly the command to reflect upon the mind. Such reflection can occur only in the light of divine Truth, which sets the norm for judgment.<sup>674</sup>

49. To summarize the dialogue between these two spiritual traditions, Christian theologians could certainly appreciate Laozi's keen insights on the flow of "energies" in divinity, as communicable aspects of the divine nature. Nothing, something and their spontaneous change mutually indwell in the form of these energies. The divinity of tranquility and purity, however, flow out to humans and never exhaust the source from whence they come. The Daoist agential exposition of divinity tries to define the relationship between Dao and the world as a mixture of emanation and immanence. The infant ideal is designated as the field manifesting the energies of Dao. Appreciating these insights might suggest that Christian theology could move some emphasis from the theology of the cross to a theology of nativity in which God reveals his true nature in the form of a baby.

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., p.304.

<sup>671</sup> DT 10.5

<sup>672</sup> DT 10.19; 14.9-10; 15.25

<sup>673</sup> DT 10.16

<sup>674</sup> DT 10.7; 12

50. Augustine's theology can fully agree with Daoist spirituality that theoretical construction is by no means a merely abstract project, but is always related to an inward training that aims to concentrate and to purify our mind and heart. Jesus Christ in many ways could be understood as the embodiment of divine tranquility and purity in an ideal infant form. Being born in Mary's womb suggests that the logos is found deep in the innermost part of humans. Life is where the divine energies are prominent and alive and where God can be experienced. The goal of humans is not to look outside in reaching for fullness but to turn inside where the energies of softness and humbleness are generated.

### 5.3. The Interior Ground of Human Transformation

51. The theoretical constructions in Augustine's theology and early Daoist spirituality are both extraordinary. They are extraordinary because they envision ultimate reality as experienced by extraordinary human beings. For Laozi and Augustine, the common world as experienced by an ordinary mind is nothing but a part of reality. For both of them, experience grasped at that common level does not reveal the real depth of reality. A person on the level of common experience lacks what both Augustine and Laozi call illuminating light. In order to obtain such light, human beings must practice a contemplative life and go beyond the common world to an intellectual and contemplative mode of being.

52. The goal of theoretical construction is to manifest and realize the truth of reality. Human knowledge of existence should come from inside. In early Daoism, theoretical contemplation of reality as the "three and one" finds verification by participation of an adept in *guan* (contemplation) and *ming* (illuminated consciousness). The Daoist commentary tradition takes the DDJ as the original source of mystical experience. In the Zhuangzi passage, for example, we find descriptions of spiritual practices such as "sitting and forgetting" (坐忘), letting organs and members drop away" (墮肢體), dismissing eyesight and hearing (黜聰明), parting from the body and expelling knowledge (離形去知), merging with the universal thoroughfare" (同於大通).

53. Training (*disciplina*) and the exercise of the Soul (*exercitationes animi*) also occupy a significant place in Augustine's world. His concern is the "gradual renewal of the inner man." In order to fulfill this goal, we should "turn our attention to the things we are going to discuss in a more inward manner than the things that have been discussed above, though in fact they are the same things."<sup>675</sup> The human intellectual/spiritual quest aims to "fall in love" with the communion of the Triune God. The exercise of the soul is a process of healing, strengthening, cleansing, and purifying the prideful self. It is an inward ascent that desires the "renewal of the innermost self."

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<sup>675</sup> John Sullivan, *Image of God*, pp.64, 146. see also DT 8.1

Specifically, it is a spiritual exercise intended to restore the *Imago Dei* in the Order of Triune Love.

54. The Daoist mode of knowing is “image thinking” that takes images and processes them through interaction with other images in an inner dynamism, finally verifying theoretical knowledge by contemplative meditation. In the DDJ, Laozi put this thinking in terms of *guan*.<sup>676</sup> The DDJ emphasizes the epistemic function of contemplation (*guan*) that verifies ultimate reality as three and one. For Laozi, contemplation means to go beyond the realm of common experience. It is a speechless act. He declares: “the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking effortless action and practices the teaching that uses without speech”.<sup>677</sup> Those sages “reach an understanding of the benefits of teachings that go beyond what can be said and of doing things non-coercively.”<sup>678</sup> Human language is not a perfect vehicle to express the completeness of ultimate reality, for it only functions well within social practices and conventions. Human beings struggle constantly with the imperfection of human language. Teaching, therefore, is not collecting empirical data, analyzing information and reciting some memorable phrases of ancient times. The DDJ shows no interest in fixing on a final dogmatic formulation but tries to convey something that cannot be formulated in terms of prepositions or categories.

