

DAOISM AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE




# Heidegger and Dao

Things, Nothingness, Freedom

Eric S. Nelson

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B L O O M S B U R Y

# Heidegger and Dao

## Daoism and the Human Experience

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# Heidegger and Dao

*Things, Nothingness, Freedom*

Eric S. Nelson

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*To Shengqing*



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Readers should keep in mind that this book is a sequel to Nelson 2017 that can, of course, be read independently as a related “intercultural genealogy.” Note that there is some slight repetition in the text to remind readers in later chapters of earlier significant points. Some of the short discussions of Daoism, Buddhism, other German thinkers and writers, social-political philosophy, and Heidegger's broader life and thought might strike some as excursions, but they serve to contextualize, illustrate, and support the overall argument and interpretation offered in this book. As I interpret Heidegger in an intercultural, anarchic-egalitarian, and participatory democratic context, this requires confronting Heidegger's worst moments and tendencies while intensifying the thinking of freedom as releasement.

Also note, lengthier quotations from Chinese and German language sources have been placed in the endnotes. With both early ziranist or generative Daoism and Heidegger, it is difficult to think with and through their sources without encountering and engaging their words and linguistic strategies in their own sense and context.

Finally, note that parts of Chapters 1, 4, and 8 appear in substantially different forms in Nelson 2022c: 141–62; Nelson 2022: 787–806; and Nelson 2023b.

# Introduction

## 1. Heidegger and the Way

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) is a philosopher of being under and on the way. “Way” is arguably a more elemental guiding word than being, beings, or meaning to express the twists and turns of his thinking.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger insisted throughout his writings that the way toward a more decisive questioning of being, the unthought matter to be thought, is more fundamental than any given determinate answer or expected result. Each anticipatory indicative response remains provisional as the way itself overturns expectations and compels reposing the question of being anew. Heidegger’s early methodology of formal indication and its continuation as wayfaring explains the variety, originality, and intensity of his reflections that cannot be reduced to a method or a doctrine.<sup>2</sup> This interpretive situation compels his readers to repose and enact for themselves the questionability and perplexity of that which is to be thought and enter a condition of being underway without a predetermined destination and purpose.

Thinking anticipates through expectations that can be upturned and reoriented by what is encountered. There is no uninterrupted “royal road” of conceptualization from thought and the subject to the truth of being. Heidegger himself confessed that he was confronted with—playing on the senses of “*Holzwege*,” wooden or forest paths—unexpected twists, turns, and dead ends. The dead end is the place where one is forced to double back, repeat one’s steps, and take new ones. He also spoke of his own errors and stupidities, as his pathways traversed freedom and fixation, good and evil, and truth and errancy. Numerous publications have reconstructed these pathways through narratives of unconcealment and concealment, social-political errancy and offense, and private reticence and hiddenness. The thinker is not only persistently concealed from others but remains concealed and unknown to himself. The philosopher of the unthought in the history of metaphysics does not necessarily sufficiently confront his own unthought. Nevertheless, thinking that would be appropriate to what is to be thought in its event cannot sidestep arduous walks, narrow passages, and steep ascending and descending paths. In Heidegger’s twisting byways and sideways, in the play of shadow and light conveyed in his favorite passage from the *Daodejing* 道德經, a path emerges in which thing and world would be released through their emptiness into the free mystery of their own ways of manifesting and being. This is why philosophy, inveterately wrapped up in its own self-referential conceptuality without adequately recognizing

that which addresses and motivates it, should ruthlessly criticize without abandoning Heidegger's thinking. More than this, it should be approached as an imperfect yet insightful exemplary model that continues to speak to the present condition.

