

What is the dao?

■ The Subject Matter

- ◆ *The Laoian Vision of the Dao universal in the Tao Te Ching or Dao De Jing.*
 - ◆ Other Synonyms:
 - The Laoian Theory of Reality
 - The Laoian Ontology of the Dao universal
 - ◆ The ontological concept “*dao universal*” is not used by Laozi but coined by the author of this lecture to represent its Laoian theory of reality (Laoian ontology).

Kongzi vs. Laozi

■ Kongzi (v. Khổng Tử)

- ◆ Founder of Confucianism
- ◆ Supreme Teacher of China
- ◆ Political thinker
- ◆ Aristocrat

■ Laozi (v. Lão Tử)

- ◆ Founder of Daoism
- ◆ God in C.R. Daoism
- ◆ Philosopher
- ◆ Universalist
- ◆ A “No Where Man” (20)



Kongzi vs. Laozi

■ Kongzi (v. Khổng Tử)

- ◆ The man of high culture
- ◆ A Yang-like personality
- ◆ The Dao of Man
 - ◆ Dao of King Wu
 - ◆ Dao of the Superior Man

■ Laozi (v. Lão Tử)

- ◆ The man of Nature
- ◆ A Yin-like personality
- ◆ The Dao of Nature
 - ◆ The dao universal
 - ◆ Other dao-types



What is the dao?

■ The Question

- ◆ *What are the different terms that can be used to indicate/represent the teachings of Laozi?*

■ The Answer

- ◆ Laoism
- ◆ The Laoian Dao
- ◆ The Dao of Laozi
- ◆ The Laoian teachings
- ◆ The Laoian philosophy

Introduction to the Laoian Philosophy in the Daodejing?

- *What does Laozi teach in the Tao Te Ching?*
- **The Secondary Theses (Interpretive Claims)**
 - ◆ Laozi teaches the following:
 - ◆ A cosmology of the dao universal
 - ◆ An ontology of the dao universal
 - ◆ A philosophy of life
 - ◆ A dialectics of *you wei* (有為) and *wu wei* (無為)
 - ◆ TTC: 36, 37, 63, 64, 65.
 - The Dao universal is the foundation of all other *dao*-types.

Introduction to the Laoian Philosophy in the Daodejing?

■ The Questions

- ◆ *What are the main aspects of the Laoian philosophy?*
- ◆ *What are the main fields of the Laoian philosophy?*

■ The Answers (Secondary Theses)

- ◆ The Laoian philosophy contains the following fields:
- ◆ A Laoian cosmology of the dao universal
- ◆ A Laoian ontology of the dao universal
- ◆ A Laoian dialectics of *you wei* (有為) & *wu wei* (無為)
 - ◆ TTC: 36, 37, 63, 64, 65.
- ◆ A Laoian philosophy of life (based on all the above)
 - The Dao universal is the foundation of all other *dao*-types.

What is the dao?

■ The Romanization Systems

◆ *The Tao Te Ching*

◆ (the old Wade-Giles Romanization)

◆ *The Dao De Jing*

◆ (the current Pinyin Romanization)

■ The Standard Translation

◆ *The Classic of the Way and Its Virtue*

◆ *The Classic of the Way and the Virtue*

The Hermeneutical Problem of Interpretation

- “The text known in ancient China as the *Lao-tzu* after its alleged author, and latter as the *Tao-te-ching*, is one of the most frequently translated and yet one of the most difficult and problematic texts in all of Chinese literature.” (Schwartz 1985: 194)

The Philosophical Questions of the East Asian Axial Age (700-221 BCE)

What is the Dao?

Where is the Dao?



道

What is the literal meaning of the Ru/Nho character “*dao/đạ*” (道)?

■ **Literal Meaning (Needham):**

- ◆ “Etymologically speaking, the term “*tao*” is composed of two elements (radicals): head and to run, giving the picture of a movement heading in a certain direction.”

(Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, II (1956: 222), note 70).