55. In contrast with this strong suspicion of text and language, for Augustine divine illumination is implicitly mediated through reading and listening to the Old and New Testaments.<sup>679</sup> For Augustine, finding illumination through a community of faith is a crucial part of spiritual discipline. But he also agrees that in order to receive illumination one should listen carefully to what is taught by the inner teacher Christ.<sup>680</sup> Fasting is also a spiritual exercise that prepares us to listen to the Word of God, maintaining clarity of mind and preparing us for illumination.<sup>681</sup> Augustine also emphasizes that the Eucharist provides him with necessary daily spiritual food for the hungry soul. The body itself can be disciplined with temperance to be an “instrument of righteousness.”<sup>682</sup> When a soul offers itself to God, it will be kindled by the fire of love and lose its worldly desire. The Eucharist is a sacred sign that sustains and enlivens one’s spiritual being through the symbolic act of eating the daily bread, transforming human souls into the image of Christ. Prayer is the highest form of the activity of soul. In the DT, Augustine presents to us his practice of contemplative

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<sup>676</sup> DDJ16

<sup>677</sup> DDJ 2

<sup>678</sup> DDJ 43

<sup>679</sup> For Augustine’s critical views of the history of ancient Israel and the Jews, see my previous discussion. Also Paula Fredrikson, “*Secundum Carnem*: History and Israel in the Theology of St. Augustine,” in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999: pp.26-41; and “*Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei*: Augustine on Jews and Judaism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (Fall 1995); pp.299-324.

<sup>680</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.227, cf.doc.Chr.4.30.63

<sup>681</sup> Hill, Works of St. Augustine III/1, p.473.

<sup>682</sup> CD 10.3

prayer, which is designed to purify the mind in order to see God face by face. Contemplative prayer is directed by divine grace and illuminated by God. It produces a perfect knowledge and everlasting joy by the divine presence.<sup>683</sup> A process of reflection on both self and God, prayer begins with meditative exegesis and logical purification and ascends toward concern with wisdom about eternal things, rather than knowledge of temporal matters.<sup>684</sup>

56. Daoism would regard Christian eagerness to listen to the Word of God through Christ the inner teacher as a noble quality. The problem from its perspective is that theistic faith always tends toward a dualistic understanding, which takes God as a spiritual being having supreme power and wisdom, separate from this world. God puts a moral command upon that world, which depends upon God's justice and mercy. This can lead to an objectivization of God as a supreme master who is the powerful judge and savior. This worldview is taken to belittle the dignity of human responsibility and autonomy, reducing ethics and faith to blind acceptance of rituals, authoritative commands and a spirituality of guilt. In contrast, the Daoist *guan* (illumination) consists of the radicals "bird" (隹) and "seeing" (見). *Guan* is not only seeing things in depth and in detail, it also rises to achieve a comprehensive bird's eye view. According to this logic, Christ could be understood as a cosmic bird, the total, eschatological Christ in Augustine's term. Augustine's Christian hope is that through communion between the "inner word" of our mind and the divine Word "just exactly as it is," we may become truly wise, as Christ himself, through prayer.<sup>685</sup>

57. Laozi, by indicating the profound relation between the way of spontaneity, the way of nothing and the way of something, points out immediately that "he that rids himself forever of desire can see (*guan*) the secret essences".<sup>686</sup> Daoist theology would maintain that seeing through the eyes of Jesus Christ implies an effort at self-cultivation, an effort that can verify the existence of the Dao through the evidence of effective inner transformation. We see both the nameable, the manifestations of the Dao, and the nameless, the immanent nature of the Dao, in the experience of illumination through the two inseparable natures of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we are able to receive illumination (*ming*) through the practice of seeing the life and work of Jesus Christ. Daoist spiritual exercise can be differentiated into three stages: the preamble stage to calm down the consciousness; the consecutive stage, to heighten consciousness, to upright body and to regulate breathing.<sup>687</sup> The goal is to attain states of being unadorned (素), being concentrated or purified(精), being illuminated (明), having a numinous spirit(神), and, finally, attaining the state of *ziran* or Nothingness.

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<sup>683</sup> DT 1.20

<sup>684</sup> DT 12.4

<sup>685</sup> DT 14.25-26

<sup>686</sup> DDJ 1

<sup>687</sup> See the detail discussion in Chapter Three, Paragraph 93-94



58. Seeing Christianity through Daoist eyes, we find that Augustine demonstrates a step-by-step ascent to discern the triune image in human nature. He calls this spiritual exercise “training the mind...to come in our own small measure to a sight of the trinity which God is.”<sup>688</sup> Whatever progress is made through patience and perseverance will reach completeness in the beatific vision. In his speculation on the Trinity, Augustine argues that the human mind’s search for God is likewise based on a similar activity.<sup>689</sup> His study of the human mind is thus not epistemology *per se*, but an exploration of how spiritual completeness may be achieved through the epistemological process of knowing God. The doctrine of the Trinity provides a salvific, practical knowledge that can help people be liberated from the mimetic mechanisms of the earthly city and find the fullness of humanity in the eternal city. Attaining spiritual completeness means to discipline our human mind by knowing and loving God and by committing us to the humble life of the Incarnate Word.