Why then write or read about Heidegger and the *dao*? What is this "*dao*"? An initial clue is found in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 that states a way is made by walking it. The Chinese *dao* 道 character is composed of the radicals related to walking (辵) and head (首). Some explanations accentuate the head as directing the feet. But the accent here is on walking and moving, as the head follows the passage of the feet stepping along the path and encountering the myriad things in their varying circumstances. Relational freedom and unanxious ease (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙游) occur in a wandering that recognizes and forgets things, values them in their uselessness and lets them go in their departure, and transitions with the transformations of self and world. This way as walked cannot be disconnected from that which is encountered on the way: changing things, localities, seasons, and birth and death. According to the *Zhuangzi*, these occur in an elemental generative nothingness (*wu* 無) from which attunement occurs by emptying and forgetting the heart-mind (*xin* 心). Emptiness can signify a gloomy absence of meaning in ordinary language. But, as linked with humility, simplicity, and sincerity in early Chinese thought, it is constitutive of a free and responsive way of life.

It is not accidental that Heidegger, who already began to think about the Daoist way in 1919 and 1930, and early Daoists accentuated questions of the thing as that which is to be encountered and nothingness as a way of living freely that undoes the fixities of the self and identity. This inquiry will recount and radicalize their tactics of questioning identity and undoing fixation. It is an attempt to critically reactivate and reimagine Heidegger's way in view of the early Daoist *dao* and, to a lesser but still significant extent, the Buddhist dharma by (1) historically tracing and situating Daoist and Buddhist influences operative in Heidegger's German contemporaries and his own thinking, (2) reinterpreting his thought from these sources (including those unfamiliar to him), and (3) articulating the senses of the thing, generative nothingness, and the open empty clearing for the sake of a renewed *ethos* of openness to things and world, as a way of freely and responsively wandering and abiding amidst them and the places they shape. This *ethos*, more elemental in its demand than recent object-oriented philosophy and thing-theory, would recognize how things have their own environing places and changing pathways, even if they are thought to have no well-being or sentience of their own.

This threefold task demands a specific intercultural practice of hermeneutics (the art of interpretation) in response to the tensions between historical circumstances and philosophical questions. Interculturality challenges the orthodox identity-based presuppositions that continue to dominate philosophy and its history. The heterodox interpretive strategy deployed here is a mixture of historiographic and philosophical inquiry, and Asian and European discourses, as we consider a variety of historically positioned exemplary cases and traverse shifting perspectives with and beyond Heidegger. First, archival and historical inquiry frees us to study the purportedly "small," semi-forgotten, and problematic questionable figures of an epoch that can lead to a more appropriate hermeneutical contextualization and historical sensibility in

contrast to pure forms of theorizing and moralizing. The hermeneutics of words and concepts entails examining multiple generations rather than only a single renowned author. Engaging forgotten and semi-forgotten texts and authors can help facilitate generational contextualization as well as their further rediscovery. Secondly, Daoist and Buddhist texts should not only deliver raw data for European conceptual reasoning. They offer a variety of argumentative and interpretive strategies with their own situated specificity and philosophical stakes. Working through unthought hiddenness and the anxieties of influence, this analysis reveals how Heidegger is unique among European philosophers in learning from ways enacted in these sources.

What follows can be read as a reflection on Heidegger's statement: "Releasement toward things and openness for the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of residing in the world in a wholly other way" (GA 16: 528). This constellation of releasement, openness, mystery, things, and other ways of relational dwelling appears throughout his discussions of Daoist sources and was developed in conversation with them. Heidegger's pathways to the releasement and freedom of things (*Gelassenheit der Dinge*)—through the uncanniness of nothingness and the open emptiness of the clearing—are informed by his explicit engagements and unthought resonances with East Asian philosophies, particularly the *Daodejing*, attributed to the mysterious figure of Laozi 老子 and the *Zhuangzi*. The early forms of these two anthologies, composed from disparate sources, have been dated from the chaotic Warring States period (475–221 BCE). The redacted transmitted editions, used by the German translators read by Heidegger and his contemporaries, stem from the post-Han Wei-Jin period (220–420 CE). It is still insufficiently appreciated how the images and words employed in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German editions reverberate throughout Heidegger's writings, giving them an aura of both familiarity and strangeness in comparison with contemporary translations and readings.