■ **Literal Meaning (Creel):**

- ◆ “The character *tao* 道 is composed of 走 meaning ‘to go’ and 首, ‘chief,’ ‘leader’.” (Creel 1929: 44)

- **English translations:** Road or Path or Way. “Way” is the most preferred English translation.

The Hermeneutical Problem

■ The Plurality of Dao-Meanings

- ◆ “The word *dao* can have so many different meanings that it invariably imposes difficulties of interpretation in the passages in which it occurs. A case in point is the *Tao Te Ching*, in which the term occurs 76 times, each time with different connotations.” (Max Kaltenmark 1969: 28).

The Hermeneutical Problem

■ The Plurality of Dao-Meanings

- ◆ “When the word is translated Way, it means the Way of Nature, – her processes, her methods, and her laws; when translated Reason, it is the same as li, – the power that works in all created things, producing, preserving, and life-giving, – the intelligent principle of the world; when translated Doctrine, it refers to the True doctrine respecting the laws and mysteries of Nature.” (Frederic H. Balfour 1881 cited in Legge 1962: 14)

Meanings of the Term “Dao”

■ **Had there been a meaning-shift?**

◆ “The word *tao*, one of the most important terms in Chinese philosophy, has a primary meaning of ‘road’ or ‘way.’ Beginning with this primary meaning, it assumed already in ancient times a metaphorical significance, as the “Way of man,’ that is, human morality, conduct or truth. During this time, its meaning was always restricted to human affairs, whereas when we come to the *Lao Tzu*, we find the word *tao* being given a metaphysical meaning. That is to say, the assumption is made that for the universe to have come into being, there must exist an all-embracing first principle, which is called *Tao*.” (Fung 1952: 177)

THE DAO OF LAOZI

■ The Textual Citation

“My words are very easy to understand,
And they are very easy to practice.

Yet no one in the world has understood them,
And none has yet put them into practice.

[My-ccp] words have their ancestor (宗),
[And my-ccp] activities have their lord (君).
Since people have failed to understand them,
And so they have failed to understand me.”

[DDJ: 70]

Why?

One has first to understand the **Laoian dialectics** and his **dialectical thinking** before one can understanding his philosophy (Laoism or Laoian Dao).

LAOIAN DIALECTICS

- **Some Principles of the Dialectics**
 - ◆ **Everything has its opposite.**
 - ◆ The yin 陰 âm is the opposite of the yang 陽 dương.
 - ◆ The yang 陽 dương is the opposite of the yin 陰 âm.
 - ◆ **Opposites are hidden in each other.**
 - ◆ Good fortune is hidden in misfortune.
 - ◆ Misfortune is hidden in good fortune.
 - ◆ **Interactions between paired opposites produce contradictions whose resolutions lead to their changes and transformations.**
- **Student Applications**
 - ◆ **Identify the passages in the TTC that reflect these dialectical principles.**

Wisdom and Enlightenment

■ The Claims

- ◆ Laozi can teach us how to become practically wise if we know how to *interpret* and *apply* his words of wisdom.
- ◆ Laozi can teach us how to become philosophically self-enlightened if we know how to *interpret* his *Tao Te Ching* and understand his Laoian philosophy.

Wisdom and Enlightenment

■ The Questions

◆ The Question of Practical Wisdom

- ◆ *What is wisdom?*
- ◆ *How to become wise?*
 - Aristotle \leftrightarrow Laozi

◆ The Question of Philosophic Self-Enlightenment

- ◆ *What is philosophic self-enlightenment (明)?*
- ◆ *How to become philosophically self-enlightened?*
 - To know oneself is enlightenment (明).
 - To know the small is called enlightenment.
 - To know the constancy of all things is called enlightenment (明).
 - TTC: 16.

The Mantra of Academic Wisdom

- **“Because increasingly the world does not care what you know. Everything is on Google. The world only cares, and will only pay for, what you can do with what you know.” Thomas L. Friedman**
 - ◆ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/opinion/friedman-the-professors-big-stage.html?_r=1&
 - ◆ “Everything is on Google” also means everything covered in lectures and course reading assignments.