59. In contrast with Augustine’s future orientation, Laozi believes the ultimate reality can be verified immediately. The inner light (*ming*) can direct our mind to seek for truth. Laozi asks his disciples to polish the mind/heart and leave no blemish on it.<sup>690</sup> Truth can be found within the self by a practical method. For the beginner, the method of *via Negativa* is the starting point for spiritual practice. He requests us “to block up the openings, and shut the gate ways” and promises “to the end of your days your energies will not be used up”.<sup>691</sup> Laozi’s notion of illumination refers to a human inner transformation. To be illumined means to differentiate the operations of human consciousness/energy, and by doing so, to know the One in Three within. This divine-human movement is manifested as human seeking in response to the mysterious attraction from the mysterious Dao that draws us toward practicing effortless action. The process of discernment of ultimate reality can be called “the meditative complex” in which the “human quest reaches a climax with the discovery of the quest itself as a source of order and disorder in existence.”<sup>692</sup>

60. Daoists might feel uneasy about Augustine’s future oriented faith, because this eschatological hope can be deformed into a quietism and resignation that gives up effort in the present. For Daoism, people should call for action to resist the world’s disorder world, for returning to nurture our whole being in body and mind. Even though we could not find God in a violent world, but we could cultivate and nurture life by showing the divine light at a personal level. We could experience the presence of divinity in our daily disciplined life. Augustine need not disagree that there is a way

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<sup>688</sup> DT 13.26 cf. 15.1;10

<sup>689</sup> Rowan Williams, “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the De Trinitate,” in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, edited by Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske New York: Peter Lang, 1993, pp.121-134.

<sup>690</sup> DDJ 10

<sup>691</sup> DDJ 54

<sup>692</sup> Eric Voegelin, “Wisdom” p.268.

in which the presence of divinity can be concretely verified in the here and now. He would understand this immediacy as a state of falling in love with the divine. It is experienced as a gift from God that will only take its complete form in the future. For Augustine, the operation of human consciousness is naturally an action of love, and love by nature is directed toward the known and not the unknown. The human mind provokes questions, either by loving knowledge itself or loving some objects of knowledge. Human beings by nature direct their love toward some universal truth or value. This kind of knowledge leads us toward God and this is always future oriented. Knowing God depends on knowing self, and vice-versa. Knowing and loving is a spiritual exercise to come to the knowledge of God. For Augustine, even an unrighteous mind is able to love someone who is just because our mind knows in itself what it is to be righteous. The concept of justice cannot be learned through human bodily experience, but must be gained through introspection. Despite the overlap in description of this inner exploration, Augustine and the Daoist still will differ over Augustine's insistence on the importance of the future and of outward-directed relation with God.

61. Though the theological convictions are finally different in Augustine Christianity and early Daoism, an important commonality is that for both of them life transformation is the key for verifying the ground of Being. Theoretical verification occurs in the process of cultivation that consists in the human's purifying himself of all desires in their normal form and his mind of all received constructions. Purity of the empirical self leads to the birth of new selfhood, the cosmic ego, which in the Daoist thinking, is considered to be in union with the Dao in its life confirming activity. In the case of Christianity, new creation is said to take place in Jesus Christ who is confessed as the Holy Son of the Mystery of Trinity. The major differences between the two have to do with the "degrees" of this transformation and purification. The two traditions differ in many details, but agree with each other in the main direction.

62. For early Daoism, human beings meditate on themselves in illumination embody the process in which myriad things arise, mingle with each other and return into the ocean of Dao. Daoist consciousness is at the highest levels identified with the spontaneity of the Dao at an ontological level. Naturally, at these levels the adept falls into a profound silence and peace and an extraordinary tranquility fills his heightened consciousness. Augustine sees that human beings cannot restore the image of God in themselves apart from the presence of divine grace. Having purified the old "life," a person has gained a new identity. Having lost his life, he has found an eternal life in union with the mystery of the Triune God forever. Here too there is peace and tranquility, but at the same time there is a permanent solidity and mutuality among the "myriad things" that have been created.