How did this remarkable conjuncture and its concealment come to pass? Answering this question, the first task of this study, requires a situating and singularizing historical description. Heidegger's interest in Daoism was part of a generational movement—shared by Martin Buber and others—and unique in how it was adopted into his thinking. Heidegger was aware of Daoism since at least 1919. He repeatedly directly cited and indirectly evoked multiple translations of its two classics from 1930 (GA 80.1: 370; Petzet 1993: 18) to the final years of his life (GA 91: 667–8). It is noteworthy, given the remarkable shift in his thinking in 1942–1944, how he explicitly referenced and tacitly echoed—occasionally from 1919 to 1942 and with regularity beginning in 1943—their thought-images and interpretive strategies. His pivotal crisis and transformation of the mid-1940s, coinciding with the defeat of National Socialism, might be described as a quasi- or semi-Daoist turn. It incorporates and systematically reconfigures several distinctive Daoist elements based on German translations, his translation activities and conversations with a visiting Chinese scholar, and his own philosophical categories.

The significance of this adaptation of early Daoist sources into European philosophy remains contentious. First, a formerly prevalent view sees this intersection as a fortuitous personal idiosyncrasy that does not play a serious systematic role in his thinking. Second, another—increasingly widespread—analysis holds that these

are crucial concealed sources from which his modes of speaking and thinking draw insight, orientation, and—in the crises of the closing years of the Second World War and early postwar period—healing and renewal. Earlier research on Heidegger and the “East” prepared the way for this change in perceptions but are often Orientalizing, mythologizing, and inadequately hermeneutically situated.<sup>3</sup> They frequently fail to appropriately recognize how these transmissions can dialogically speak back and help us question and reimagine key themes and categories not only in Heidegger but in European philosophy.

## 2. Shifting Perspectives: Heidegger’s Daoism and Daoism’s Heidegger

The present interpretation of Heidegger and the *dao* has three interwoven objectives. Its first aim is to convey a more multifaceted historical and intercultural sense of Heidegger’s way, the Daoist *dao*, and the Buddhist dharma. It contests both Orientalist fantasies about Heidegger and “Eastern wisdom” and the opinion that Heidegger had myriad yet ultimately incidental Daoist affinities by tracing his Daoist encounters and intersections and how they helped guide key aspects of his philosophical journey in an elemental and systematic way. Its first mission is to map out Heidegger’s explicit and implicit engagements with East Asian discourses concerning the thing, nothingness, and world with the intent of articulating the conditions of an elemental encounter with them. Second, this strategy makes it necessary to examine Daoist and Buddhist constellations beyond Heidegger’s historically circumscribed acquaintance with them and allow them the freedom to speak back to European transmissions and shift European perspectives. A third interrelated undertaking, existentially the most vital as it is compelled by our contemporary situation, is to indicate prospects of responsively attuned and ecomimetic relations with things and within the world and, on that basis, the critical unfettering potential of ways of being environmentally and publicly attuned in response to existing ecological and social crisis-tendencies. These crises consist of the devastation of earth and thing, the obscuring of sky and world, environmental degradation and destruction, and the global climate predicament. Early Daoist philosophy and moments in Heidegger’s thinking point toward different modes of attunement and dwelling that can “leap ahead” (*vorspringen*) in “being-with” (to expand Heidegger’s early categories beyond human existence) and nurture life in responsive attunement by sympoietically (to adopt Donna Haraway’s expression) co-appropriating and collaborating with others and things, self-patterning environing localities and ecosystems.

To accomplish this threefold task, this book’s opening part focuses on elucidating the thing in its specificity and priority and Part Two on nothingness and how they mutually form the locus of sense and world. More specifically, Part One presents a historically informed intercultural description of Heidegger’s philosophical journey in the context of an expansive analysis (beyond the German editions mentioned by Heidegger) of Daoist practices of undoing fixations. Daoist discourses accentuate generativity and fluidity, natality and mortality, responsive attunement (*wuwei* 無為) to spontaneous

