



## Winning, Losing, and Wandering Play: Zhuangzian Paradox and Daoist Practice

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## Abstract

Many daoist texts offer guidelines to political action. The following essay on Zhuangzi and the martial arts explores kinds of movement and thinking that remind Western political philosophy of the breadth of action open to politics when we think outside of the neoliberal parameters of the modern world. Daoist traditions that have inspired the martial arts are commonly taxonomized in terms of means or ends: either as physical movements, or as effective cause. Effective cause is itself often divided into battlefield efficacy and self-actualization. This paper explores an alternative orientation toward movement and toward winning and losing, which daoism also makes available to the martial arts, and one that goes beyond the dichotomy of means and ends to focus on process. In specific, this paper uses the paradoxes of the classic daoist text *Zhuangzi* and a traditional daoist movement system to explore the eschewal of end-directed, teleological activity in favour of the 'undifferentiated', what we call non-teleological process or wandering play that is co-extensive with the objects, sentient beings, and other things in an ecological field. It is to imagine a non-autonomous self. Daoist movement tradition reminds us of the vitality in the concurrent Western search for the multitudinous self, the transindividual self, the porous self, which all seek to find political action appropriate to sentient beings that are aware of their co-extension with things, animals and objects, of their ecological field.

## Contributor Notes

Lynette Hunter is Distinguished Professor of the History of Rhetoric and Performance at the University of California Davis. She has trained for nearly twenty years in a daoist movement practice, a learning that is increasingly relevant to her studies in modern democratic rhetoric, the constraints it puts on the wider participation of different communities worldwide, and the ways we deal with diversity and create value through performance. Topical areas of her current research include theories of performativity, Canadian First Nations studies, feminist philosophy, and daoist practice.

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### Three Introductions

*Introduction one: Lynette Hunter*

#### **Daoism, the 'undifferentiated', and contemporary critical discourse**

Many daoist texts offer guidelines to political action. The following essay on Zhuangzi and martial arts explores kinds of movement and thinking that remind Western political philosophy of the breadth of action open to politics when we think outside of the neoliberal parameters of the modern world. Three stories provide the focus for our exploration of elements in daoist movement traditions: the story of the Undifferentiated Particular, the story of Cook Ding, and the story of woodcutter Qing. If, as we suggest, the story of the Undifferentiated Particular establishes three modes of action – the ordinary teleological, the extraordinary teleological and the non-teleological – Cook Ding transfers these modes into the art of wielding a knife, and woodcutter Qing tells us how to use the knife without using it.

The stories provide a context for many daoist movement traditions, that allies them with modes of political action, and recalls Roland Barthes' discussion of the woodcutter in *Mythologies*:

If myth is a de-politicised speaking, there is at least one kind of speaking that opposes itself to myth, this is the speaking that *stays* political. It's necessary here to come back to the distinction between language-object and meta-language. If I am a woodcutter and if I come to name the tree I am cutting down, whatever be the form of my phrasing, I speak the tree, I do not speak about the tree. This is to say that

my language is surgical, tied to its object in a transitive mode: between the tree and me, there is nothing other than my 'work', that is to say it [the naming] is an act: and there's the political language; it offers me the nature of the object only to the extent where I go to transform it; it is a language by which I enact the object: the tree is not for me an image, it is simply the sense/feeling of my act. But if I am not a woodcutter, I cannot speak the tree, I can only speak on it; it is no longer my language that is the instrument that enacts the tree, it is what the tree is known as [chanté: celebrated as] that instrumentalises my language; I only have an intransitive relation with the tree; the tree is no longer a sensing of reality through human action, it is an image-at-one's-disposal [image with mythic content]: instead of the languaged reality of the woodcutter, I create a second language, a meta-language, in which I enact not things, but their names, and which is to first order language like gesture is to an act [or gestus]. This second order language is not completely mythical, but it is the very place where myth installs itself: for myth can only labour on objects which have already received the mediation of a first order language.

There is then a language which is not mythical, it is the language of man [sic] the maker: wherever man speaks to transform reality and not only to keep it as an image, wherever he ties his language to the making of things, metalanguage is returned into the language-object, and myth is

impossible. (Barthes 1972: 146)

Barthes is often criticised for this passage partly because the initial most widely distributed translation into English does not underline the difference he makes between the intransitive sense of 'agir' which, according to *Larousse*, is related to behaviour and having 'efficaciousness over' another person or thing, and the transitive sense 'faire agir', which is to animate or enact a person or thing. Both senses of the word are also directly embedded in acting and performativity, as are Barthes' words 'production' – often referencing theatre or film production, and 'fabrication' – often referencing theatre making. Barthes' word 'opérative' has strong connotations not only of surgical operation but also of the 'operative' that happens without pre-cognition, 'theory' or plan – again in a referential field of the early 1950s concern with what J. L. Austin was calling the 'performative'.

Performance Studies has developed a long way over the past 50 years but has always retained a focal range not only on the discursive but also on the many elements in our lives that happen alongside the discursive. When Barthes uses the woodcutter's performative or 'language-object' naming of the tree to talk about a mode of speaking that is opposed to myth-making, and which unlike the non-political habitual of discursive myth, '*stays*' political, he outlines the political activity of alongside life. Most of us live in political systems that arrange our relations to things within them through discourse. These systems satisfy some of our desires but not necessarily all the things that we need such as shelter, food, sex. Lack of attention to particular need can lead to people positioning their need as a desire that discourse has to become aware of

and recognise – thereby generating discursive fields of sexuality, ethnicity, poverty and others. But most of us also find ways to realise or make present, to presence the needs that give us reasons for going on living, to which discourse is otherwise blind. These presencings are political because they organise relations to things in our ecology even if they are not those with which discourse is concerned. Indeed this alongside political action can generate a source for the energy that impels some to try to change discursive political systems.

When political acts that make need present – and hence value it – move from the undifferentiated lived moment of a particular individual into context, precipitating the particular out of its ecological field into alongside environment, these acts become situated within groups of people and can be used to build a 'set toward' discourse that offers a basis for positionality. Positionality is sometimes a stand taken up against discourse, and sometimes – as with Barthes' use of the work 'oppose' not as 'opposite' but 'to pose differently' – a set toward the discursive that offers an alterior. 'Alterior' here is a positionality that takes a set toward the discursive based on situated particulars – not on presencing, and not on the particular individual, but on a group consciously inventing with what might happen if the situated particulars gifted toward discourse, and were willing to change themselves at a specific time of ar/rest (process that is 'rested' as rehearsal is 'rested' into performance) so discourse could 'see' them (Hunter 2011: 11-22). This rhetorical stance is a political act that does not change discourse – as opposite positionality attempts to do – but builds an environment in which discourse is enabled to change itself, by recognising something to which it was

previously blind. The interaction here is what we explore in the following essay as the opposition of the 'ordinary teleological' and posing differently of the 'extraordinary teleological' action in daoist movement.