#### 5.4. Life Accountability in Practices

63. Daoist seeks to realize the way of self-so or the “dynamism of Heaven” through self-cultivation. Transcendent order is manifested in the path of “retuning”.<sup>693</sup> Returning means to go back to one’s root and for Laozi this root is an ultimate reality with absolute freedom, beyond what any language can name. It is nothing, the Way of Self-so. When adept understand it through bodily experience, it is the location in the belly, the low energy zone of human body. In tradition, the Daoist tries to reach a perfect bodily balance so that the conscious breathing exercise becomes second nature and he can experience the unity of the soul, mind and body. Indeed, this is a religious decision, a choice between the trust that is willing to follow the cyclical movement of the Dao and the arrogance that departs from it.<sup>694</sup> When we return to the primordial ground, we are able to attain unrestricted freedom and nurture life forever. This path of return to the Dao is expressed throughout the DDJ.<sup>695</sup>

64. The strength of Christian faith, on the other hand, is based on the engagement of the missions of the Triune God. The incarnate Word sets human life free from the power of *libido dominandi* through his sacrificial love in the power of the Spirit. Augustine’s argument is pervaded by the Platonic notion of participation in God: the Holy Spirit initiates our participation in the incarnate Word, whose mission is love poured into the human heart.<sup>696</sup> Augustine declares that the fulfillment of all things comes from their participation in and imitation of the divine realities, specifically, in the ‘form of likeness’ identified with the Word, the Son, the perfect Image and Likeness of the father God.<sup>697</sup> When the mind is being renewed in the divine image, it will “achieve wisdom in the contemplation of things eternal.”<sup>698</sup>

65. Christian faith in a Daoist sense can be seen as a practice of keeping the three ones: Holy Father, Holy Son and the Holy Spirit. The practice basically is a personal confession, manifest in outward ritual services. For the Daoist, however, the practice of keeping the three ones focuses on inward search. The Daoist realizes that the Dao is always present in human life and it is ready to respond to anyone in harmony and tranquility. Returning to Dao is a way of conversion in which our thinking and living style are changed radically. The focus of this return is to cultivate the vital energy, the Qi, through meditation, breathing practice, and stretching. Human bodies are born through the coagulation of the vital energies, and this coagulation follows a transformational dynamic inscribed in time. The DDJ teaches one to concentrate the *qi*,

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<sup>693</sup> DDJ 40

<sup>694</sup> DDJ 38

<sup>695</sup> See. DDJ 14, 16, 25, 28, 30, 40, 52.

<sup>696</sup> DT 13.14

<sup>697</sup> DT 7.12 See also B.Studer, “History and Faith in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*,’ *Augustine Study* 28, no.1 (1997): 7-50.

<sup>698</sup> DT 15.5

the vital energy and make it pliant.<sup>699</sup> From a Daoist perspective, the vital energy is circulated between the realm of transcendence and the realm of human experience: both worlds are created by *qi*. Returning to the Dao is an exercise to activate the animated human body, not the static or dead body but the living and pliant body. Daoists view the human body as the residence of luminous spirits. Spiritual exercises are said to “refine the body to a point where it overcame its ordinary limitations and turned into part of the Dao, encompassing the symbolic body of the entire universe.”<sup>700</sup>

66. These luminous spirits from Augustine’s perspective represent our mindful activity. Augustine sees that self-appropriation of the mind is the key to the human spiritual quest. He distinguishes between two levels of human consciousness (*animus*): the lower (*anima*) and the higher (*mens*). The lower part is connected to the empirical world and to finite and temporal materials. The higher part, or mind (*mens*), is pointed toward contemplation of the transcendent realm. Rejecting the Daoist non-dual vision of reality, Augustine calls for a clear distinction to be made between our mind and our participation in divine life. The human mind cannot rely on its own completeness. It depends on the gifts of God. This is why even the most profound inner trinity, that of the mind remembering, knowing, and loving itself, cannot be considered the image of God, for the image relies only on its relation to God. This highest of God’s creatures has the capacity to participate in God and in various divine attributes, such as wisdom, light and justice. As it does so, the soul turns to itself not only on the level of *scientia*, knowledge of temporal reality, but with *sapientia*, the wisdom of the divine reality. By this divine wisdom, the mind becomes actively aware of itself and of itself as *Imago Dei*.

67. The problem is that in its deformed condition the mind has forsaken and forgotten God.<sup>701</sup> Though it does not lose its capability to remember, understand, and love itself, the mind becomes inactive, unhappy, helpless: a broken mirror. The solution, Augustine says, does not lie within the soul. To repair the broken image requires divine action. It is God’s incarnation and procession that enable the soul to be “reformed” and “renovated.”<sup>702</sup> The Triune God, who created the soul according to his image, engages in human life to restore the image, which has been distorted and deformed by sin.

68. Early Daoism recognizes that our present world is not an ideal one. Thus, it calls for returning from disordered existence to an orderly existence. The ideal form of the order is the Order of Dao, symbolized by the image of a baby. The practice of returning is symbolized in the action of imitating the breath of a baby who is nurtured

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<sup>699</sup> DDJ 10

<sup>700</sup> U. Engelhardt, “Qi for life: Longevity in the Tang.” In L. Kohn (Ed.), *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. pp.263-296.