self-naturing (*ziran* 自然), thingly transience and transformation (*hua* 化), and the generative nothingness that nourishes the myriad things (*wanwu* 萬物). These expressions and thought-images, which defy the bifurcation of concept and picture, emerged in ancient Chinese sources mostly unfamiliar to Heidegger and other early European readers. These documents encompass recently excavated pre-Qin era silk and bamboo manuscripts, such as the Guodian and Mawangdui *Laozi* manuscripts that have dramatically altered contemporary studies of early Chinese thought. Heidegger also did not systematically investigate the transmitted Wei-Jin era mysterious learning editions and commentaries of Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249 CE) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312 CE). The Sinologist and translator Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) did study them, construing Daoism as a philosophy of the “sense of life,” and these two editions served as the basis of every German translation available in Heidegger’s milieu.

Part Two shifts and expands the horizons of this inquiry from the Daoist thing to nothingness, emptiness, and the clearing, drawing on Daoist, Buddhist, and modern East Asian discourses. Heidegger’s earlier dismissiveness of Buddhism was adjusted in the postwar period, especially regarding Zen Buddhism. This changed appreciation is witnessed in his postwar conversations with visiting Japanese intellectuals and his interview with the Thai Buddhist monk Bhikku Maha Mani. His modified understanding is most evident in the 1953–1954 essay “From a Dialogue on Language.” It marks the culmination of Heidegger’s turn from the fear and trembling of existential nothingness to the clarity and freedom of emptiness, the open, and the clearing. Accordingly, in Part Two, we delve into the roles of Daoist nothingness, Buddhist emptiness, and East Asian discourses and interlocutors that helped mold postwar Heidegger’s understanding of emptiness and clearing.

The project unfolded here offers a unique and innovative contribution in four ways: (1) a systematic reexamination of the German language translations and interpretations that shaped Heidegger’s linguistic context and individual engagement with Daoism and the thing (in Part One) and Daoism, Buddhism, and nothingness (in Part Two); (2) an analysis of the linguistic and conceptual shifts in Heidegger’s thinking that correlate with his interactions with Daoist, Buddhist, and East Asian texts and interlocutors; (3) a critical interpretation—with and beyond Heidegger and his generation—of early Daoist and classic Buddhist sources as indicating models of the self-nature of the thing and comporting oneself toward thing and world through practices of emptiness; and (4) a Zhuangzian Daoist and “Flower Garland” (*Huayan* 華嚴) Buddhist inspired critique and reimagining of the thing, nothingness, releasement, and their contemporary import.

### 3. A Preliminary Overview of the Chapters

Part One’s five chapters examine varying answers to a question that recurs throughout Chinese and German discourses: What is a thing? First, the thing in the restricted sense signifies what is available, ready at hand, and useful. These “mere things” are of bare significance in the availability of daily use and consumption. These are the

conventional anthropocentric categories of usefulness parodied and undermined in the *Zhuangzi* and by the mature Heidegger. Second, the thing in its expansive sense denotes “all beings” and encompasses all that is and might potentially be atoms, stones, plants, animals, humans, spirits, gods, and heaven and earth. Chapter 1 unfolds Daoist philosophy for the sake of resituating Heidegger’s thought, tracing the expansive image and conception of things in texts associated with Laozi and Zhuangzi and their early Chinese context. The expression *wanwu* (myriad things) points toward all existents in their own concrete, plural, relational, and transformational generativity. Informed by this “ziranist” or “generative” clarification of the thing, Chapters 2 to 5 track Heidegger’s journey from a (predominantly yet not exclusively) pragmatically instrumental and objectively represented thing (as useful instrumental tool and representational object) to the fullness of the thing *as* thing that gathers place and world.