Barthes' woodcutter knows part of this: the particular, which is the moment we can name the limits of sentience. This is one function of performativity, and what Barthes goes on to elaborate as poetics. Poetics or performativity occur in the alongside and are political acts because they organise sentient beings in relation to their ecology. Their acts also change them, and hence make them different in both their larger ecological field and in the discursive subset of that field. This performativity is a political act that is at the basis of all making or 'fabrication', whether we call it aesthetic, productive, or as Barthes concludes, revolutionary. It is not outside the ecology of living but works alongside the discursive environment with which it is simultaneous in that ecology.

Zhuangzi's woodcutter senses a little more about this. Qing can move to the non-teleological, undifferentiated ecological and then make, in the ecology of his moment with the tree, the difference of the particular which releases the possibility of the table. Zhuangzi's woodcutter makes the tree 'different' and in doing so changes himself, for difference does not exist before it is made and the being that makes something different necessarily changes their particularity by admitting to it something that was not there before. The action that changes him also changes the ecological relation in which he exists, and it is that new relation that releases the possibility of the table. The woodcutter does not then have to externalise the table, cut it out, because

it is already made. If he does do so he will, like Barthes' woodcutter, be situating his particularity into a set toward the alongside discourse, a set toward that could pose something anterior to its myth. But like Barthes' woodcutter, he 'enacts' or animates a new possibility, what Barthes calls an invention, by generating a different ecology. It is that ecology that releases the table. It is that ecology arrested in an action that makes possible the woodcutter's naming. Both woodcutters use a mode of political action that organises their sentient being within their whole ecology. But this is not to interact with the tree on the basis of 'celebrated', already known, discursive images. It is, rather, to become the medium through which an image is made, to work as an actor works, to play.

The point that our essay would like to make is that training in daoist movement is training in being in the undifferentiated ecological, what we call non-teleological process or play. To play, be played, be a player is to be co-extensive with the objects, sentient beings, and other things in an ecological field. It is to imagine a non-autonomous self. Politics, or organisation of relations with the elements in that field, is not limited to the discursive. If it were, it would be to imply in these late-modern times that politics is only effected by those that discourse considers 'human'. It would be to disregard the limitations of sentient beings and the unknowability of the world. It would be to continue the discourse of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism into the hyper without even being aware of the genealogy. Daoist movement is a centuries old tradition that underwrites what actors can also tell us, that we are not separate from other things. This tradition and its practices remind us that the singular self is as strategic as the essential self is

iconic, and both behave politically within a discursive environment – Barthes would say they behave ‘as if’ the myth is true and are in fact non-political. But furthermore, Daoist movement tradition also reminds us of the vitality in the concurrent Western search for the multitudinous self (Gatens and Lloyd 1999), the transindividual self (Balibar 1997), the porous self (Brossard 1997/1995), which all seek to find political action appropriate to sentient beings that are aware of their co-extension with things, animals and objects, of their ecological field.

*Introduction two: Richard Schubert*

### **Wandering Play and the Martial Arts**

Philosophy of the Martial Arts offers a unique window onto culture and an extraordinary opportunity to contemplate means and ends. Traditional legend has it that Southeast Asian Martial Arts originated when Bodhidharma, the seminal figure in the development of Zen Buddhism, brought the combat-oriented yoga he learned as a member of the warrior caste to China and taught it to Shaolin monks who lacked the flexibility and strength that extended Zen meditation in a classic lotus posture requires. What began as a means to prepare a warrior to defeat his enemy thus became a means to prepare a spiritual seeker to obtain enlightenment. But Shaolin monks soon found themselves pressed to defend their temple and, as they saw it, Buddhism itself, as well as their own persons, so Bodhidharma’s yoga, the Eighteen Moves of the Lohan, became the basis for the martial arts and movement systems of Shaolin *Kempo* and *Quan Fa*. With the support of Daoism (which became intertwined with Chinese Zen), Chinese

martial arts maintained a focus on health, on the whole seeing self-defense primarily as a means of preserving one’s health and defeating an attacker as one among many sometimes necessary means to that end.

However, over time and under the considerable influence of the Daoist Sunzi, victory came to be understood as a worthy end in its own right or as a means to reach political ends. In medieval Japanese martial arts, under the influence of indigenous Shinto and the Confucianism, Daoism and Zen imported from China, martial arts came to be central to the broader culture, seen as a means to purification, enlightenment, and feudal service. After World War II, with the destruction of the last vestiges of the feudal system and diminution in the influence of Shinto given its association with the discredited feudal system in the particular form of State Shinto, Japanese martial arts turned almost exclusively to their interest in enlightenment. *Bujutsu* (Kanji: 武術), martial arts whose primary aim is battlefield efficacy, became *budo* (Kanji: 武道), martial arts whose primary aim is self-actualization.

*Budo* was subsequently exported to the Anglo-European world in the wake of World War II as those who served in the armed forces in post-war occupied Japan brought the practice they had begun in Southeast Asia home along with the Zen that was its primary basis and which became a broader cultural influence. In the 1960s Anglo-Europeans in growing numbers practiced martial arts for self-defense and self-improvement. By the 1980s, martial arts were a mainstream portion of Anglo-European culture and by the early 2000s, became widely viewed as sports engaged in, and watched for, entertainment. At

about the same time, they were conscripted by the fitness industry in such forms as aerobic kickboxing, seen as a means to physical fitness but devoid of any other significance. Mixed Martial Arts as 'pure sport' emerged, divorcing martial arts from even fitness and health and severing the link to enlightenment.

In short, over the millennia and across continents, Southeast Asian martial arts have adopted a variety of means and ends. In 'Winning, Losing, and Wandering Play: Zhuangzian Paradox and Daoist Practice', following the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi*, we distinguish among ordinary use, extraordinary use, and non-teleological use. To illustrate this taxonomy by reference to the case at hand, utilizing martial arts to prevail in combat exemplifies ordinary use. Utilizing martial arts to obtain enlightenment exemplifies extraordinary use. Our paper seeks to illuminate a philosophical thread regarding undifferentiated means and ends within traditional martial practice that, while never broken over the millennia, has received little attention in academic papers: that which concerns the non-teleological use constitutive of what we call wandering play.

