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The Reassertion of Taoist Classics in the Technological Age

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Abstract

In terms of a dialogue with Heidegger's thinking, this paper tries to argue for the inclusion of Taoist Classics as core curriculum in general education. In order to support such a thesis, some of the possible hermeneutical applications of Taoism to modern society have been indicated. Particularly, it will show in which manner through the thoughtful reading of Taoist classics that students can be expected to develop their sense of orientation in the technological age. One will see that the Taoist "topological thinking" not only can counter-balance "calculative thinking" in the Heideggerian sense, but also can contribute to a deeper understanding of the essence of technology.

“...everything great arises from man’s rootedness in his homeland and tradition.”¹

“Thinking is not inactivity, but that very action (Handeln) which is dialogue with the world’s destiny.”²

It seems to be strange to argue today that one should include Chinese Classics in the core curriculum of general education, given the fact that in the May-Fourth Movement of 1919 there was already an urge to throw them away. In particular, nowadays, the major concern for the countries in the third world is rather the goal of Modernization. Accordingly, one may be puzzled by the claim that students of the technological age should read Chinese Classics. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that there are eminent Western scholars who show high respect for Chinese culture. For example, A. N. Whitehead, the famous mathematician and philosopher, clearly admitted, “the more we know of Chinese art, of Chinese literature, and of the Chinese philosophy of life, the more we admire the heights to which that civilisation attained.”³ In order to solve such conflicting attitudes toward Chinese classics, we should test the thinking power in the texts. In particular, one way to defend Chinese thought is to explore its possible contributions to the development of a self-understanding of human beings in the technological age. Surely, nowadays, Chinese classics is in a dangerous situation. “But,” as Heidegger realized, “where danger is, grows [t]he saving power also.”⁴

On the way towards a reassertion of Chinese thought in the technological age, it seems viable to start with a dialogue with Heidegger. It is not only because there are some fundamental similarities between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy, but also because Heidegger had once explicitly tried to found “the essence of the university in a primordial manner”.⁵ Furthermore, we will see that Heidegger's thinking on the essence of technology is particularly illuminating in shedding light on the way of hermeneutical application of Taoist classics.

Despite the scandalous historical context, Heidegger's rectoral speech of 1933 is still worth pondering from a purely philosophical standpoint, for it touches the most important problem of our age. From a standpoint of Western culture, this

important problem results from the “death of God”, as was declared loudly by Nietzsche. “It means: The supersensible world, more especially the world of the Christian God, has lost its effective force in history”.⁶ But instead of God should man become the centre of our cosmos? For Heidegger, it should not be a positive way out. In opposition to Nietzsche, he urges us to overcome “the universal rule of the will to power within history.”⁷ So, he raises the task “to think in primordial reflection towards a surpassing of metaphysics of the will to power.”⁸ In particular, a reflection of the spirit of Western world points to a returning to the essence of knowledge. Accordingly, “The heart of address serves the interpretation of the essence of knowing, science, and profession that is based on training in science.”⁹

As a matter of fact, Heidegger's complaint that “Today this fragmented multiplicity of disciplines is held together only by the technical organization of universities and faculties, and retains some importance only because of the practical aims pursued by the different specialties. But the roots of sciences in their essential ground have withered”---is still valid.¹⁰ Certainly we are strongly opposed to Heidegger's affiliation to Nazism. But one should agree with him in claiming that we need a “reflection on the totality of the sciences” and out of such a reflection “the university carries itself, by its own strength, unto its essential ground, a ground accessible only to the knowing that it cultivates.”¹¹ Only then one can expect finding a true unity for university.

In the following, we will see that a fruitful dialogue between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy can help us in shedding light on the contemporary relevance of Chinese classics. This can be shown in the following three points. First of all, in Chinese culture there is no concept of God in the Christian sense. Furthermore, the Chinese conception of Heaven is not a supersensible world but rather a sort of dynamic **Tao**. That is to say, in the Heideggerian terminology it is an “ontological” rather than an “ontical” concept. Finally, according to both Chinese philosophy and Heidegger, man is a being under the Heaven and on the Earth. As a sort of “in-between-being”, man should not be identified as the centre of our cosmos. To be sure, it is not my intention to jump to a “universalist” position. Namely, in pointing out some basic similarities between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy, I do not want to claim that the major ideas implied in Chinese classics

