

A Review on Zheng Kai's *A Survey on Daoist Political Philosophy**

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Daoist political philosophy is a hot point in the study of Chinese philosophy. This paper introduces and comments on Professor Zheng Kai's new book from four aspects, including the concept of Daoist political philosophy, the political philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi, the political philosophy of Huang Laodao, and the comparison between the political philosophy of Confucianism and Daoism. While speak highly of the systematic integration of the study in Daoist political philosophy, I also point out the shortcomings of this book.

Keywords: Daoist political philosophy, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Huanglao, Zheng Kai

Due to the development of Western political philosophy, how to explore Chinese political philosophy has become a new problem for Chinese philosophers nowadays. They, in recent decades, mainly explore the Confucian political philosophy in the context of Western philosophy, which results in ignoring the Daoist ideas on political issues relatively. Hence, Dr. ZHENG Kai 鄭開, the philosopher devoting to the study of Daoism and its political philosophy, points out that there are a special set of concepts, clear theoretical boundaries and unique theoretical characteristics in the political philosophy of Daoism. Daoist political philosophy, consequently, has been deemed to be a strict and real political philosophy by the author.

This monograph, consisting of twelve chapters and covering nearly all the important figures, concepts and issues, is the result of the author's long-term research. It is easy to find that twelve chapters are divided into four parts, beginning with summarizing the Daoist political philosophy first, then showing the political philosophies of *Laozi* 老子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and *Huang-Lao school* (*Huanglao Xuepai* 黃老學派) in later two parts, finally discussing the overlaps in political philosophy between Daoism and Confucianism. Now I'll summarize the main idea of this book and then give my comments.

The First Part Surveys What Is Daoist Political Philosophy

Different from the political ideal of the three generations of Confucian sages (*Sandai Shengwang* 三代聖王) and the Hellenic city-state background of Plato's *Republic*, the political philosophy of Daoism does not rely on any kind of political system. In the author's view, Daoism distinguishes two worlds: the metaphysical world and the physical world. Further, the metaphysical world is dominated by *Dao* 道, while the physical world is full of ethics and politics. Therefore, those ethical and political concepts are interpreted from the perspective of *Dao*. For instance, Mysterious Virtue (*Xuande* 玄德) coming from the spirit of *Dao* transcends Confucian

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Illustrious Virtue (*Mingde* 明德). Similar to the ancient Greek concept *Physis*, Daoist concept *Nature* also involves the dimension of *Wu* 無. What's more, Chaos-Order (*Hundun-Zhixu* 渾沌-秩序) of Zhuangzi, Dao of being an Emperor (*Didao* 帝道), Persist in One (*Zhiyi* 執一), Nature of Name (*Mingli* 名理) of Huang-Lao school have been equipped with the negative virtue of *Dao*, which shows the basic framework of Daoist political philosophy. In general, Daoist political philosophy is the application of metaphysical Dao in the political field.

The Second Part Focuses on the Political Philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi

The author regards *Xuande* as the cornerstone of Daoist political philosophy. *Xuande* cancels the boundary of Confucian Kindheartedness (*Ren* 仁), Righteousness (*Yi* 義), Rite (*Li* 禮) and Law (*Fa* 法) and makes them fuzzy by virtue of its mysterious trait coming from *Dao*. Besides, *Wuwei* in the field of politics and *Ziran* in the area of ethics are both rooted in the Daoist *Xuande*. Contrary to Confucian positive political attitude, *Xuande* represents a negative trend in government management that the Sage-King (*Shengwang* 聖王) should keep its place and not intervene in political management. In this way, political order will automatically run by itself. It, to a large extent, is the *Hundun* status in Zhuangzi's political metaphor. *Hundun*, the Emperor of the central, dies after be chiseled out seven holes of eyes, ears, nose and mouth (*Qiqiao* 七竅), which indicates that the best way to be a king is keeping confused. A confused king will not meddle in political affairs, and this *Wuwei* attitude leads to the automatic running of the political system. On the whole, taking *Xuande* as the starting point, Laozi's negative *Wuwei* political philosophy is mainly in response to the Confucian positive politics. Meanwhile, Zhuangzi's *Hundun* adapts the spirit of *Xuande* to the operation of political system.

The Third Part Probes Into the Political Philosophy of Huang-Lao School

Since the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.), the virtue dominated politics (*Wangdao Zhengzhi* 王道政治) and the power dominated politics (*Badao Zhengzhi* 霸道政治) were two main political models. In this situation, Huang-Lao school, based on the *Xuande* spirit of Daoism, advocated a new political model named *Didao*. According to classics *Guan Zi* 管子, *Lvshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and *Huainan Zi* 淮南子, the author finds that *Didao* in state governance corresponds to the One (*Taiyi* 太一), compared Confucian Wangdao imitating the Yin-Yang 陰陽 and Legalist *Badao* abiding by four seasons. *Taiyi*, similar to the *Xuande*, lays the theoretical foundation for Huang-Lao's political philosophy, which can't meet the current need of state governance. So, Huang-Lao school further penetrated metaphysical *Taiyi* into the Rite (*Li* 禮) and Law (*Fa* 法), then developed a set of Daoist state governance techniques such as (*Xingming Zhi Shu* 刑名之術). Those techniques are the expression of Persist in One (*Zhiyi* 執一), the specific application of *Taiyi*. From a historical point of view, Laozi & Zhuangzi and Huang-Lao, as to political philosophy, approved *Dao* as their theoretical basis, but there was also a major difference between them: Laozi & Zhuangzi constructed the meta theory of Daoist political philosophy, while Huang-Lao school developed it to be a complete set of state governance theories and techniques.