This proposed reading of Heidegger’s thing touches on a contested issue that can be preliminarily addressed here: the appropriateness and inappropriateness of the analysis of the thing and nature in *Being and Time*. I concur with Heidegger’s later self-critique that this seminal, brilliant, and incomplete work is overly transcendental and pragmatic, requiring a more radical step toward being and the thing that only fully emerged after the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger mentioned but barely articulated a “third” more primordial “power of nature” in *Being and Time* (GA 2: 70, 211) and “nature in an originary sense” in the 1929 “The Essence of Ground” (GA 9: 155). Heidegger noted that criticisms of the absence of nature in *Being and Time* were in part correct in later self-reflections and retorted that this work did not aim at a complete philosophical system (GA 82: 8, 293). Further, the thing cannot be simply identified with nature, and nature with power, as Heidegger increasingly problematized in his 1930s genealogies of *phúsis* and more fully recognized in the 1940s. The mature Heidegger insisted on a turn from a still too Dasein-centric approach in the late 1920s, in which things are primarily perceived in their availability and serviceability, toward the priority of the thing as “carrying and opening the there” (GA 82: 493–4). This transition—whether understood as a gradual adjustment or fundamental break—suggestively intersects with his readings of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*. The *Zhuangzi*, for instance, discloses through parables and perspectival shifts how the pragmatically and conceptually available thing (labeled and fixed as an isolated object) is not the dynamic thing encountered and followed in its transformations. The “useless” free thing and the sustaining nourishing earth cannot be pragmatically or theoretically dictated, and the very paradigm of the anthropocentric constitutive subject is inadequate to them.

This is not the only example. Heidegger returned to Daoist-inflected interpretive strategies and thought-images of letting beings and things be themselves, preserving the darkness that nourishes, entering the silence in which genuine hearing happens, emptying the heart-mind for the sake of the encounter and event, and the mystery beyond mystery. Heidegger’s mature thinking of the ontological “event” (*Ereignis*) is connected to his most mentioned line from the *Daodejing*. The event refers to what is hidden coming into view, or the matter to be thought entering thinking, while it inevitably retains dimensions of hiddenness and being unthought that escape the subject. Heidegger’s resonances with the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, based on a partial



degree of direct influence, allow for a reevaluation of Daoist *ziran* and Heidegger's "ziranist" leanings that culminate in the releasement of things.

The *Daodejing* states that all things, even the *dao*, follow their own *ziran*. What is *ziran*? This expression emerged in a specific historical constellation that is profoundly unlike yet still can speak to our situation. Two prevalent translations are spontaneity and nature. "Nature" is inadequate to express what is meant by "*ziran*" and can only be used in a highly qualified sense. Unlike the "nature" that is frequently opposed to the human world in modern thought, and thus has an ideological and mythological aura, *ziran* is enacted in all things human and nonhuman. "Ziranism" (in contrast to reductive naturalisms) refers to the centrality of the multiplicity, spontaneity, and transformation of self-generation and self-patterning. Daoist *ziran* signifies generatively being self (*zi* 自) so (*ran* 然), autopoietic self-emerging and self-patterning, or nature in the qualified sense of self-naturing. This sense of *ziran* is fundamental albeit incompletely thought in Heidegger's Daoist encounters. These engagements occurred in the context of his understanding of *Abendland* (Occident, the evening land, Greek *hesperos* and *dúsis*, which referred to Europe and not the "West" in the current sense) and *Morgenland* (Orient, the morning land, Greek *anatolḗ*, the land of the rising sun). Naturalism seeks to dictate the nature of the thing through a determining theory or picture of what it considers true nature. It inadequately recognizes human participation within nature. "Ziranism" expresses in contrast the need to attend to the self-unfolding or self-dynamic of the thing that is possible through practices of emptying and realizing the humility of the heart-mind (*xuxin* 虛心) and attuned non-coercive action (*wuwei*).

Daoist generativity does not entail naive oppositions between the organic and the artificial, the primitive and the civilized, or the passive and the active, as inaction is enacted in action, clarity in mystery, and simplicity in complexity. It likewise cannot be reduced to a first principle or to causality, at least in their standard explanations, owing to the elemental spontaneity and transformability in things themselves. Instead of an unbroken determinate sequence, or resignation before an indifferent necessity, there is an adaptive sense of generational change in natality and mortality that gives each singular life its due while letting it go in death. This *ziran*-directed guiding strategy entails the reconstruction of several core, and arguably the most transformative, elements in Heidegger's philosophy. Indeed, as this book demonstrates, Heidegger's anarchic and Daoist tendencies are closely interconnected in accentuating the generative self-patterning of things. *Ziran* can be understood in the *Zhuangzi* through images of dark watery chaos.<sup>5</sup> This free self-patterning chaos has anarchic (without *arché* or *dao*-archic) and—if reimaged under modern conditions—participatory democratic implications in stressing adaptive spontaneity and collaborative or sympoietic self-ordering by human and non-human individuals and communities; this strategy necessitates critiquing Heidegger's most problematic philosophical and social-political commitments while recovering and extending moments of truth.