The Dao of Wisdom

■ The Textual Citations

- ◆ TTC: 26.
 - ◆ TTC: 28.
 - ◆ TTC: 33.
 - ◆ TTC: 40.
 - ◆ TCC: 43
 - ◆ TTC 59.
 - ◆ TTC 64.
- ◆ Those who know do not talk.
Those who talk do not know.
 - ◆ Beautiful words are not sincere.
Sincere words are not beautiful.

■ The Interpretations

- ◆ *Can you find the Laoian dialectics being inherent in the cited verses?*
- ◆ *What type of practical wisdom can you learn from the cited verses?*
- ◆ *Can you apply the principle of the Laoian dialectics to judge people and interact with them more successfully?*

Kongzi vs. Laozi

- Kongzi (v. Khổng Tử)
 - ◆ Write a few sentences to explain why KZ teaches his disciples about the Dao of Man (人之道).
- Laozi (v. Lão Tử)
 - ◆ Write a few sentences to explain why LZ teaches about the Dao of Nature (自然道).



What is the dao?

■ *The Terminology*

- ◆ *The chang dao 常道 thường đạo*
 - ◆ (DDJ: 1.1.5-6)
 - ◆ Ontology

- ◆ *The Dao universal*
 - ◆ Naturalism

- ◆ *The Ontological Dao*
 - ◆ Ontology

- ◆ *The Dao universal*
 - ◆ Ontology

What is the dao?

■ *The Terminology*

◆ *The Dao universal*

◆ *The Dao of Nature as Nature itself*

◆ **Naturalism**

- **Nature is natural, self-existing, and self-regulating.**
- **Beyond Nature there is nothing.**
- **Behind Nature there is nothing.**

What is the dao?

■ *The Terminology*

◆ *The Ontological Dao*

◆ *The Dao of Nature as Nature itself*

◆ **Ontology**

- **A philosophical study of reality**
- **The ontological dao is the dao universal.**
- **Beyond the dao there is nothing.**
- **Behind the onto dao there is nothing.**

The Hermeneutical Problem of Interpretation

■ The Question

- ◆ What does Laozi teach in the DDJ?

■ The Claims

- ◆ The *Dao* (Way)
 - ◆ (Ames 1994: 33)
 - ◆ (Henricks 1989: xviii)
 - ◆ (Nguyễn 1962: 365)

The Hermeneutical Problem

■ The Supremacy of “Dao”

- ◆ “The starting point for understanding the philosophy of Lao-tzu is understanding what he means by the Tao, or the Way.” (Henricks 1989: xviii)
- ◆ “Which *dao*?” (Hansen 1992)

The Hermeneutical Problem

■ The Supremacy of “Dao”

- ◆ “At the center of Lao Tzu’s vision is the notion of *tao*, and any discussion of the *Tao Te Ching* must begin from an explication of this concept.” (Ames 1994: 33).
- ◆ “Which *dao*?” (Hansen 1992)

The Hermeneutical Problem of Interpretation

■ The Question

- ◆ What does Laozi teach in the DDJ?

■ The Claims

- ◆ Naturalness (*zizan*)
 - ◆ (Liu 1999: 216)
 - ◆ (Chen 1984: 132 c.d. in Liu 1999: 213)
- ◆ Non-action (*wu-wei*)
 - ◆ (Lao 1993: 237 c.d. in Liu 1999: 214)

The Hermeneutical Problem of Interpretation

■ The Question

- ◆ *Which thesis is hermeneutically most acceptable?*

■ The Critical Personal Response

- ◆ The “Dao” thesis
 - ◆ “Which *dao*?”
 - *The dao universal*

The Laoian Vision of the ordinary Dao

■ Part Two

◆ THE EXPOSITION

The Cosmological Vision

■ Cosmological Classification

- ◆ *How does Laozi view the cosmos?*
- ◆ Dao (道)
- ◆ Heaven (天)
- ◆ Earth (地)
- ◆ Ten Thousand Things (物)
 - ◆ TTC: 1

■ Cosmological Question

- ◆ What is their ultimate origin?
- ◆ Where did they all come from?
- ◆ How did they come into being?