are universally valid and hence have to be accepted by the West. As a consequence, we entirely agree with Heidegger that the **Umkehr** from the technological world cannot simply come by “appropriating Buddhism or other [E]astern experience.”¹² For the essence of modern technology as **challenging (Herausfordern)** revelation is really beyond the thought of Chinese classics. Furthermore, in the age of Post-Modernity, it seems to be meaningless to promote Chinese classics in such a “universalist” manner. On the contrary, what we try to do is to show that, in doing justice of the spirit of pluralism, it is viable to conduct dialogues with the other so that one can learn more from the other and also cooperate well with each other in overcoming the crisis of our age. As a matter of fact, we also realize that there are essential differences between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy. Nevertheless, it is in terms of this sort of philosophical dialogue that one can find a justification for including Chinese classics as core curriculum in general education. So, there is no need to claim that the doctrine implied in Chinese classics is “universally” true. Rather, one can be satisfied that the ideas implied in Chinese classics might provide an alternative way of thinking in dealing with the crisis of our age. But particularly through the dialogue with Heidegger’s later thinking, we are confident of the potential implied in Taoist classics in dealing with the problem of overcoming of technology.

Indeed, there is also no need for all students to study philosophy as a major subject. Rather, through the thoughtful reading of Taoist classics students can be expected to develop their own orientation in the technological society. By the way, each person has to think about his/her situation in the technological age.

At first look, the crisis which results from the death of God in Western culture seems to be local. But from a sociological standpoint, such a crisis actually points to a deeper paradox underlying the technological age which is now a global phenomenon. As a matter of fact, Max Weber first succinctly formulates it as the “paradox of rationalization”:

“One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born...from the spirit of Christian asceticism... The Puritan wanted

to work in calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilied coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light clock, which can be thrown aside at any moment'. But fate decreed that the clock should become an iron cage."¹³

Actually, what Weber has anticipated about "the last stage of this cultural development"-- "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved"--has become the best characterization of our age.¹⁴ In its very essence, the dominance of technology ends up with the construction of a huge iron cage. Then how is it possible to break out of such an iron cage? It is well-known that Weber himself hints that either "entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals."¹⁵ However, from the past experiences of Hitler in Germany and Mao in China one should exclude the hope for the rise of any charismatic leader.¹⁶ Then the second possibility seems to be the only viable option. As a matter of fact, Heidegger has pursued this line in his later thinking. He explicitly declares that "I don't see the position of man in the world of global technology as inextricable and inescapable. The task of thought is to help limit the dominance of technology so that man in general has an adequate relationship to its essence."¹⁷ Whether Heidegger himself was inspired by Weber is not important. What we are interested in is how Heidegger prepares his way towards overcoming the dominance of technology. In fact, as the philosophers of the Frankfurt School realized, the iron cage mainly results from the generalization of technology from the conquest of nature to the conquest of society.¹⁸

As we have seen in his rectoral speech, Heidegger starts with a reactivation of the pre-Socratic experience of nature, particularly the quest of the essence of science in Greek. Indeed, Heidegger himself clearly recognizes that "our

present-day world is completely dominated by the desire to know of modern science.”¹⁹ But in order to prepare for an overcoming of such a domination, “he must consider also, and above all else, that every reflection upon that which now is can take its rise and thrive only if, through a dialogue with the Greek thinkers and their language, it strikes root into the ground of our historical existence.”²⁰ What is especially of interest to us is the fact that, in realizing that “That dialogue still awaits its beginning. It is scarcely prepared for at all,” Heidegger at the same time stresses that “and yet it itself remains for us the precondition of the inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world.”²¹ But why does the enterprise of the reflective overcoming of the domination of modern science’s desire to know point to be connected with an inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world?