The Fourth Part Studies the Overlaps Between Daoist and Confucian Political Philosophies

In the previous discussion, the author who always emphasizes that Daoist *Xuande* politics breaks through Confucian *Mingde* politics has further noticed that there are some overlaps between Daoist and Confucian in political philosophy. *Wuwei* is the first intersection between Confucianism and Daoism, because Confucius

once praised the Sage-King *Shun* 舜's *Wuwei* politics by keeping good virtue and not interfering in specific administrative activities. In the author's opinion, the Confucian politics is still based on rites and music, but its *Wuwei* attribute in political management, sage personality and practical wisdom, to some extent, comes from Daoism. Besides, *Zhongdao* 中道 in *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy representing the mean course has been regarded as the second cross point. Through articles such as *On Leveling All Things* (*Qiwu Lun* 齊物論) and *Nourishing the Lord of Life* (*Yangsheng Zhu* 養生主), the author points out that *Zhuangzi* pursues the state of *Zhongdao* in the field of nature, ethics, politics and life, which is supplementary with Confucian Mean (*Zhongyong* 中庸) mutually. Then, the philosophy centered on life and spirit of *Huang-Lao* school has been explored in its classic *King Huang's Internal Classic* (*Huangdi Neijing* 黃帝內經). Reaching the metaphysical spirit status through focusing on human life is the common point shared by Confucianism and *Huang-Lao* school. In short, *Wuwei*, *Zhongdao* and *Life & Spirit* are the three overlaps between Daoism and Confucianism.

On the Whole, I Have the Following Comments Based on the Brief Introduction Above

1. The author abstracts the Daoist core concepts such as *Xuande*, *Ziran-Wuwei*, *Hundun-Zhixuxi* and *Didao* etc., and outlines the system of Daoist political philosophy. Compared with *On Daoist Political Philosophy* (*Daojia Zhengzhi Zhexue Yanjiu* 道家政治哲學研究) published by Dr. MEI Zhensheng 梅珍生 in 2010, ZHENG pays more attention to Daoist "virtue" of *Xuande* than Daoist "nature". From the perspective of virtue, the relationship between Daoist *Xuande* politics and Confucian *Mingde* politics has been further discussed. Besides, *Huang-Lao* school has been studied deeply, which expands the scope of Daoist political philosophy.

2. Western political philosophy is often regarded as the theoretical background, which enlarges the vision of Daoist political philosophy. Different from *City-State*, *Rights*, *Freedom*, *Natural Law* and *Justice* that mostly discussed by the West, Daoist reflects *virtues*, *rites* and *laws* in a negative way and further asks for the metaphysical *Dao* as the ultimate basis of human politics and ethics. In this way, the author highlights the uniqueness of Daoist political philosophy from the comparative perspective between the East and West.

3. Some details need further discussion. The author, for instance, discusses the overlaps between Daoism and Confucianism instead of making the final summary on Daoist political philosophy. To some extent, it is a brave beginning and weak ending. Because I, as a book reader and reviewer, indeed hope to see the author's final review and comment on Daoist political philosophy. Besides, the article *On Confucianism* (*Shuo Ru* 說儒) published in 1934 by *HU Shi* 胡適 had explained the original similarities between Daoism and Confucianism, but the author doesn't refer to *HU*'s point of view.

In a word, this is a novel, wide-ranging and profound monograph on Daoist political philosophy, which is worth recommending.

Drawing on Daoist dialectics, this article shows how we can reframe this issue by revealing the complications that bind even seemingly intractable opposites, thereby undermining the rationale for violence. By recognizing the ontological parity between (US/Western) Self and (Chinese/non-Western) Other, we may begin to shift IR/world politics from hegemony to engagement, the "tragedy" of great power politics to the freedom of discovery and creativity. Friedberg is a Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University. 14 J. Stapleton Roy, "Strategic Challenges for the US-China Relationship"; Ibid., p. 36. A former ambassador to China (1991-5), Roy currently directs the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Sinologists usually present Chinese thought as philosophy for non-philosophers. They present Daoism (Taoism) as a paradigm. I agree that Daoism is a paradigm, but proceed on the hypothesis that it is serious philosophy. My view of Daoism obviously differs from the tradition. Still, they bifurcate the tradition and maintain that the mainstream traditional thinkers, particularly the Daoists, had a radically different way of thinking. The two strands of Classical thought never touched. I disagree and attempt to produce a unified interpretive theory which integrates philosophy of language in the social-political dialogue of the period. I argue here that the alleged uniquely Chinese way of thinking is an artifact of naive interpretation and uncritical parroting of a traditional Confucian credo. Traditionally traced to the mythical Laozi "Old Philosopher," Philosophical Daoism owes more to "philosopher Zhuang" (Zhuangzi) (4th Century BCE). Daoism is an umbrella that covers a range of similarly motivated doctrines. The term "Daoism" is also associated with assorted naturalistic or mystical religions. Sometimes the term "Lao-Zhuang Philosophy" is used to distinguish the philosophical from the more religious "Huang-Lao" (Yellow Emperor-Laozi) strain of Daoist thought. Survey of Colleges in the West: Confucianism is taught mostly in Asian Studies or Religion. By contrast, in the East: Confucianism is decisively a moral philosophy. Confucian religiosity: moral perfection as a spiritual quest. Word Bank Ying Zheng army copper. More information. Advanced Placement (AP) Social Studies Courses. 228 Philosophy Mission The study of philosophy is based on the recognition that all human beings are engaged in a search for meaning and values with which to interpret their experiences and give order. More information. Ancient China.