Chapter 6, analogous to the contextualization of Chapter 1, resituates Heidegger's thinking by shifting perspectives to Daoist generative nothingness (*wu*) and Buddhist emptying emptiness (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*; Chinese *kong* 空). These have their own specificity and are not merely instances of a monolithic "Oriental nothingness" or nihilism. Daoist nothingness and Buddhist emptiness have a variety of senses within



Daoist and Buddhist teachings that differ from the monotheistic *creatio ex nihilo*, the “nonbeing” of classical Greek philosophy, and the mystical nothingness of Occidental metaphysics and onto-theology. The systematic clarification of varieties of nothingness and emptiness in Chapter 6 situates Chapter 7’s reenvisioning of Heidegger’s earlier existentially oriented philosophy of nothingness and its subsequent transitions to the emptiness and the clearing of his postwar thinking.

Chapter 8 concerns the intercultural position of Heidegger’s nothingness in its early reception in the 1930s and 1940s by East Asian philosophers and intellectuals. This chapter contains an exploration of the controversial and inconvenient existential Buddhist and transnational fascist intellectual Kitayama Junyū 北山淳友 (1902–1962) whose philosophy of nothingness provides a counterargument to my interpretation. Kitayama studied philosophy in Freiburg and Heidelberg during the 1920s and remained active in Germany until 1944, providing significant clues to Heidegger’s intercultural contexts. There are several reasons for this unusual retrieval. First, he was directly involved in Heidegger’s German milieu, as one of the first authors to extensively engage with the discourses of Heidegger and phenomenology, South and East Asian Buddhism, and Japanese philosophy for two decades in Weimar and National Socialist Germany. Secondly, Heidegger was familiar with him, and several passages in Heidegger’s later interpretations echo Kitayama’s earlier uses of Heideggerian categories. Thirdly, Kitayama’s problematic identification of the nothingness of Daoism, Buddhism, and the Kyōto School with the destruction of the liberal individual for the sake of collectivist nationalist, militaristic, and authoritarian politics is valuable to illustrate the perils of incomplete elucidations of nothingness and practices of emptiness.<sup>6</sup> Emptiness does not loosen the borders between the self and society for the sake of a determinate collective identity in classical Daoism and Buddhism. It radically unfixes forms of substantive identity in, for instance, the different strategies of equalizing things in nothingness (Zhuangzi) or reciprocal interpenetration in emptiness (Huayan Buddhism) that releases both the specific singular and the relational whole.

The concluding chapter draws out implications for a new philosophy of nothingness, thing, and world. It reassesses the historical and political tensions of modern discourses of nothingness by adopting the relational singular of Zhuangzi and Huayan (which are distinctive yet complementary) to contest essentialized individual and social realities. As collective identities are just as constructed and illusory as individual identities, if not more so, it is a mistake with perilous consequences to destructure and decenter the individual subject while fetishizing the collective subject as a monological identity removed from communicative gathering and the existential dynamics of personal and interpersonal life. The challenge is to encounter and express connection and relatedness, and dismantle binary oppositions, without disregarding environing locality and particularity or—to be clear—reducing them to either particular or universal identities that systemically exclude and subjugate what is non-identical. Since it would be negligent to avoid critical discussion of ideology and politics in the current climate, even as ideology and culture-industry impact the most critical consciousness and practices, the complex philosophical and social-political contexts traced in the closing chapters entail learning from Heidegger’s insights and

failures to resituate the ethical and political roles of nothingness and emptiness, reconsidering them with and beyond their previous incarnations.