### Introduction three: Wandering Play

Daoist traditions that have inspired the martial arts are commonly taxonomized in terms of means or ends: either as physical movements,<sup>1</sup> or as effective cause. Effective cause is itself often divided into battlefield efficacy and self-

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, there are grappling styles and striking styles, punching styles and kicking styles. For an extended treatment of such taxonomies, see Bolelli (2003).

actualization.<sup>2</sup> However 'self-actualization' may be a focus on 'spirit' which leaves open the possibility that to 'win' may be achieved without any weapon,<sup>3</sup> or it may instead be neither winning nor losing, but a 'way'. It is widely recognized that Sunzi, whose *Art of War* is widely considered part of the Daoist canon, wrote that 'the important thing in a military operation is victory, not persistence'.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, this paper explores an alternative orientation toward movement and toward winning and losing, which Daoism also makes available to the martial arts, and one that goes beyond the dichotomy of means and ends and to focus on process. In specific, this paper uses the resources of the classic Daoist text *Zhuangzi* and a traditional Daoist movement system to explore the eschewal of end-directed, teleological activity in favor of what we call 'wandering play'. We approach wandering play via a series of paradoxes that arise in conjunction with such play, paradoxes we see as suggested by *Zhuangzi* and inherent in the practice of Daoist movement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The traditional taxonomy employed in Japanese martial arts, mentioned above, distinguishes between Japanese *bujutsu* (Kanji: 武術), martial arts whose primary aim is battlefield efficacy, and *budo* (Kanji: 武道), martial arts whose primary aim is self-actualization.

<sup>3</sup> Miyamoto Musashi's summary in *Book of Five Rings* of the teaching of his school as 'the spirit to be able to win no matter what the weapon' (21).

<sup>4</sup> Sunzi is most deeply Daoist in the methods he suggests for the achievement of victory. ('Therefore one who is good at martial arts overcomes others' forces without battle'. 64). However, his ends are those usual among martial arts and martial artists of a certain type.

<sup>5</sup> Our use of 'paradox' here is Zhuangzian in spirit, following, for example, *Zhuangzi's* invocation of Huizi's spatio-temporal paradoxes.

## Huizi's Gourd and Zhuangzi's Wandering

Early in the inner chapters of his text, in a section entitled 'Free and Easy Wandering', Zhuangzi provides insight into his notion of wandering (*yóu*) (Hanzi 遊) via his treatment of Huizi's gourd:

Hui Tzu said to Chuang Tzu, 'The king of Wei gave me some seeds of a huge gourd. I planted them, and when they grew up, the fruit was big enough to hold five piculs. I tried using it for a water container, but it was so heavy I couldn't lift it. I split it in half to make dippers, but they were so large and unwieldy that I couldn't dip them into anything. It's not that the gourds weren't fantastically big – but I decided they were of no use and so I smashed them to pieces.

Chuang Tzu said, 'You certainly are dense when it comes to using big things! In Sung there was a man who was skilled at making a salve to prevent chapped hands and generation after generation, his family made a living by bleaching silk in water. A traveler heard about the salve and offered to buy the prescription for a hundred measures of gold. The man called everyone to a family council. 'For generations we've been bleaching silk and we've never made more than a few measures of gold', he said. 'Now, if we sell our secret, we can make a hundred measures in one morning. Let's let him have it!' The traveler got the slave and introduced it to the king of Wu, who was having trouble with the state of Yueh. The king put the man in charge of his troops, and that winter they fought a naval

battle with the men of Yueh and gave them a bad beating [because the salve, by preventing the soldier's hands from chapping, made it easier for them to handle their weapons]. A portion of the conquered territory was awarded the man as a fief. The salve had the power to prevent chapped hands in either case; but one man used it to get a fief, while the other one never got beyond silk bleaching – because they used it in different ways. Now you had a gourd big enough to hold five piculs, why didn't you think of making it into a great tub so you could go floating around the rivers and lakes, instead of worrying because it was too big and unwieldy to dip into things! Obviously, you still have a lot of underbrush in your head! (Watson 1964: 28-29)<sup>6</sup>

As we read this passage, it differentiates among what we think of as ordinary or conventional teleological use, extraordinary teleological use, and a non-teleological process constitutive of wandering (*yóu*). These distinctions are carried forward in this essay by the words 'contact', 'connection' and 'the co-extensive' respectively. Gourds were traditionally used in China whole as containers or split as dippers. The hand salve of the man from Sung, as Zhuangzi makes clear, was traditionally used by his family to facilitate silk bleaching. These thus serve to illustrate ordinary teleological use. The traveler's use of the same salve to facilitate a naval victory and to acquire a fief serve to illustrate extraordinary teleological use. Finally,

<sup>6</sup> We have added Watson's explanatory footnote, verbatim, parenthetically to the text. All quotations from Zhuangzi are taken from this text unless otherwise indicated.



Zhuangzi's suggestion that Huizi use the gourd as a vessel with which to 'float around the rivers and lakes' illustrates a non-teleological use constitutive of wandering (*yóu*).

Zhuangzi's distinctions among ordinary use, extraordinary teleological use, and non-teleological wandering, allow us to further develop the taxonomies of means, ends and processes, among martial arts with which we began this paper. More specifically, it allows us to differentiate among three approaches to martial practice. The first sees such practice as having an ordinary use, such as the attainment of martial victory. The second sees martial arts practice as having an extraordinary use, such as self-cultivation or self-improvement. The third approach, the interest of this paper, inspired by the Daoist movement practice that has already informed the martial arts in other ways, sees martial practice as an opportunity for the particular variety of Zhuangzian wandering that we call 'wandering play'.

### **Wandering Play and Paradox**

Zhuangzi's notion of wandering is paradoxical in a way he seems to both clearly recognize and intend. Wandering is, for example, as Zhuangzi see it, both useful and useless. In fact, it is apparently useful from his perspective precisely because it is useless. As he declares through the madman of Ch'u, 'All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless' (63). In various passages Zhuangzi illuminates the usefulness of the useless, but at least on our reading of the text, he is always at the same time careful not to suggest an ultimate resolution of the underlying paradox.