■ Cosmological Classification

- ◆ *How does Laozi view the cosmos?*
- ◆ Dao (道)
- ◆ Heaven (天)
- ◆ Earth (地)
- ◆ King (王)
 - ◆ TTC:25
- ◆ COSMOLOGY
- ◆ COSMOGONY

The Dao of Heaven



The *dao* of Heaven (天之道) resembles
the drawing of a bow.

That which is high is lowered down.

That which is low is raised up.

That which is excessive is diminished.

That which is deficient is augmented.

The *dao* of Heaven (天之道) reduce that which is excessive,
And increase that which is deficient.

The Dao of Men



The *dao* of men (人之道) is certainly not like this.

It reduces that which is deficient,

And increases that which is excessive.

Who is really capable of using the excessive
to serve the world?

It is only those who possess the *dao* (唯有道).

Therefore the sages do their works without self-attachment.

After their works are accomplished, they withdraw.

[Because] they have no desire to display their worthiness.

[DDJ: 77]

Dao of Heaven vs. Dao of Men

■ Interpretation by Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall

- ◆ “The way of the world in which we live is one of sustained equilibrium. Excess and insufficiency in our various ecological environments certainly occur, but in the course of time they are righted through a process of redistribution, and balance is restored. While we human beings would do well to imitate this pattern, we instead create a vicious circle in which the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. Chapter 75 states what is a familiar refrain in the *Daodejing*: ‘The people’s hunger is because those above are eating too much in taxes.’ It is only the enlightened among us who are able to coordinate fully their participation in their natural, social, and cultural environments, and who in so doing, extend the way forward for all concerned.” [2003: 197]

WHAT IS THE DAO?

- **“The Dao of Heaven”**

- ◆ **Uncertainty of its Meaning**

- ◆ **A Natural Law**

- ◆ **A cosmological concept**

- ◆ **This cosmological concept refers to some type of natural law that governs the operational way of the cosmic processes.**

What is the Dao of Heaven?

■ An Alternative Interpretation

- ◆ By “the Dao of Heaven,” Laozi can be interpreted to mean a natural law by which the universe (“Heaven”) maintains its dynamic state of cosmic equilibrium by balancing out all its opposing forces in due time and due measure.
 - Cosmic balance \Leftrightarrow imbalance
 - Cosmic harmony \Leftrightarrow disharmony

The Cosmogonic Vision

- **The Laoian Cosmogony of the Dao universal**
 - ◆ **The Self-Evolution of the Dao universal**

The dao gives birth to one.

The one gives birth to two.

The two give birth to three.

The three give birth to the ten thousand things
(*wan wu* 萬物). (Chapter 42)

The Cosmic Cycles of Life

Dao > 1 > 2 > 3 > 10000 Wu

Dao < 1 < 2 < 3 < 10000 Wu

1 Wu <> 10000 Wu

Methodological Problematics

■ The opening verses in the Ru/Nho characters:

1	2	3	4	5	6
道	可	道	非	常	道
名	可	名	非	常	名

The Standard Translation 1

The Way that can be told **is not** the **eternal** Way

The name that can be named **is not** the **eternal** name

The Standard Translation 2

The Way that can be told is not the constant Way

The name that can be named is not the constant name

Notes: “非” is understood in the SR to mean “is not” (a simple negative).

Methodological Problematics

■ The opening verses in the Ru/Nho characters:

1	2	3	4	5	6
道	可	道	非	常	道
名	可	名	非	常	名

The Phan Translation: Negative Reading

The dao that can be daoed **is not** the ordinary dao

The name that can be named **is not** the ordinary name

The Phan Translation: Positive Reading

The dao that can be daoed is the **extraordinary** dao

The name that can be named is the **extraordinary** name

Notes: The verb "daoed" is understood to mean "discoursed" and "made into a way."