#### 4. *Dao* and *Ethos*: Critical Intercultural Implications

Heidegger has left a troublesome and thought-provoking legacy. The agrarian utopianism that informed his interest in Daoism demands a differentiated ideology-critical interpretation. His hermeneutical situation requires thinking through ambiguity and complexity, as good and bad only appear in the finitude and imperfection of life. Heidegger is one of the few modern European philosophers to seriously engage with and adaptively learn from East Asian philosophy, breaking with philosophy's Eurocentrism in practice even if he could not do so within his conception of Occidental philosophy (*abendländische Philosophie*). Heidegger, despite himself and his problematic anti-democratic nationalist political commitments in the 1930s that ziranist Daoism and Heidegger's more thoughtful critics place in question, helps to confront the continuing Eurocentrism of philosophy, its systematic distortion of the history and practice of philosophy, and disclose other freer possibilities for thinking and dwelling.

Daoist generative nothingness, Buddhist emptiness of form, and Heidegger's open clearing of being convey exemplary orientational models of being relationally free and responsive in the world with things and environments. They disclose in their radical moments three distinctive ways of transformatively undoing experiential and linguistic hypostatization and of releasing self and things. As unfolded in this ziranist philosophical reconstruction, each expresses ways of contesting sedimented formations of reified life and thought. Daoist nurturing care (*ci* 慈) for things, Buddhist loving-kindness and compassion for sentient beings, and Heidegger's care (*Sorge*) suggest distinctive indicative ways of leaping-ahead for and critical exemplary models of caring for things and nourishing life.

There are two initial problems that confront this approach to Heidegger. First, his formally indicative categories of care, being-with, and leaping-ahead were restricted to human existence in *Being and Time*. Secondly, Heidegger described the analytic of Dasein as ethically neutral and suspends the language of ethics, morality, and value. This is a problem if interpreters are bound solely to *Being and Time*. The Berlin philosopher Katharina Kanthack has argued that this neutrality does not entail ethical indifference, which would signify a forgetting of care, but leads to an *ethos* of relational being-with and ethical knowledge of self and other (Kanthack 1958 and 1964). This formally emptied neutrality opens the concrete nexus of ethical questionability, deliberation, and decision. It allowed for questioning the ethical modalities of leaping-in (*einspringen*) to coercively dominate the other and leaping-ahead to care for and nurture the other's self-individuation. The later Heidegger provides instructive ways to reorient and expand his earlier discourse. He speaks not of ethics, with its fixed rules and virtues, but of *ethos* or "originary ethics" (GA 9: 356). He articulates an *ethos* more fundamental than ethics and a worldly mortal abiding in openness to mystery that is more originary than *ethos* (GA 98: 345). Most significantly, this *ethos* encompasses

things and their spaces. At the same time, factual existence is another key piece of the puzzle, as intersubjective and interthingly compartments are complexly mediated by material and social forms of life in which they serve apologetic ideological as well as critical transformational roles.

The guiding aspiration of these chapters is to reinterpret and reimagine Heidegger's thinking of being and his originary ethics given their ziranist elements and our hermeneutical situation. Its primary thesis is that, entangled with Daoist and other intercultural sources, Heidegger's path proceeds from the paradigmatic Occidental philosophy of available givenness and mere presence—which conceals the open spacing of things and seeks to logically exclude and dialectically subordinate negativity and the nothing—to nothingness, emptiness, and the clearing in their coming to presence and withdrawal in absence or, to accentuate its mutable verbal sense, presencing-absencing. The nurturing darkness and mystery of nothingness and the concealing-unconcealing openness that characterize Heidegger's thinking of being are, when interpreted as bearing and *ethos*, elemental to responsively encountering and dwelling with things in the world-clearing. Zhuangzi's vision of free and easy wandering indicates ways of practicing philosophy as contesting and unraveling fixations. These practices allow rethinking Heidegger's pathways and reimagining for ourselves things, nothingness, and world in the specificity of our existential condition.

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