To be sure, there was no science in the modern sense in traditional Chinese culture. But if “essence of science” is to be understood as “**the questioning, unguarded holding of one’s ground in the midst of the uncertainty of the totality of what-is**”, then one finds that the similar pursuit also exists in ancient China.²² Despite the “primitive” character of Chinese science, Chinese philosophers were conscious of the uncertainty of the mandate of Heaven. Accordingly, “to stop with the incomplete” is the cardinal doctrine in **I Ching**. That is to say, due to the “uncertainty of the totality of what-is”, the Chinese philosophy of nature well understands that any complete control of nature is an impossible dream. On the contrary, the concept of the consciousness of anxiety is revealed in that **Tao** “promotes all things without sharing the anxiety of the sage.”²³ Indeed, **I Chuan** also explicitly proclaims that “that which is unfathomable in the operation of **yin** and **yang** is called the divination.”²⁴ For “the divination has no spatial restriction and Change has no physical form.”²⁵ In order to stress such an inescapable uncertainty, Hsun Tzu put it in a somewhat extreme statement, “The fixed stars rotate in succession, the sun and moon shine alternately, the four seasons follow one another, **yin** (passive cosmic force) and **yang** (active cosmic force) effect their great transformations, and the wind and rain spread over all things. Each of the ten thousand things attains its harmony, and thus grows. Each obtains its nourishment, and thus achieves full development. We do not see their activities but we do see their results. This is what is called divination. We all know how

they attain their full development but none knows that such a process is invisible. This is called Heaven. The sage does not seek to know Heaven... Therefore great skill consists in not doing certain things, and great wisdom consists in not delivering over certain things. What is to be noted about heaven are its visible phenomena, which can help us to foretell things. What is to be noted about earth are its suitable aspects, which can be used for growing things. What is to be noted about the four seasons are their course and their distinctive characteristics, according to which we can manage our affairs. And what is to be noted about **yin** and **yang** is their revelation, on the basis of which we can regulate things. The official (astronomer) adheres to [the phenomena of] heaven. As to the sage himself, he adheres to the way.”²⁶ At first look, such a thesis would merely signify the conservative character of Chinese science and it could at best be applied to the pre-modern agricultural society. However, it would be to only understand it ontically. If we can approach such a thesis from an ontological standpoint, then it perfectly matches what Heidegger tries to express. First of all, both of them see “The essence of truth as the letting-be of what is, as it is.”²⁷ Namely, the essence of science or knowledge does not lie in the possession of things or control of nature. Secondly, for both of them, to know is to be completely exposed to the hidden and uncertain. Accordingly, knowing is always a risky process. Indeed, one can say that here both the Chinese sage and Heidegger agree in accepting the Heraclitean fragment: “Nature loves to hide itself.” In terms of the concept of “aletheia” in later Heidegger’s thinking one might provide a better explication. In so far as the truth of Being or **Tao** is unconcealment at the same time concealment, it is impossible for human being to achieve any “complete” and “certain” knowledge of nature. Indeed, as Chuang Tzu also maintained, to know is “to respond to things without any damage to them.”²⁸

However, with the rise of modern technology, man seems to become the master of cosmos. Knowledge appears to be the infinite power for the conquering of nature. Certainly, the advancement of modern technology has improved the material conditions of living. But exactly here lies the extreme danger. As pointed out by Michael Zimmerman, “For the Greeks, the Being of the tree was **physis**, the power of a being to emerge from the darkness of non-presence, to grow

and develop and maintain its presence in the face of the possibility of lapsing again into non-presence. For a modern botanist, however, the tree might be seen as a specific complex of cellulose which, by modern scientific methods, can be turned into any number of useful products. In fact, modern man views the whole of the universe in terms of its value for the promotion of human power. For the Greeks, the 'reality' (Being) of the tree was its power to keep itself in stable presence; for modern man, the reality of the tree is its use-value as a commodity. The 'reality of the real' or the 'Being of beings' for use is the **value** of objects in man's quest for world mastery.²⁹ Accordingly, Heidegger points out that "The destiny of revealing is as such, in every one of its modes, and therefore necessarily, **danger**."³⁰ At this juncture one can clearly see that Heidegger's position also reminds us of Lao Tzu's dictum: "Fortune is that in which calamity is latent."³¹

From a broader perspective, one can discover that the famous Frankfurt School has also attempted to overcome the dominance of technology. For example, as pointed out by Habermas, Marcuse is convinced that what Weber called 'rationalization' realizes is not rationalization as such but rather, in the name of rationality, a specific form of unacknowledged political domination.³² Why doesn't Heidegger follow such a trend? According to Heidegger, such an approach starts with a false premise. For "The false opinion that the rational and the rationalization (disenchantment) of the world are themselves rational is presupposed in the question of the origin of the **Ratio** (rationality)."³³ One might say that even Habermas's theory of communicative rationality fails to break such a limitation. For it is clear that in Habermas's theory the "rationality" of communicative rationality is from the very beginning an unquestionable "axiom"³⁴ But then one can raise the question: Why, at this juncture, is the Chinese thinking of **Tao** of particular importance?