非常: not ordinary <> 非常: extraordinary

The Cosmological Vision

■ The Status of the Dao Universal

- ◆ *What are the concepts used by Laozi to symbolize the dao universal?*
 - ◆ All the below and more.
 - ◆ “the nameless” (Feng and English)
(verse 3 of chapter 1)
 - ◆ “the named” (Feng and English)
(verse 3 of chapter 1)
 - ◆ “the origin of Heaven and Earth”
(verse 3 of chapter 1)
 - ◆ “the mother of the ten thousand things”
(verse 4 of chapter 1)
 - ◆ “Something” (*wu* 物) or “a thing (*wu* 物) ... existed before Heaven and Earth.”
(chapter 25)

The Methodological Problematics

■ Methodological Problematics

- ◆ What is the philosophical problematic that Laozi intends to address in the first two opening verses of his DDJ?
- ◆ How does Laozi resolve the problematic of discovering the dao universal if it cannot be told, learned, and understood by the powers of human languages and concepts?
- ◆ *How does Laozi resolve the MP?*

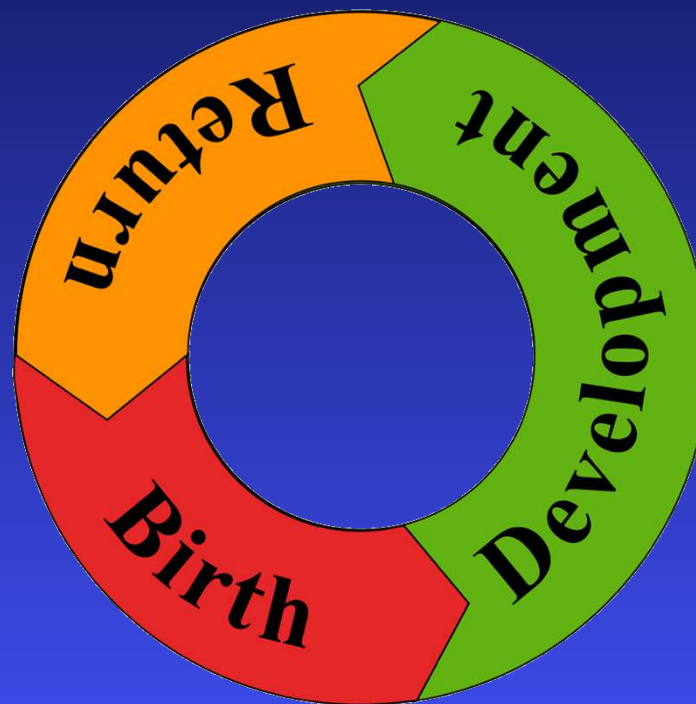
■ Methodological Resolutions

- ◆ *The Textual Citation*
 - ◆ TTC: 16
- ◆ *The Laoian Phenomenology*
 - ◆ *Mental Conditions*
 - ◆ *Phenomenological Observation*
 - ◆ *Ontological Reduction 48*
 - ◆ *Cosmological Jump 52, 25*

■ Student Responses

The Natural Cycles of Life

To know the constancy of all things is called self-enlightenment (明).



The Ontological View

- **The Two Aspects of the Dao universal**
 - ◆ The Being (有)
 - ◆ The Non-Being (無)

- **Textual Citation**
 - ◆ DDJ: 1 (chapter 1)
 - ◆ DDJ: 2 (chapter 2)

- **Textual Analysis**
 - ◆ Student's Task

The Ontological View

- The Three Attributes of the Dao universal

- ◆ The *Dao* (道)
- ◆ The *De* (德)
- ◆ The *Wu* (物)

- Textual Citation

Dao (道) gives birth [to the 10000 things-ccp].