Consider, for example, Zhuangzi's treatment of the oak at Crooked Shaft:

Carpenter Shih went to Ch'i and, when he got to Crooked Shaft, he saw a serrate oak standing by the village shrine. It was broad enough to shelter several thousand oxen and measured a hundred spans around, towering above the hills... There were so many sightseers that the place looked like a fair, but the carpenter didn't even glance around and went on his way without stopping. His apprentice ... ran after [him] and said 'since I first took up my ax and followed you, Master, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you don't even bother to look, and go right on without stopping. Why is that?'

'Forget it – say no more!' said the carpenter. 'It's a worthless tree! Make boats out of it and they'd sink, make coffins and they'd rot in no time. Use it for doors and it would seep sap like pine, use it for posts and the worms would eat them up. It's not a timber tree – there's nothing it can be used for. That's how it got to be that old!'

After Carpenter Shih had returned home, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, 'What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with those useful trees? The cherry apple, the pear... the rest of those fructiferous trees ... as soon as their fruit is ripe, they are torn apart... Their utility makes life miserable for them, and so they don't get to finish out the years Heaven gave them, but are cut off in mid-journey. They bring it on themselves... And it's the same way with all other things.



'As for me, I've been trying a long time to be of no use, and now that I'm about to die, I've finally got it. This is of great use to me. If I had been of some use, would I ever have grown this large?

...When Carpenter Shih woke up, he reported his dream. His apprentice said, 'If it's so intent on being of no use, what's it doing there at the village shrine [lending an air of sanctity to the spot]?'

'Shhh! Say no more! It's only *resting* there. If we carp and criticize, it will merely conclude that we don't understand it.... It protects itself in a different way from ordinary people. Try to judge it by conventional standards, you'll be way off!' (59-61)

In the remainder of this essay, we will seek to address wandering play roughly following Zhuangzi's model in this passage (and others). That is, we will seek to address wandering play through a series of paradoxes, which we hope to illuminate, but not resolve. Our approach will be briefly to sketch a paradox, introduce a portion of *Zhuangzi* in which we see the paradox suggested, and explain how we see the paradox through the processual lens of elements of Daoist movement practices.

The essay will focus on three paradoxes. The first is of the Undifferentiated Particular that recasts a current liberal definition of the individual as both autonomous yet universal. This contradictory definition asks individuals to think of themselves as self-determining at the same time as recognizing that all individuals have the same objective, which is to acquire capital – the one contradicts the other. The Undifferentiated Particular suggests

instead that the individual is a simultaneous participation of particularity within wholeness. This is effected by self-transformation through co-extensive connection, recounted, as this essay argues, in Zhuangzi's allegorical figure of The Hinge of the Way. The second is the paradox of Wei Wu Wei, or 'doing by not doing', that brings together the concepts of all doing being accompanied by undoing, and of doing that must overcome doing. Exploring this paradox we turn to Zhuangzi's reflections on Cook Ding and Woodworker Qing. The final paradox we explore is that of 'Leading by Following', in which the concept of cause and effect is brought gently into question through the concept of rules being made to be broken, and assumptions being necessary to their own interruption, which we approach first through Zhuangzi's treatment of 'The Penumbra and the Shadow', and then by a return to Cook Ding.

### **The Paradox of the Undifferentiated Particular**

Zhuangzi's Daoism, like Daoism in general, emphasizes the underlying unity and undifferentiability of ultimate reality.<sup>7</sup> At the same time it recognizes the existence and differentiability of the myriad things in the world. This is not best understood as a distinction between appearance and reality as it is in various forms of Upanishadic Hinduism, for example. Zhuangzi commits himself to what we call The Paradox of the Undifferentiated Particular. Thus, he writes 'Heaven and Earth are one attribute, the ten thousand things are one horse' (35), simultan-

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<sup>7</sup> For the sake of convenience, we shall employ the standard fiction that *Zhuangzi* has a single author, Zhuangzi.



ously recognizing the existence of particular things and their undifferentiable unity. Elsewhere he contends that 'Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was and the ten thousand things are one with me' (38). But he cautions against '[wearing] out your brain trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same' (36).

The Paradox of the Undifferentiated Particular in turn, seems to us to underwrite Zhuangzi's implicit, paradoxical advice that we not let outside things affect us, while simultaneously enjoying transformation through connection.<sup>8</sup> Thus he writes:

Life, death, preservation, loss, failure, success, poverty, riches, worthiness, unworthiness, slander, fame, hunger, thirst, cold, heat – these are the alternations of the world, the workings of fate. Day and night they change place before us and wisdom cannot spy out their source. Therefore, they should not be enough to destroy your harmony; they should not be allowed to enter the storehouse of spirit. If you can harmonize and delight in them, master them and never be at a loss for joy, if you can do this day and night without break and make it be spring with everything, mingling with all and creating the moment within your own mind – this is what I call being whole in power. (70)

<sup>8</sup> For passages in which express Zhuangzi's commitment to not letting outside things affect you, see the quotation immediately below and, for example, archery under pressure (Watson (1964: 121-122) and the training of the game cock (125). For passages in which express Zhuangzi's commitment to enjoying transformation through connection, see the quotation immediately below and especially the illnesses of Masters Yu and Lai (80-1).

The key to being whole in power on Zhuangzi's view, and the key to understanding The Paradox of the Undifferentiated Particular lies in 'the hinge of the Way'. As he puts it elsewhere in the text:

Everything has its 'that', everything has its 'this'. From the point of view of 'that' you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it. So I say, 'That comes out of "this" and "this" depends on "that" – which is to say that "this" and "that" give birth to each other'... Therefore the sage does not proceed in such a way, but illuminates all in the light of Heaven. He too recognizes a 'this', but a 'this' which is also 'that', a 'that' which is also 'this'. His 'that' has both a right and a wrong in it; his 'this' too has both a right and a wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a 'this' and 'that'? OR does he in fact no longer have a 'this' and 'that'? A state in which 'this' and 'that' no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. (34-5)

The Hinge of the way is an allegorical figure for thinking of 'this' and 'that' as particular yet infused into one another at the same time. To be 'whole in power', the fusion of the self with the world should not eradicate the self or 'destroy harmony', but should become a wholeness arrived at in the co-extensive experience of infusion.

Daoist movement practice illuminates The Paradox of the Undifferentiated Particular by providing insight into being 'whole in power'. A central learning process for a Daoist movement system is to move from being in mere contact with the animate and inanimate things around one to being in connection with

them. The profound difference between contact and connection is often experienced through 'qi activation exercises'.