<sup>701</sup> DT 14.21

<sup>702</sup> DT 14.22

in mother's womb. The DDJ sees that a baby is the height of potency, a perfect image of the manifestation of the Dao.<sup>703</sup> Returning to Dao is returning to the potency of a baby. A baby's breathing is called embryonic breathing. It is a journey of inwardness likened to a baby feeding in the mother's womb. It is also a heightening of consciousness to unify the three energy fields in a creative process. Chang Chung-yuan noted that "[Dao] is achieved through profound understanding, penetrating insight, and the attainment of non-attainment. The attainment of non-attainment may be understood in more familiar terms as *wu-wei*, or [effortless action]."<sup>704</sup> The path of return thus is to become "useless," to take life "as it is," to be the master of effortless action (*wu wei*) or the disciple of the Way of Self-so.

69. Augustine's solution of the divine-human separation lies essentially in divine action. Yet, Augustine continues, the key still lies in the human mind, which must turn to God to receive healing and be restored in God's by participation in the life of the incarnate Word. In this sense, human beings should practice a certain kind of effortless action by allowing the light of grace to shed light in their minds. Through the process of healing and restoration, begun at the divine initiative, the broken image can be "made new and fresh and happy" again.<sup>705</sup> By the consolation of the words of God, the mind starts taking the divine truth into itself, holding it, and becoming transformed in the process. When the Spirit touches the mind, the mind knows its own sinfulness and the divine love, forgiveness, and missions for its sake. As it receives this insight through the intimate relationship with the Spirit, the inmost self accepts the actuality of renewal, reformation and participation.<sup>706</sup> In this sense, grace is a profound understanding of the effortless action that rests in God.

70. The Daoist understanding of the notion of effortless action is rich. It expresses the heart of praxis in the Daoist vision. This is a practical kind knowledge that is displayed in actions rather than in a rational argument. It is a decision for a life style always associated with the gifts of harmony and tranquility from the nurturing power of the Dao. It is a state of "perfect knowledge of the reality of the situation, perfect efficaciousness and the realization of the perfect economy of energy."<sup>707</sup> If a person practices effortless action, he will take action instantly and spontaneously as the circumstance bring together the harmonious operations of consciousness and physiological training. Effortless action is the result of the inward training of the body, the emotions and the mind. One adopts an attitude of careful awareness, focused vision, slow motion movement.<sup>708</sup> This is the performative action of the "embodied mind," in

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<sup>703</sup> DDJ 55

<sup>704</sup> Ibid., p.xxv.

<sup>705</sup> DT 14.18

<sup>706</sup> DT14. 21 cf. 4.2

<sup>707</sup> Jean-Francois Billeter, "Pensee occidentale et pensee chinoise" p.50. Quoted in Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.7.

<sup>708</sup> Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi*. p.51.

which the embodied mind conforms to something bigger than the individual, the order of the Dao. An individual realizes that his or her proper place in the cosmos is in accordance with the Dao.

71. Human beings are broken but blessed images of God. We are living in gifted existence at the same time that we can prepare ourselves to receive the gift of the divine. Baptism, for Christians, is a moment of effortless action. In baptism, we do nothing but receive the salvific gift from above. We begin to be what we are becoming through participation in the Triune God. Effortless action in God requires worship, and worship requires devotional love. Worshiping God involves a life-long quest to know God, who is and remains a constant puzzle to our human minds. This puzzlement, however, is by no means agnosticism, according to Augustine. Rather, it is an exercise of the soul, a discipline of contemplation that receives the illumination of divine wisdom. This is the goal of Christian life: to seek wisdom in order to gain freedom from the power of the prideful self, which clings to temporal knowledge.<sup>709</sup>

72. Daoist effortless action implies a resistance to the pervasive power of mimetic violence. As an ideal for social life and a kindly exhortation to the ruling clans to restrict their disordered desires, effortless action is taken as medicine to settle down the mimetic conflicts among the social parties. The sage is an ideal figure who has attained the most profound wisdom, and achieves the highest virtue and accomplishments by receiving the power of powerless from the Dao. No one in this world is really a sage, but the sage sets a model for all people because he is the image of the Way of Self-so. He is an ideal portrait that invites people to follow the Way.<sup>710</sup> Unlike Confucianism, the DDJ does not project any ancient rulers as sages. The sage only functions as a theological concept to convey Laozi's vision of fulfillment for humanity. Thus, the subject of effortless action is not identified with any actual human being, but human beings are urged to participate in this ideal model.