De (德) fosters [the 10000 things-ccp].

Wu (物) gives [them-ccp] physical forms.

The environments complete [them-ccp].

(DDJ: 51)

The Ontological View

- The Three Attributes of the Dao universal
 - ◆ The *Dao* (道)
 - ◆ The *De* (德)
 - ◆ The *Wu* (物)

- Textual Analysis
 - ◆ *Dao* (道) is the life-principle
 - ◆ *De* (德) is the life-developing virtue
 - ◆ *Wu* (物) is the materiality of the OD

The Ontological View

■ Ontological Questions

- ◆ What are the ontological relationships between the *Dao* (道), the *De* (德), and the Non-Being (無) of the ND?
- ◆ What are the ontological relationships between the *Wu* (物) and the Being (有) of the ND?

■ The Student's Task

- ◆ *Use the materials you have learned to answer these questions.*

Cosmological Thoughts

■ The Question

- ◆ *How has the dao universal been self-transforming into Nature, self-existing as Nature, and self-regulating as Nature?*

■ The Answer

- ◆ The *dao* universal is the ultimate source of all things (Heaven+Earth+10000 things).
- ◆ The generations of all things are the cosmogonic results of the self-evolution of the (natural) *dao*.
- ◆ The *dao* universal has been self-evolving by the principles of self-division, self-multiplication, self-replication, self-transformation, and self-development.

What is the natural dao?

■ The Question

- ◆ *What is the dao universal?*

■ The Answer

- ◆ The dao universal has been self-existing naturally as *the Dao-of-Nature-as-Nature*.
- ◆ The (natural) dao has been self-regulating naturally as *the Dao-of-Nature-as-Nature*.
- ◆ The dao universal is the ordinary dao.

What is the natural Dao?

■ Questions for Philosophic Contemplation

◆ *That which is ordinary is extraordinary.*

◆ *That which is extraordinary is ordinary.*

◆ *Can you find the extraordinary in the ordinary?*

◆ *Can you find the ordinary in the extraordinary?*

The Cosmological Jump

The Phenomenological Reduction

The Methodological Problems of Laoism

How does Laozi discover the (natural) dao as the ultimate source of all things because the lifecycles of “the 10000 things” are all that he observes?

He must have made what can be called *a cosmological jump* or *an ontological reduction*?

The first question is: How does he make it?

The second question: Is he justified in making it?

The question of human relation *How should we treat the bad?*

The Feng-English Translation	The <i>Daodejing: 27</i>	The Lau Translation (1963)
<p>The good person is the teacher of the bad person. The bad person is the good man's charge.</p>	<p>故善人者 不善人之師 不善人者 善人之資</p> <p>Key Concepts: good man (善人) bad man (不善人) teacher (師) charge/material (資)</p>	<p>Hence the good man is the teacher the bad learns from; And the bad man is the material the good works on.</p>

The question of human relation

How should we treat the bad and the good?

<p style="text-align: center;">The Feng-English Translation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The <u>Daodejing</u> <u>Đạo Đức Kinh</u>: 49</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Lau Translation (1963)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">I am good to people who are good. I am also good to people you are not good. Because Virtue is goodness.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I have faith in people who are faithful. I also have faith in people you are not faithful. Because Virtue is faithfulness.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">善者吾善之 不善者吾亦善之德善</p> <p style="text-align: center;">信者吾信之 不信者吾亦信之德信</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Key Concepts: the good (善) the not-good (不善) virtue of goodness (德善) virtue of good faith (德信)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Those who are good I treat as good. Those who are not good I also treat as good. In so doing I gain in goodness. Those who are of good faith I have faith in. Those who are lacking in good faith I also have faith in. In so doing I gain in good faith.</p>

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The Mantra of Academic Wisdom

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 - ◆ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/opinion/friedman-the-professors-big-stage.html?_r=1&
 - ◆ “Everything is on Google” also means everything covered in lectures and course reading assignments.