To start with a brief outline of a representative *qi* activation exercise, let's say one person stands with arms extended to make a circle horizontally out in front of them so that the palms face inward and the fingertips touch one another. A partner tries to slowly and firmly pull the arms in opposite directions so the fingers come apart. The two people are in contact and the fingers do usually come apart. When the person with arms extended allows their energy to flow around the circle, the exercise changes and the partner has much more difficulty in pulling the fingers apart. Yet when the person with extended arms allows their energy to flow not only around their own circle of the body, arms, hand and fingers but also outward to their partner, picking up and engaging with that partner's energy, the experience changes yet again.

In the first iteration of the exercise the two people have specific objectives in mind – usually to maintain the fingers touching and to disrupt the fingers from touching. They are limited to the contact of one physical part of their own anatomy to the other's, both distinct and well-defined in terms of force, mass, velocity and so on.

The second iteration of this exercise asks for the partner with encircled arms to work less with the goal of keeping the fingers touching than being committed to the holistic system of their entire body and the energy it continually cycles through the circulatory, pulmonary, nervous and other physiological pathways. The connectedness this puts into place, in which the touching fingers are not two separate entities but part of a

larger whole, makes it more difficult for the other partner to achieve their own aim of disrupting that touch.

Yet there is still a vast difference between the contact of one partner and the internal connectedness of the other. The possibilities of connection have only just begun. Indeed the partner generating an internal connection may have done so only to isolate their body from external influences. If, however, as in the third iteration of the exercise, they shift their set toward the external world to incorporate, literally, the other person and all the things, animals, plants, shapes, light, shadow and so on in the ecology of their particular environment, they begin to extend from their particularity into a co-extensive and connected whole. The result is not only that it becomes much more difficult, and in working with a significantly more advanced practitioner all but impossible, for the other partner to disrupt that whole by pulling the fingers apart. It is also that the desire to do so disappears as the two people working together feel part of a larger whole that each wants to sustain. Zhuangzi catches this inextricable-ness when noting 'Virtue is the establishment of perfect harmony. Though virtue takes no form, things cannot break away from it' (69).

On a more immediate scale, this is the difference between simply holding a ceramic vase, and, alternatively, being attentively aware of the way its shape locates in the hand, its weight and the tension it creates/invites in your arm/shoulder, its surface texture on your skin, the way your own scar tissue senses that texture differently from your other tissue, the warmth the vase acquires as the heat of your hand passes into the clay and returns to meet your hand, melding the two together. It is similar to being in

bathwater that cools to exactly the temperature of your body, setting off that odd simultaneity of complete relaxation and nervous uneasiness of not knowing precisely where the flesh meets the water.

Most of the time we experience these connections with the external world around us only momentarily, which is presumably why Zhuangzi says, 'if you can do this day and night without break ... this is what I call being whole in power' (69). But how does this shift in 'set toward the world' take place? Zhuangzi suggests it takes place by simultaneously bringing the many elements in that world into harmony, while not being distracted by 'likes or dislikes' (71), by knowing your 'spirit' or the form Heaven has given you (71), even though the virtuous has no form.<sup>9</sup> You do not let yourself be distracted by a partner's intent and forceful movement, or other surrounding people and things, yet you become intensely aware of them, thereby transforming contact into connection, and connection into the co-extensive.

The transformation of contact into connection into the co-extensive, from ordinary or even extraordinary martial arts practice, into wandering play, illuminates the paradox of experiencing the self as an 'undifferentiated particular' – differentiable but at the same time melded into the larger environment and thus undifferentiable. The paradox recalls the experience of being near and far yet within at the same time, with which varieties of visual perspective play. The transformation allows a shift from the idea of the particular as an isolated element of the world, towards the particular that lives the paradox of being

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Watson: 'his powers are whole, though his virtue takes no form' (1964: 70).

individual while connected, lives the paradox of doing that is ordered yet porous to need, of having form yet no form. As we have seen, Zhuangzi observes that 'Everything has its "that", everything has its "this"' (35). Yet such separation is not the way of the Daoist sage. The sage works toward a state in which 'this' and 'that' no longer find their opposites, which as we have also seen, Zhuangzi calls the 'Hinge of the Way'.

To explore further how transformation through connection leads to an experience of particularity within wholeness, we turn now to a technique called 'loose gripping' that trains in such hinging. Two people (or more, but training starts with two) work together, one attempting to keep part of the other's body – arm, trunk, feet, head, even simply a finger – encircled in a loose grip (which, in a paradigmatic instance, looks a bit like an extraordinarily light hug) while the other tries to release their body from the grip, often by simply stepping away after disturbing the energy flow of their partner using various techniques.

Clearly this could be oppositional as is the initial iteration of the *qi* activation exercise described above, yet with acquired skill, the exercise transforms into a collaborative movement in which neither partner is gripping or releasing – or both are. If the partner who is being 'gripped' moves on from the conventional teleological end of 'getting out of the grip', and toward greater sensitivity of the weight, pressure, angle of the grip, and attention to the strategies that their partner is using to respond to attempts to move out of the grip, the exercise becomes an interactive game in which each partner continually tries to shadow and absorb the movements of the other. The interaction is hinge-like in that

whatever movement one partner sends toward the other, the other responds by working out how to complement the energy of that movement. This kind of interaction is what we have called the extraordinary teleological. It is sufficient in itself. There is usually a moment when one or the other partner loses attention for a moment, and at that moment the grip is broken and the game is over, although this is not understood in terms of winning or losing. It becomes a reflection and an unpicking of the threads that leads back to the moment of change.

Yet, there is another experience in which the attention moves past the strategies of the game and the attempts at control, toward an awareness of the way that the movements of each person are turning into the movements of the other. For example, let's say that one person is standing behind the other with their arms encircling that person's upper body. The grip is incredibly light, and if you are attuned to the nuances of that person's presence there is no real need to touch the other person at all. Imagine standing on the edge of a high building with a wall immediately behind you, and then imagine standing there with nothing behind you. There is a difference. If the person standing behind moves in any way it will affect the person in front whether or not they touch them. That established, the person in front is free to move anywhere in the circle, just not out of it. The encircled person can even turn fully around to face the person behind them. All they have to do then is raise their arms and each person is encircled by the other.