73. Augustine pictures the human spiritual journey as an upward climb in grace. Contemplative prayer is an activity of the higher level of the human soul. Its concern is with eternal, not temporal things.<sup>711</sup> The great obstacle in this spiritual training is the power of *libido dominandi*, which inheres in human nature as a prideful self, dragging our attention down to the materialistic and temporal realm. Spiritual disciplines seek to activate our awareness by the act of turning and focusing, not just on the mind itself, but on the imitation of (as well as participation in) God's own form. The kenosis hymn in the Epistle to the Philippians had significantly shaped Augustine's Christological exposition of the divine nature, as well as his spiritual experience and pastoral works.<sup>712</sup> The Christian hope, as he understands it, is that through communion

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<sup>709</sup> DT 15.5

<sup>710</sup> Ibid., p.119

<sup>711</sup> DT 12.4

<sup>712</sup> Albert Verwilghen, *Jesus Christ: Source of Christian Humility*. p.301.

between the “inner word” of the mind and the divine Word “just exactly as it is,” we may become truly wise, as Christ himself.<sup>713</sup> This wisdom of Christ is the wisdom of humility, the only remedy against human pride.

74. Augustine developed a sevenfold scheme of spiritual growth, beginning with fear and progressing to the final stage of wisdom. For each stage, he shows how the wisdom of humility may be allowed to operate at various levels of consciousness.<sup>714</sup> Augustine’s vision of purification (*catharsis*) seeks to lift Christian life above temporal experience, bringing the soul closer to God. At the highest point of purification, the believer may rest “tranquilly within the self, wholly elevated above all things.”<sup>715</sup> He also enumerates seven gifts for spiritual growth. They are identified with the works of the Holy Spirit. Augustine names the Spirit as the agent of human spiritual transformation and participation in the life of God, and this is supremely so in the Spirit’s inspiring us with love of neighbor and love of God.

75. The Spirit is “common” to God the Father and God the Son in the active divine giving. Together with the One who gives (God the Father) and the One who returns (God the Son), the Holy Spirit is properly called God because the Spirit imparts the reality of this self-giving divine *sapientia* to creation. In the communion of the Godhead, the Spirit’s act of giving implies a profound humility (self-emptying) that is neither God the Father’s self-emptiness in begetting the Son, nor the Son’s obedience in “returning” to the Father and “sending” the Spirit into the world, but is the act of giving itself. The Spirit is thus as truly God as are the Father and Son, and in no way inferior to them.<sup>716</sup> This trinitarian “activity” is not merely “sapiential love” *per se* but the sapiential self-emptying love mutually shared among the Persons of the Trinity. Through the incarnate Word, the transcendent humility of God has broken upon the world with liberating power, overcoming the mechanisms of human pride and drawing human beings to become partakers in this self-emptying love. This is the essence of Christian spirituality, for Augustine: a lifelong process whereby fear of death is transformed to fear of God through participation in the wisdom of humility through the mediator Jesus Christ in the merciful love of the Holy Spirit.

76. Trinitarian “activities” can be read as the greatest instance of effortless action. The purpose of effortless practice is to act noncoercively in order to achieve nothing undone (無為而無所不為).<sup>717</sup> The goal of effortless action is associated with qualities of softness and weakness and the best image to represent this ideal is the flow of water. In many ways, Christian tradition tries to picture the salvation story exactly as

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<sup>713</sup> DT 14.25-26

<sup>714</sup> The detail study sees Canisius van Lierde’s “The teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2-3.”

<sup>715</sup> Canisius van Lierde, “The Teaching of St. Augustine on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Text of Isaiah 11:2-3” p.21.

<sup>716</sup> Williams Rowan, p.328

<sup>717</sup> DDJ 43

effortless action of the Divine in human history. Water is the image of the power of effortless action. It represents the order of the Dao. And it also reminds us of the Gospel story, of the waters of creation, nativity, crucifixion and baptism.

77. God's effortless action acts on behalf of things but does not lay any claim to them, sees things through to fruition but does not take credit for them. Following this divine movement, human performance of effortless action could be divided into external and internal aspects. The observable, external side would be the lack of contention. To take effortless action doesn't mean to do nothing but advocates a more radical way of living that stills the conflictive effect of the mimetic mechanism in human nature. The internal side refers back to the order of transcendence. The DDJ states that the mysterious power of the Dao is to "give life yet claim no possession", "benefit yet exact no gratitude", "to be the steward yet exercise no authority." Sages keep this cosmic power and serve, but do not practice coercion. The practice of effortless action stresses non-possession or taking no credit for fruition. Disordered desires, such as domination or conspicuous consumption, are dissolved by cultivation of "having no body"無身, "unselfishness"無私, being "objectless in one's desires"無欲.<sup>718</sup> When human misfortune comes from the desires to own, to get, to possess, and to go to battle, real inner peace is realized by the effortless action that knows when enough is enough.<sup>719</sup> Feeling satisfaction is a psychological condition, but to elicit this satisfaction in the right conditions depends on value judgment and spiritual cultivation. By this kind of effortless action the negative power of mimetic desires is overcome.