First of all, in spite of the fact that in ancient China there was no modern technology, the Taoist thinkers had reflective experience of the essence of technique. In realizing the possible negative effect of the domination of technique, they also developed ways to overcome it. For example, in the text **Chuang Tzu** one can find the following famous metaphorical passage: "The chicken walked and drank freely in the swamp. But it is unexpectedly captured in a cage. Although the

chicken looks great, this is not good.”³⁵ Here one can clearly see that Taoist thinkers were, before Max Weber, well conscious of the danger of being trapped in an iron cage. The problem is obviously the loss of freedom. But, here, as Heidegger stressed, “The essence of freedom is **originally** not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing”.³⁶ Rather, as it is shown in another metaphor in **Chuang Tzu**, “a fish is only free when it is swimming in the water.” For freedom should be primarily understood as returning to one's proper place.³⁷

Furthermore, in overcoming the dominance of technique, Taoist philosophers have tried to absorb or internalize it as a moment of art. That is to say, **techné** is basically a mode of **poiesis**.

From the famous case of Pau Ting in **Chuang Tzu**, one can learn that the only way to overcome the dominance of technique is not to abolish it, but rather to promote it as an art.³⁸ So, on the way towards overcoming the domination of technology, it is viable to realize that **poiesis** is a more primordial mode of unconcealment. As a consequence, art will play an important role in overcoming technology.

As a matter of fact, Taoist philosophers are also conscious of the danger of the inflation of calculative thinking. In particular, Chuang Tzu explicitly urges us to transcend the dimension of calculative thinking, for it blocks our way towards the apprehension of **Tao**.³⁹ According to Chuang Tzu, in order to reach **Tao**, one has to “discard the intelligence, go beyond the visible and transcend subject-object-schema.”⁴⁰ So, becoming one with **Tao** provides a possible way out to overcome the inflation of calculative thinking which underlies the improper expansion of technology. In order to make sense of such a claim in a less “mysterious” manner, one can pay a closer look at the nature of thinking in the Taoist sense.

It is interesting to note that the “art of thinking” is usually an essential part of general education. However, it is commonly a sort of elementary formal logic or basic scientific methodology. To be sure, it is an optical discipline. As a matter of fact, even the Einsteinian “insight” into the “essence” of physical phenomena

belongs to the Husserlian “Wesensschau” (eidetic intuition). All these can be located in the dimension of “calculative thinking”. On the other hand, “essential thinking” in the Taoist sense is “topological” in character. Namely, it is a thinking which can lead things back to their proper place or limit. That is not a matter of technique but rather a proper corresponding. When Heidegger raises the question, “Is there not also a guilt incurred by failing to do what is essential?”, he might criticize university education for not being capable of producing students with such a power of thinking.⁴¹ In this regards, reading Taoist classics can provide an opportunity for students to develop such a “topological thinking.”⁴²

It is also worthwhile to point out that Hoelderlin's following dictum: “But where danger is, grows the saving power also,” which was repeatedly quoted by Heidegger, is quite close to the following saying of Lao Tzu: “Calamity is that upon which fortune depends.”⁴³ Furthermore, even though **Ge-stell** (enframing) as the essence of modern technology is seen to be “the extreme danger,” “**danger** in the highest sense,” Heidegger still claims that “Where the danger is as the danger, there the saving power is already thriving also.”⁴⁴ Such a position of Heidegger reminds us of the following famous thesis in Chinese classics: “By the law of change, whatever has reached its extreme must turn back.”⁴⁵ Especially, Heidegger's statement: “The danger is the saving power, inasmuch as it brings the saving power out of its -- the danger's -- concealed essence that is ever susceptible of turning”, has also a parallel in **Lao Tzu**: “The concealed essence is deep and far-reaching. And with it all things return to their original natural state. Then the great concord will be reached.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Heidegger's choosing of “Die Kehre” (“The Turning”) as the title for his work on the seeking for the saving power out of the dominance of modern technology brings us back to the following message from Lao Tzu: “Turning (**Kehre**) is movement of **Tao**.”⁴⁷ Finally, it is well-known that the later Heidegger has stressed a lot on the topic of the thinging of things. Heidegger writes, “The thing things. In thinging, it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals.”⁴⁸ Further, he states, “Earth and sky, divinities and mortals -- being at one with one another of their own accord -- belong together by way of the simpleness of the united fourfold. Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in its own way into its own,