This maneuver could simply be a strategy to gain advantage. On the other hand it can be the beginning of a sensitivity to the way that one person's

movement is not separate from the other's, that however the other person responds is not a countermovement but an extension of the first movement. To return to the figure of the Hinge of the Way: it is as if the hinge becomes not only flexible but also a spiral rather than a circle around the central core. The opening of the hinge simply continues going around, past the 180 degree flatness, past the 270 degree backwards bend, and eventually past the 360 degree turn that should bring it back to where it started – but the flexibility and spiral nature of the core has shifted it imperceptibly so that the 'beginning' is no longer where one remembers it and it is impossible to say whether a 270 degree opening, is not a 90 degree closing. The people are in a perpetual movement of energy that creates a single entity from two particular bodies, continually re-defining each of these particularities and in turn changing the nature of the single entity. There is no beginning and there is no end, there is simply the process of play that wanders in and out of particularity and wholeness. In this way an opening may also be a closing, just as a closing may also be an opening. But the Way of Daoist practice is to think not of openings and closings but of the hinge as one and simultaneously as having two (or more) parts. This orientation, the embrace of this paradox, enables wandering play.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The next section draws from a series of conferences papers by Richard Schubert: 'Secularization and Goal Orientation in Western Martial Practice: A Taoist Perspective' presented at the 2009 Annual Conference of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, Pacific Grove, California, June 16, 2009; 'Goals and Goallessness in the Martial Arts', presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Philosophy and the Martial Arts as part of the 2007 Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, San Francisco,

## The Paradox of Wei Wu Wei

Laozi's Daoism is well known for its emphasis on *wu wei* ('inaction'). *Dao De Jing* tells us 'The sage goes about doing nothing' (Laozi et al 1973: Ch.2). and 'If nothing is done, then all will be well' (Ch.3). On our reading of the text, *Zhuangzi* emphasizes *wei wu wei*, ('doing by not doing'), a way of doing which has more in common with doing nothing than with ordinary doing. In specific, *Zhuangzi* emphasizes a way of doing that has the intentional profile, the non-teleological intentional character, of attentive inactivity. In *Zhuangzi* we find, following Burton Watson, that the sage engages in a 'course of action that is not founded upon any purposeful motive of gain or striving'. To connect the point directly to the concern of this paper, as Watson sees it, *Zhuangzi* 'employs the metaphor of a totally free and purposeless journey using the word "you" [Pinyin *yóu*] (to wander, or a wandering)'. (6).

However, although we are indebted to Watson for his recognition of the importance of wandering to *Zhuangzi*'s Daoism, we see wandering, as in the case of the wandering play with which we are here concerned, as a form of actual Daoist practice rather than mere metaphor. As was probably the case with countless other Daoist practitioners past and present, we see *Zhuangzi* as providing a veritable, although at times implicit, manual regarding how to

engage in wandering play.<sup>11</sup> Consider *Zhuangzi*'s treatment of Cook Ding.<sup>12</sup>

Cook Ding was cutting up an ox for the ruler Wenhui. As he moved his hands, leaned forward with his shoulder, planted his foot, and pushed with his knee, the sound of the flesh being cut and the knife slicing it were all in regular cadence as in the dance of the Mulberry Grove and the blended notes of the Jingshou music.

'Ah, admirable! That your skill should have become so consummate!' exclaimed Wenhui.

Putting down his knife, the cook replied, 'What your servant loves is the approach of the dao, more advanced than any skill. When I first began to cut up an ox, I saw it in its entirety. After three years, I ceased to see it as a whole. Now I work with my spirit and not with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and my spirit moves freely.<sup>13</sup> Following the natural forms, the knife slides through large crevices and follows the big cavities as they are...

As we read this passage, it provides substantial insight into *wei wu wei* and in doing so provides substantial insight into wandering play.

Let us begin by noting that Cook Ding describes a process of practice whereby current practice is an undoing of

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California, April 5, 2007; and 'Goals and the Martial Arts: A Taoist Perspective' presented at the University of California, Berkeley, March 15, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> There are many Daoist reading of *Zhuangzi*'s writings as training manuals.

<sup>12</sup> Hochsman and Guorong, 99; we also occasionally use the Watson translation for comparison.

<sup>13</sup> We here follow Watson (1964: 46-47), where Hochsman and Guorong have 'My senses no longer function' (99).

previous practice. Of course, in doing something this time, you move past all the other times that you have done it. But this fact might be understood and experienced in an accumulative, ordinary, teleological way or in an extraordinary teleological way, or in a nonteleological way. The latter two, as outlined in the introduction to this essay, distinguish between the traveler's use of a gourd to produce a salve to facilitate a naval victory, and the use of the gourd as a vessel with which to 'float around the rivers and lakes' constitutive of wandering (*yóu*). These two uses, the former associated with connection and the latter with the co-extensive, illuminate the difference between two different kinds of self-actualization. Through Cook Ding, Zhuangzi offers us The Paradox of *Wei Wu Wei* and illuminates the distinction among ordinary, extraordinary, and non-teleological use by applying these distinctions to doing itself.

Consider Cook Ding's description of the process by which he developed 'the approach of Dao'. When he first began carving oxen, he tells us, he saw an ox only 'in its entirety'. After several years of practice, he 'ceased to see [an ox] as a whole', instead seeing it in its complex of particularities. However, this is not a process of perceptual dissection. Cook Ding does not accumulate a more and more detailed understanding of the anatomy of an ox nor does he develop an ever-clearer perception of the parts of an ox. Instead, his continued practice in a relevant sense *undoes* his earlier practice. He comes to see *less* of the ox as an assemblage than he did at the start of his practice until he reaches the point that he does not see the ox at all. His 'perception and understanding ... come to a stop' and in the space this perceptual and cognitive inaction

provides, he experiences the opportunity for what we call wandering play.

Daoist movement practice offers further insight into doing and undoing and hence into The Paradox of *Wei Wu Wei* in a partner-work form, Whirling Arms. Looked at from the outside, while practicing the form, two people seem to be whirling their outstretched and contacting arms around and around each other's until suddenly the point of contact for the whirl releases and one partner's hand glides down the other's arm taking them off balance. But in the experience of those practicing the form, much more is going on.

In basic Whirling Arms two people face each other, each for example with their right foot forward, front feet parallel to their partner's and about an inch apart. Their feet stay rooted to the ground as they move backwards and forwards in synchrony. Into this rhythmic movement they each add an unbent arm, usually the right if the right foot is forward. The arms touch on the inside of the wrist and the partners make large circles on a vertical plane between them, in time with the to-and-fro movement of the hips and legs. The touch is light yet purposeful, as each partner looks for the opportunity to snake around up to their partner's shoulder and wipe down the length of their partner's arm, the palm of their hand connecting with their partner, uprooting their partner, and taking them in one direction or another.