78. Jesus Christ, therefore, serves as example and sacrament of effortless action, so that Christian believers seeking this wisdom of humility may be formed in his likeness. Because of Christ's humility, every Christian is called to practice humility in his life and in his community. Participation in the missions of the Son and the Spirit is at the heart of Augustine's spirituality.<sup>720</sup> In his account of God's self-communication in Christ, and Christ's revelation of the Father, Augustine also confirms that the Holy Spirit, being common to both the Father and Son, is properly called "*societas* to them both".<sup>721</sup> This God of "*societas*," the bond of peace, will, and sacrificial love, has been sent by the Father as a gift in his eternal Word to us, the learned ignorant. Our knowledge of God is wholly the gift of the Spirit, who mitigates the ignorance of the saints by giving them the desire for God. While the mind as *Imago Dei* possesses the operations for remembering, understanding and loving, it is the Spirit who directs these operations toward God. Sent by the Father in the Holy Son, the Spirit creates a "catholic" community in which people encounter the humility and wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. The goal of Christian spirituality, writes Mary Clark, becomes the

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<sup>718</sup> DDJ 13; 7; 1, 3, 34, 37, 57

<sup>719</sup> DDJ 46

<sup>720</sup> DT 13.22.

<sup>721</sup> DT 15.37



transformation into a greater likeness of the Triune God by loving God and serving neighbor.<sup>722</sup>

## A Conclusion

79. Can we conceive Christian identity through our exploration of Daoist experience, understanding and practices? Can we reformulate Christian confession in a Chinese context after learning to see through the eyes of Daoist perspective and think in terms of its language? Many years ago, a great Norwegian missionary, Karl Ludvig Reichelt, wrote a dedication for his beloved mission center in Hong Kong. He used the model of Buddhist language that refers to taking the Three Refuges in the Three Jewels. Reichelt confessed, “with all my heart I take refuge in God Most High, who created all things, the merciful Father, Source of all goodness. With all my heart I take refuge in Christ, the redeemer from sin, who restores my true nature, the perfect and mysterious Dao. With all my heart I take refuge in the one who embraces the universe, who at all times and in all places has ways and means to respond to our needs, the pure and tranquil, the vital and active Holy Spirit. Amen.”<sup>723</sup> The format is typically Buddhist, but the content is very Christian. Today, Chinese Christians recite this dedication in every morning prayer. Is it a work of syncretism or a higher integration of the human spiritual quest across traditional boundaries? Another example comes from the discovery of a Christian Cross with the Daoist White Cloud and the Buddhist Lotus in an ancient Syrian Christian Monument in China, 781 BCE.<sup>724</sup> Is it a masterpiece of Christian theological construction in ancient times or a piece of worthless stone craft with a syncretistic flavor? Similarly, working in an interfaith dialogue study center, I am currently running a Daoist Tai Chi workshop for many Christians coming from various denominations and churches. Are we betraying our faithfulness to Christian tradition or are we making space to recognize the varied dimensions of practice and the varied realizations or ends that can be achieved in the spiritual quest?

80. This study has tried to begin to build a framework within which our answers to these questions can be more thoughtful and securely grounded. This can only be done slowly and patiently. In this case, I have deepened the conversation between one aspect of Chinese religious tradition (early Daoism) and one strand of Christianity (Augustinian Trinitarian spirituality). The differences between Early Daoism and

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<sup>722</sup> Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J. “Spirituality” in *Augustine Through the Ages* p.815. cf. Conf. 13.32

<sup>723</sup> See. *Hymn of Praise* Edited by Hymn of Praise Revision Committee. Hong Kong: Taosheng Publishing House. 2005.



Quoted from [http://www.uoregon.edu/~sshoemak/407/rel\\_407.htm](http://www.uoregon.edu/~sshoemak/407/rel_407.htm)

Christianity are obvious. The fundamental difference relates to the consciousness of time. For Laozi and his disciples, the present time is the venue to experience eternity immediately. Through spiritual practices, e.g. Keeping the Three Ones, cosmological thinking centered on the Dao is supplemented with an agential model that implies that the Dao interacts with, but does not intervene in, human life and the natural world. To experience the Dao always comes back to a meditation on the present. The Daoist understands that the riddle of the present is the deepest of all the riddles of time. Whenever we say "now," we are trying to stop the flux of time consciousness. Spiritual exercises aim to experience, understand and enjoy the present time. In heightened consciousness, for a Daoist, every moment of time reaches into the eternal effortlessness that can only be named as an experience of chaotic unity. This awareness breaks very powerfully into our consciousness and gives us a sense of tranquillity and purity. Augustine's spirituality stresses a consciousness of the future that produces feelings of contrast. In a turbulent world, the expectation of the future gives one a feeling of hope and joy. The blessing of having a future is to be one who can actualize various kinds of possibility--- creating something new, doing a new work, living a new life, regenerating a new mode of one's own being. This freedom and hope are sources of profound meaning and purpose in life. But the counterpart of this consciousness is our anxiety about what will happen in the future. The ambiguity of human existence is that every year, our life becomes shorter and fear is increased that we approach the unavoidable end of life. Finally impenetrable darkness threatens that the efforts of one's whole life will be judged as worthless.