within the simpleness of the four. This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightning each of the four, appropriates their own presencing into simple belonging to one another. Mirroring in this appropriating-lightning way, each of the four plays to each of the others. The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it bonds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another. The mirroring that binds into freedom is the play that betroths each of the four to each through the enfolding clasp of their mutual appropriation. None of the four insists on its own separate particularity. Rather, each is expropriated, within their mutual appropriation, into its own being.⁴⁹ Actually, this has a close connection with the problem of how to overcome modern technology. For, first of all, “no representation of what is present, in the sense of what stands forth and of what stands over against as an object, ever reaches to the thing **qua** thing.”⁵⁰ And, “Even when **ratio** pervades **animalitas**, man’s being remains defined by life and life-experience. Rational living beings must first **become** mortal.”⁵¹ Such a doctrine of the thinging of things can also remind us of the following tautology in **Chuang Tzu**: “Thinging of things without subject to the domination of things”.⁵² Indeed, regarding its meaning, one can also identify this illuminating tautology as an explication of the thesis of “becoming one with **Tao**.”

Furthermore, in so far as the process of the thinging of things basically involves letting things back to their proper place, “topological thinking” is its “methodological” prerequisite. Accordingly, reading Taoist classics one could learn an “extraordinary” art of thinking. Though this art of thinking cannot contribute to the increase of our knowledge, it could help limit the essence of modern technology.

All in all, from our comparison to Heidegger’s thinking, one can find a concrete demonstration of the potential implied in Chinese classics.

Undeniably, there are basic differences between Taoism and Confucianism. But they are not necessarily incompatible to each other. On the contrary, it could be shown that they can well cooperate with each other. Though for a detailed treatment, I must reserve for another writing. But I would like to argue that Taoism is more interested in the **Tao** of the Earth, whereas the Confucian

philosophy of nature is focused on the **Tao** of the Heaven. On the one hand, according to Lao Tzu, “Simplicity, which has no name, is free of desires. Being free of desires, it is tranquil. And the world will be at peace of its own accord.”⁵³ But it only when earth obtains the One (**Tao**) that tranquility is possible. “If the earth had not thus become tranquil, it would soon be shaken.”⁵⁴ On the other hand, **I Ching's** mantic-phenomenological approach has shown in what way there is an eternal recurrence of cosmic process.⁵⁵ Moreover, the Confucian idea of benevolence provides a cardinal political-social principle. Altogether, in Chinese classics one can find the picture that as an authentic being, man exists “on the earth,” “under the Heaven” and “with other men.”

Historically speaking, it is true that since Hegel's famous criticism of Chinese culture, the status of Chinese classics has been extensively downgraded. Indeed, one can regard the radical negation of Chinese classics in the May-Fourth Movement as the logical consequence of such an undermining of Chinese culture. In terms of a dialogue with Heidegger, we have not only shown in which manner one can demonstrate the contemporary relevance of Taoist classics, but also pointed out a positive way in approaching Chinese culture. In particular, now we can say that it is mainly because these critics fail to recognize the ontological difference in the Heideggerian sense that they can only develop a negative picture of Chinese classics. Namely, from Hegel to the major representatives of the May-Fourth Movement, Chinese thought has been understood exclusively from an “ontical” perspective. A famous example is Hu Shih's interpretation of Taoism as a system of cosmogony. Here the Taoist concept of “Nothingness” is (mis)understood as an “empty space” in the physical sense.⁵⁶ Now with our comparison between Heidegger and Taoist thought, we are able to clear us from such an absurd way of reading Chinese classics. Positively speaking, our “ontological” way of reading Taoist classics enables us to lead Chinese thought back to its proper dimension. Also, one is now able to say that the negative attitude towards Chinese classics, to a large extent, results from an “inauthentic way of reading”. And an authentic way of approaching Taoist classics, especially through a dialogue with Heidegger's later thinking, could well shed light on the possibility of overcoming the dominance of technology. Particularly, the Taoist insight that the artistic **poiesis** is a more primordial mode of unconcealedness than **techné** could point to a “path that