With every circle of the arms each partner is initiating and responding to an action. If one partner is impelling the circle by pushing the other's wrist, the other partner needs to respond to this movement, as a feather would respond to a breeze. If, contrary to a trained performance of the form, the partner whose wrist is being pushed resists the



movement, the other partner may take advantage of that resistance and do something with it. For example, she may wipe down the resisting arm and use the resistance to initiate a reaction. Because this reaction can be anticipated, she can also prepare herself to 'catch' or respond to this reaction and guide it in a different direction. She can also wipe the resisting arm to create a vibration against its rigidity, and induce a sense of imbalance. Both movements lead to the uprooting of the partner. This kind of 'doing versus doing' can become a crude kind of wrestling in which one partner ends up dominating another.

In Whirling Arms properly performed, the aim initially is to be alert to the moment when your partner's intention shifts away from simply continuing the whirl. At times such a shift occurs quite naturally, because there are points on a vertical circle where the change in relation to gravity can alter the connection one partner has with another, allowing for a smooth and almost inevitable reversal of direction similar to that which a pendulum undergoes. At other times it is possible to sense a loss of focus or intention, or indeed of physical and energetic connection as described above, that allows one to redirect the movement. The attention required at these moments recalls tacitly-learned skills such as those needed to feel when a screw has joined two pieces of wood together and one can sense the grip of the screw at the extent of its length – if one continues turning the screwdriver the screw will turn in position and destroy its spiral grip on the wood. The doing in Whirling arms generates an interactive exchange of feeling from one person to the other, based on an alertness to the intention carried by common physical movement analogous

to the attention needed sense the grip of the screw.

Yet it is possible to work on more subtle engagement with the form as Zhuangzi's treatment of Woodworker Qing suggests.

Qing the Woodcarver carved a bell stand. When it was completed, all who saw it were astonished, as it appeared to be the work of a spirit. The Marquis of Lu saw it and asked 'where does your art come from?'

Qing replied, 'I am only a workman. How could I have any art? But still there is one thing that could be mentioned. When I set out to make a bell stand, I do not become enervated. I fast in order to still my mind. After fasting for three days, I do not think of praise, reward, titles, or gains. After fasting for five days, I no longer think of recognition or criticism, ability or inability. At the end of seven days, I forget that I have four limbs and a body. By this time the court and the ruler no longer exist – all the distractions of the external world have disappeared from my mind and my ability is concentrated. Entering into the forest I look at the natural forms of the trees. When I see a tree of perfect form from which the figure of the bell-stand emerges, I put my hands to work. If I do not find the tree I do not proceed. This way I am aligning my nature with the nature of the tree – this could be why people regarded the bell stand as the work of a spirit'. (Hochsman and Guorong 2007: 201)

Just as woodworker Qing, fasting 'for seven days', becomes 'so still that [he forgets he has] four limbs and a body' (129), the two partners face each other with wrists touching and, once the whirling is underway, remove from that moment their individual intention to do something. As students of Daoist practices learn: 'Do nothing and it all gets done'. It becomes an arrogance to direct the motion of the circle oneself. The partners work on yielding each to the other's energy, not by passively giving way to it but by encountering it and going with it, finding where the connected energy of their two bodies needs to go. If Qing, in a place where external actions 'fade away' (129), 'can see a bell stand' in a tree in the forest, then he puts his 'hand to the job of carving; if not [he lets] it go' (129) because he is 'following things as they are'. So in Whirling Arms, partners both try to harmonize even when also remaining sensitive to playing with each other's balance. They each 'do' by accepting that nothing will remain the same, that change will happen, and adopting a position of humility, of waiting. In this undoing of doing, they become aware of a simultaneous doing and undoing of intention, an awareness that becomes a yielding to collaborative form: wandering play.

### **The Paradox of Leading by Following**

Zhuangzi repeatedly challenges our ordinary understanding of causal relationships. Thus, for example, he challenges our naïve realist sense that it is the rightness of an action that causes us to judge it to be right by suggesting that it is our judging an action to be right that causes it to be right, just as 'a road is made by people walking on it' (36).

Similarly, he challenges our views about leading and following.

Consider Zhuangzi's treatment of Penumbra and Shadow:

Penumbra said to Shadow, 'A little while ago you were walking and now you're standing still; a while ago you were sitting and now you're standing up. Why this lack of independent action?'

Shadow said, 'Do I have to wait for something before I can be like this? Does what I wait for also have to wait for something before it can be like this? Am I waiting on the scales of a snake or the wings of a cicada? How do I know why it is so? How do I know why it isn't so?' (44)

As Watson points out in commenting on this passage, 'to ordinary men the shadow appears to depend upon something else for its movement, just as the snake depends upon its scales (according to Chinese belief) and the cicada on its wings' (Watson 2003: 44, note 23). But Zhuangzi questions whether such views capture the reality of the relevant causal relationships, raising what we think of as The Paradox of Leading by Following.

Daoist movement practices involve partner-forms which, like Zhuangzi's Penumbra, provide us with an opportunity to go beyond our ordinary understanding of what it is to lead and what it is to follow. As touched on above, in loose gripping one partner may 'grip' another, yet the exercise does not enter the Paradox of Leading by Following until neither partner knows who is 'gripping' whom and both are using their practice to maintain the undifferentiated two-as-wholeness while at the same time

maintaining their own particularity. Similarly, in whirling arms, yielding to a partner's energy is bound to find where the combined energy of both partners wants to go. While this is wandering, it is not without direction, or what Zhuangzi calls 'spirit', which we take to underwrite the ability to experience the world as an undifferentiated particular, to become uniquely absorbed into the energy of the moment in a way that allows a person to experience their co-extensiveness with their surroundings so as to make *wei wu wei* possible. For Daoist movement, leading and following are guided by technique, training and energy. When these are directed by what Zhuangzi calls 'spirit' the fusion of leading and following, moving and responding to movement that is wandering play, results.