For Augustine, the solution to this anxiety is his Christological exposition of Trinitarian faith. The two natures of Jesus Christ serve as a foundation to prevent the collapse of human hope and joy in face of the unavoidable end of life. In addition, this Christological turn draws our attention from the future to the present through the sacraments and examples of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial love becomes the fountain head of our present life, our practical guide for life in time, and illuminates our mind with trust in the future.

81. While recognizing these differences, I have specifically outlined how the Daoist practice of effortless action could contribute to an understanding of the Christian life. Effortless action always manifests the dynamism of the Dao in human history. To practice effortless action means to participate in the circular movement of the Dao and to cultivate a harmony in one's inner self, in social relationships and in the order of the world. Keeping the Three Ones, as a spiritual practice in the inner self, seeks illumined experience. It seeks to verify the nature of ultimate reality and to realize true human nature. A person who embodies effortless action is a model of the Way of Self-so. The triadic reality of the Dao is fountain of life and a ground of freedom. A Daoist is one who being called to match the sublimity of Heaven (DDJ 68).

This imitation of the way of Self-so is regarded as a participation in the movement by which the begetting Dao returns to itself.

82. A Christian who practices effortless action is one who makes a life decision to participate in the “internal strength” of the Triune God and to cultivate the attributes of God by character transformation. The Daoist metaphors such as “infant” “ravine” and “uncarved wood” are symbols that portray the qualities of a life that reflects the nature of the Dao of the Self-so.<sup>725</sup> A Christian understanding of effortless action sees it coming through the grace of God that opens the self up to the “lower” qualities of life, fostering a humility that shows compassion to the world. Effortless action stems from illumined knowledge that once the inner self is emptied and united with Jesus Christ, an internal force of tranquility and purity---the indwelling of the Holy Spirit---wells up. Daoist practitioners suggest that shutting off the openings of the five senses and eliminating insidious outside influences will serve to maintain the vitality of the Dao inside.<sup>726</sup> Christians can benefit from this meditative wisdom, which has strong resonance with Christian mystical traditions, in learning to cultivate energies inside the body and strengthen the relationship with the Holy Spirit. Alongside this convergence on inner wisdom, Christians will also maintain their emphasis on growth toward God precisely through the life of the senses and engagement with the outside world, above all in love of neighbor. The life of grace includes a dimension of effortless action, and invites people to overcome the turbulent world in light of the power of peace, tranquility and purity, to be in the world and yet not of the world. The Christian, like the Daoist, is one who is being called to match the sublimity of Heaven (Matt 5:48). This salvific path likewise has an inner practice that seeks to renew disordered nature, not only in the image of an original or natural self but in the image of an eschatological self in community, rooted in the communion of the Triune Love.

83. I clearly understand that there are many unresolved issues that are unanswered at this stage. For example, I could spend more pages discussing the possibility of multiple religious belonging and Christian identity, a question that this discussion has opened up in the specifically Christian—Daoist context. I could go further to address practical questions of inter-religious friendship through dialogue. I could pursue further research to develop more fully comparative understanding of the points of difference and similarity between early Daoism and ancient Christianity that have been outlined here. All of these tasks belong to my future study plans, and some are the stuff of my daily work in my current position. This project has laid the groundwork for these further developments. Using the heuristic scheme of the hermeneutics of consciousness (set out in the first chapter), I have explored how the fourfold operation of human consciousness (experience, understanding, judgment and practice) has been embodied

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<sup>725</sup> E.g. DDJ 28; 32; 66

<sup>726</sup> DDJ 56

in these two particular religious contexts. As a comparative Christian theologian, I have been particularly interested in studying Early Daoism and Christianity together to investigate the ways that the Daoist religious experiences might illuminate and expand a Christian vision of effortless life in the grace of the Divine Love, a vision of particular importance to Chinese Christians but of significance for others as well. Seeing through the Daoist insight of effortless action, I discover a newly nuanced understanding of the Christian teaching of Grace in Jesus Christ, where we see creation and salvation together as a great drama of effortless action that the Triune God acts out in history in terms of divine humility. And every disciple who is invited to participate in this divine drama is called to live, finally, an effortless life in Jesus Christ.

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