corresponds to the essence of technology.”⁵⁷

To be sure, in defending the thinking potential of Chinese classics we do not aim at urging all students to be major in philosophy. The purpose is rather to invite students to think, to enable them to develop an orientation in the technological age through the reading of Chinese classics. As a matter of fact, due to the high specialization of each field, it is hard for students to have any courses at their own departments which can help them to develop their self-understanding in the technological age. Such a task can only be attributed to the program of general education. Unfortunately, nowadays, there still lacks a correct understanding of the essence of general education. It is not particularly strange to experience that most people understand general education as a program of learning something of everything. In this sense, to include Chinese classics as core curriculum would not only enable us to correct such a misleading conception of general education, but also allow Chinese culture to discover its historical vocation in the modern world. In so far as everyone should become a thinking existence, how can we dismiss helpful means such as Chinese classics. As Heidegger once pointed out, “Who knows, perhaps ancient traditions of thought will awaken in Russia or China which will help man achieve a free relationship to the technological world.”⁵⁸ Undeniably, now we have not yet freed ourselves from the dominance of technology. But one at least “can struggle to cut a few narrow paths, build a few small bridges”—as claimed by Heidegger.⁵⁹ To include Chinese classics as core curriculum of general education should be regarded as an essential step towards such an awakening. So, as the essence of the university can “not be determined from some other place, from the standpoint of ‘politics’ or from some other established goals,” the only goal for general education is to help students become a thinking existence.⁶⁰ To be sure, general education is not a kind of knowledge which teaches students how to make money or solve any problems. In particular, the Taoist texts do not provide any “information” about the world. For they are full of “tautologies.”⁶¹ Namely, it is not a knowledge of any use. In this sense, it could be at best characterized as a sort of “meta-knowledge”. However, without such sort of “useless” knowledge, man can easily get lost in the technological world. But how can “tautology” in the sense of Chuang Tzu “disclose” the truth? The

answer is two-fold. First, as Heidegger explained, “it is tautology in that highest sense, what says not nothing but everything.”⁶² Second, “This is because truth is not located in the statement, in the true sentence, but is, rather, as unhiddenness, that destiny with which man stands, which he has to bear and carry out, depending upon how he is able to experience that which is.”⁶³

In the past decade, some scholars have tried to explain the success of economic growth in East Asia in terms of Confucian ethics. Namely, they have attempted to argue for an equivalent function between the Confucian and Protestant ethics. However, it seems that Max Weber's thesis is still valid. For both the formal and the procedural rationality are strange to Chinese culture. This might also be confirmed by the recent economic crisis in East Asia. But although Chinese culture has nothing to do with the institution of modern capitalism, it could contribute to the balancing of Modernization. Even Max Weber himself fails to explore such a potential of Chinese culture. Indeed, it is mainly due to Heidegger's effort that we are reminded of such a balancing power implied in Chinese culture. So, if we ignore such a possibility of Chinese culture, we might subject ourselves to a poor situation which can be aptly characterized by Wang Yang-ming's famous poem: “To abolish one's own invaluable treasure, but to live like a beggar in mendicancy.”

To be sure, to include Taoist classics as core curriculum for general education is the first step towards overcoming the forgetfulness of **Tao**. But this is a decisive step, particularly with regards to the limitation of the dominance of technology. Indeed, thinking is not an activity out of nothingness. Rather, it is historically founded in primordial experience. Now, here the major problem we have to face is: “**How** can we hermeneutically apply Taoist classics in overcoming the technological age?” In this respect, our dialogue with Heidegger could have provided us with some helpful indications towards a viable solution.