One way of thinking about this spirit, or form of leading by following, is by reference to the Daoist principle of 'finding the gap', which is illustrated by returning to the example of loose gripping. If one person holds a partner from behind with their arms clasped tightly around their partner's body and over their arms, the partner being held may well feel that they are under the other person's control. They can try to muscle their way out, for example by using levering techniques, but for many this is impossible given the relative physical strength of the partner's position behind them, quite apart from missing the opportunity for wandering play. Daoist movement teaches people how to find the gap, and this begins with technique. Suppose for example, that the person being held becomes aware that their partner is standing with their feet square at shoulder width and hence is very stable side-to-side, but significantly less so front-to-back. The person being held has found a gap and can use it to free themselves, say, stepping in a

committed fashion directly backwards between the partner's feet, breaking their balance and with it their 'grip'.

However, such techniques do not necessarily work, rules are made to be broken. If a person carries out a specific technique such as just described, stepping into a point of weakness to cause loss of balance, it will simply give that partner an opportunity to close the gap. They might, for example, reposition their feet and regain their balance, potentially increasing their control. Finding the gap is not always a technical matter of recognizing a gap that is already present, but developing a practice that trains one to be alert to the shape and form, resilience and responsiveness of the partner who is holding them. In doing so the person held learns how to use the gap appropriately. Again in Cook Ding's terms, muscling one's way out is akin to the mediocre cook who 'hacks' at the animal thereby blunting the knife, a partner with technique and even more, with training, is a good cook because they can 'find the gap'. But neither is good enough to keep the metaphorical knife sharp for long. One needs the 'spirit' of co-extensiveness that leads one to carve, to create the gap.

Zhuangzi's treatment of Cook Ding illuminates the Daoist notion of spirit. Zhuangzi tells us that Ding learns to de-bone an ox not in an ordinary way, with his eyes, nor even with the extraordinary teleological skills of 'perception and understanding' but with 'spirit [that] moves where it wants'. But in moving where it wants 'spirit' does not move on its own, it transforms through co-extensiveness with and into the larger whole, 'following things as they are'. He says:

There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room – more than enough for a blade to play about it. (46)<sup>14</sup>

Leading becomes a guiding and guided following given form by 'spirit' or energy. In 'finding the gap', the person held needs to respond to their partner's stance, attention and energy, feel how it generates a wholeness with their own, and follow the continual process of interaction that results just as Cook Ding responds to the ox and interacts with it. Every hold is about the particularity of the moment in which the person being held, and 'following', and the person holding, or 'leading', cease to be aware of the distinction between leading and following, and together create an engagement that yields an opening, a gap. Learning how to make the gap happen is learning to become co-extensive, to do nothing, to let the spirit move where it needs to go.<sup>15</sup> In Daoist movement practices, only if the partners begin to feel that to lead the movement

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<sup>14</sup> Here we again follow Watson (2003), most notably, reading 'play' where Hochsman and Guorong have 'move'.

<sup>15</sup> How following can also be a kind of leading Zhangzi addresses elsewhere when he speaks specifically about leadership in terms of the 'prime minister' who pushes people behind him (65) when he leads. He continues, 'But I've heard that if the mirror is bright, no dust settles on it; if dust settles, it isn't really bright' (65). The mirror is an allegorical figure for the politician who leads 'brightly' and is always in motion, always responding to others and even to the lightest touch of the dust of things. But such a leader follows or responds constantly so that no dust settles and insists on its own specificity. Instead everything melds into particular moments, neither follower nor leader remains the same, neither the prime minister nor the people, so there is continual leadership by following.

is to follow how it makes a gap, how it leaves room for spirit, how it enables one to play, will the hold change from an attempt by one partner to control another into an opportunity for a play of energy or 'spirit'.

### **Wandering Play**

In the preceding, we have suggested that Zhuangzi differentiates among ordinary teleological use, extraordinary teleological use, and the kind of non-teleological use constitutive of wandering play. We've suggested that wandering play provides an opportunity to meaningfully experience what seems paradoxical; the undifferentiated particular, *wei wu wei*, and leaderless following. In closing, let us return to the overarching paradox of Zhuangzian wandering, the Usefulness of the Useless.

Recall Zhuangzi's treatment of the oak at Crooked Shaft. The usefulness of its uselessness consists in the contribution its uselessness makes to its continued healthy living. Its continued healthy living depends on a particular kind of uselessness that provides it with the opportunity to simply be what it is and experience its *de*, particular virtue or power, (Hanzi: 德) in connection to the world around it.<sup>16</sup> The usefulness of wandering play consists in the fact that it provides this same opportunity, which it can do only because of its non-teleological quality, in specific, its aimlessness.

As we see it, in Zhuangzi's view healthy living becomes possible only when we experience our real power, which we can do only when we have aligned our nature with the nature of the things around us

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<sup>16</sup> Note Zhuangzi's term: 'power' and his contrast with 'use'.

as Woodworker Qing suggests. Daoist play provides an opportunity to realize your inner nature, and hence your *de* (Hanzi: 德), your particular virtue. For Zhuangzi it seems, to experience your inner nature, and with it your *de*, is to experience your relationship to 'the 10,000 things' the myriad things in the world, and to *dao* (道), in one of its primary senses, the universe in its totality.

Woodcarver Qing doesn't, as he sees it, create bell stands. He observes the 'natural forms of the trees', and, when he finds a tree 'from which the figure of the bell-stand emerges' he joins in with that emergence. On our reading, he does not improve himself or the world and in an important sense, he doesn't change himself or the world either, although he changes the processes that connect him to the world. What he does is align his already existing nature with the already existing nature of the tree. The result is a transformation, but in a relevant sense, neither a change nor an improvement. In Daoist practice, one doesn't create something that wasn't there to begin with, one simply works by doing and undoing with the *qi* (Hanzi: 氣), or

'energy', that is or becomes present. What one does is reorient oneself, as in Woodcarver Qing's case, so as to become aware of that *qi*, aware that one is an undifferentiated particular of it. In an important sense, Woodworker Qing doesn't create bell stands, he engages in a process of leading by following that reorients himself and others towards what was already there, before he began carving: that is finding the gap that enables play.

Qing says, 'I am simply matching up "Heaven" with "Heaven"' – matching up what is in the moment becoming of the tree, the bell stand and his embodied practice of carving. At that point he does not have to carve the bell stand at all, and no end is attained if he carves it. Yet when he does carve the bell stand despite the absence of an end, he is practicing Dao. As other passages in Zhuangzi and certain Daoist movement exercises make clear, in doing so he experiences the paradoxes of the Undifferentiated Particular, *Wei Wu Wei*, and Leading by Following. That is, he moves beyond ordinary and extraordinary ends to engage in wandering play.

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