Finally, it is worthwhile to point out that what is implied in the popular slogan “I do what I like to” in Taiwan is not freedom in the genuine sense. Rather, it is merely a vulgar expression of the idea of “will to will” in the Heideggerian sense. Its essence perfectly corresponds to that of the technological age. From this perspective, now, it is really good timing to “recollect” Taoist classics.

Endnotes

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10. **Ibid.**, p. 482.
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15. **Ibid.**
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17. "Only a god can save us now", p. 22.

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31. Chan, **op. cit.** p., 167. I modify Wing-tsit Chan's translation.
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33. Heidegger, M., **Denkerfahrten**. Frankfurt/M.: 1983, p.152: “Die Irrmeinung, das Rationale und die Rationalisierung (Entzauberung) der Welt seien selbst etwas Rationales, bleibt der Frage nach der Herkunft der Ratio ausgesetzt.”
34. Cf.: Thomas McCarthy, “Reflections on Rationalization in the **Theory of Communicative Action**”. **Habermas and Modernity**. Ed. by R. J. Bernstein.

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35. Chuang Tzu, **Chuang Tzu**. (In Chinese) Taipei: 1984, Ch. II, p. 3a.
36. **The Question Concerning Technology**, p. 25.
37. Cf. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
38. Cf. **Chuang Tzu**, Ch. II, p. 1bff.
39. Cf. **Chuang Tzu**, Ch. I, p. 13bff; Ch. V, p. 7a.
40. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 201. Here I modify Wing-tsit Chan's translation.
41. "The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts", p. 486.
42. Heidegger himself employs the term "topology". Cf. M. Heidegger, **Vierseminare**. Frankfurt/M.: 1977, p. 7.
43. Wing-tsit Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 167. I modify Wing-tsit Chan's translation.
44. **The Question Concerning Technology**, p. 26; p. 28; p. 42.
45. **The I Ching Or Book of Changes**. The Richard Wilhelm Translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes. Princeton: 1980, p. 375. See also: Chu Bou-kuen, **The History of the Studies of I Ching** (In Chinese). Vol. II. Peking: 1988, p. 77ff.
46. **The Question Concerning Technology**, p. 42.; Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 170. I modify Wing-tsit Chan's translation.
47. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Here I modify Wing-tsit Chan's translation.
48. Heidegger, M., **Poetry, Language, Thought**. Trans. by A. Hofstadter. New York: 1971, p. 177.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-9.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
52. **Chuang Tzu**, Ch. VII, p. 9a.

53. Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 159. See also my paper, "Taoism and Earth Ethics" (Forthcoming).
55. Cf. my essay: "Reconstruction of Chinese Philosophy of Nature and Mantic Phenomenology". **Die Verschmelzung der Untersuchungsbereiche: Formen des Dialogs zwischen Kulturwissenschaften und Wissenschaftstheorie.** Ed. by D. Ginev. Frankfurt/M.: 1993, pp. 63-72.
56. Cf. Hu Shih, **Hweinangshu** (In Chinese). Taipei: 1962, p. 39ff.
57. "Only a god can save us now", p. 17.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
60. "The Self-Assertion of the German University and The Rectorate 1933/34: Fact and Thoughts", p. 489.
61. Cf: **Chuang Tzu**, Ch. X, p. 20a.
62. Heidegger, M., "Kant's Thesis About Being". Trans. by T. E. Klein, Jr., and W.E. Pohl. **The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy.** Vol. 4, 1973, p. 33.
63. Biemel, W., **Martin Heidegger.** Trans. by J.L. Metha. New York: 1976, p. 146.

道家經典的時代意義

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摘要

本文主旨在通過與海德格思想的對話來闡述道家經典的時代意義。此一對話除了可證成將道家經典納入大學通識課程之必要性外，還為“在當代社會如何閱讀道家經典”一問題展示了一些解釋學策略。特別地，它觸及了如何培養學生在“科技時代”中之方向感問題。我們將看到：道家義之“定位性思維方式”，不僅可以平衡海德格所批評之“計算性思維方式”，而且可以幫助了解“科技時代”之本質。實際上，目前在台灣所流行之“只要我喜歡，有什麼不可以”的論調，只不過是海德格所要克服的“意欲主體”在“科技時代”之庸俗的表現。從道家的角度來看，這乃是對“道”之遺忘的邏輯後果。

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