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Rachel See

Johnson County Community College, rsee@stumail.jccc.edu

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Synchronicity, Duality and Immortality in Daoist Thought

Abstract

The history of Daoist expression can at times seem segmented and contradictory, making it challenging to achieve a truly holistic understanding of the discourse. However, in all the variety of interpretation regarding the *Dao* there exists an unchanged and carefully constructed cosmology. In the article, this cosmology is presented as a discourse on the nature of duality. Because the nature of the *Dao* is absolute unity, a chaotic and changing existence such as we have must necessarily be created by the movements between opposing forces. It is the interplay of all duality that creates a material world of day and night, life and death. The dual forces that gave rise to the cosmos are in essence the same as those that gave rise to the mind. It is within the synchronicity of all movements that the *Dao* can be found, the primordial pattern of return which governs all things. To understand Daoist expression is to understand that duality does not signify separation or competition. Dual forces are instead perfect compliments of each other, each necessary to provide the other with meaning. It is the complimentary nature of duality that creates the absolute unity of the *Dao*. The interplay of dualities and the unifying pattern to which they belong find their apex of expression in the notion of immortality. To identify how these metaphysical themes are interpreted differently, the article examines conceptions of immortality as either achievable figurative understanding or true physical eternal life.

Cover Page Footnote

Dennis Arjo, PhD, was the JCCC faculty adviser for this paper.

A basic introduction to the nucleus of Daoist wisdom requires a short explanation of what can be known, and what cannot be known. There is a secret *Dao* that creates and sustains all aspects of the universe. The secret *Dao* has analogous concepts such as emptiness and femininity, but despite these descriptions there remains “the mystery of its inner essence” (Baird 365). This secret *Dao* is the true *Dao*, meant to be experienced but never mentally quantified. What can be known and quantified is the extrinsic *Dao*. Most gracefully described by Forrest Baird, this “manifest *Dao* discloses itself in the way Nature works, and Nature is forever underway, always on the go. Within the flux a constant can be observed, a master plan, pattern, or principle-return through the opposite” (365). This pattern of divine movement and transformation creates a cosmology of synchronous emanations. It is through these correlations that dualities such as life and death come to be understood. An analysis of these metaphysical precepts will allow for a better understanding of the mystical experience an individual may have with the *Dao*. Within the contexts of metaphysical and mystical perceptions, lies the concept of immortality concept. Conceptions of immortality reflect how different interpretations of the same cosmological construct can produce a rich variance in expression.

The variety found in expressions of Daoism can upset a proper understanding if it is too rigidly delineated into the separate traditions of philosophy and religious practice (Baird 361). Before delving into this rich legacy of 2600 years of belief and custom-it is necessary to say that strictly delineating the “philosophical” from the “religious” Daoism betrays a reductionist logic. Not affording complexity the appropriate value prevents an integrated sense of understanding. Healing practices, Chinese indigenous folklore, “cultural custom and national identity” have all influenced this theosophical discourse through the ages (Littlejohn 5).

The *Dao*, like most religious notions, has manifested itself in varying degrees of pseudo-secular and metaphysical embodiments (Baird 369). Rather than identifying modes of thought within the Daoist discourse as either “philosophical” or “religious” I will be referring to them as “metaphysical” and “mystical”. I feel this draws attention *to* rather than away from the fact that varying conceptions and practices all exist interdependently. This parallels the development of many of the major religions, which also entertain “the coexistence of separate philosophical, prophetic, and cult traditions” (Verellen 322). The divergent manifestations of this tradition may best be understood by asking whether cosmological ideologies address “the place of humanity within the larger framework of universal energy patterns” or “meditation methods and [outlining] the various phases a person has to undergo to recover primordial purity” (Kohn 131).

An analysis of Daoist precepts is best served by placing them within the relevant historical context. The Classical Period of Daoism is roughly defined as 525/450 BCE-206 BCE. It was during this time key texts were composed in part and then assembled into various early versions (Littlejohn 7 & Baird 361,362). The Jixia Academy played a fundamental role in consolidating Daoist concepts and texts. Operational during the second phase of the Eastern Zhou (Warring States Period), the Jixia academy comprised a large group of intellectuals, bureaucrats, displaced nobles and master/teachers (Littlejohn 8). Before this, Daoism existed as many seemingly unconnected elements and oral traditions, including the pervasive influences of Chinese indigenous religion. After the collapse of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) Daoism and Confucianism emerged as the most influential schools of thought. It wasn't until the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) that Daoism gained a coherent identity (Baird 361).

The history of the Daoist tradition can be said to be “the history of the interpretation of its two seminal texts,” bodies of literature with whose origins are ambiguous but which have been

attributed to Laozi and Zhuangzi. Most of the significant works appeared during the first period of Classical Chinese Philosophy, some as early as 525 BCE, and the interpretive discourse began. Along side Laozi and Zhuangzi was Yang Chu, whose work was also influential at this time. However, his tendencies toward individualism and hedonism set him apart from other early historical/mythical figures (Baird 362). Less political in nature, the seminal work known as the *Zhuangzi*, was said to be originally 52 chapters written by Master Zhuang Zhou. The version in use today was edited and compiled by Guo Xiang in 312 CE. This work had only 33 chapters, and was a compilation of from many different literary sources. It is believed that the chapters 1-7 contain the oldest material, which is most likely from Zhuang Zhou (Littlejohn 25,26). The *Zhuangzi* compilation by Guo Xiang is suspected to be substantially different from the lost Zhuang Zhou narrative, with the alterations now composing an important part of the text's character (Moeller 11).

Laozi is said to be the original author of the *Daodejing*, however there is significant debate over whether he existed as a historical figure or was a mythological personification of ancient orally transmitted wisdom. As a possible historical figure, Laozi is identified as "Lao Dan" (old master) by early sources. Texts dated to 200 BCE depict him as supposedly having known Confucius, which would have placed him in the sixth century BCE. He was described as "a retired imperial archivist" (Baird 363). Other sources, such as Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian* also depict him as an archivist who interacted with Confucius. This time he is given the distinct individual name of Li Erh, and said to be from Honan province.

The first recorded parable of Laozi can be found in *Records of the Historian*. It recites the story of Laozi and the gatekeeper. Laozi is traveling on a journey to the West to escape from political upheaval when his journey is interrupted. He is stopped by the gatekeeper, just before

departing into the wilderness, who begs that Laozi share his wisdom. Laozi consents, composing the five thousand-character work that would become the *Daodejing*, then withdraws (363). Later he would be “venerated as the personification of the eternal *Dao* . . .” and thought to reappear for each age of man (Littlejohn 9). Despite sporadic literary accounts, archeological evidence recently found in Guodian and Mawangdui points to the *Daodejing* as being an oral tradition without a distinct author, spoken aloud for generations before being transcribed (Moeller 2-5).

After the proliferation of the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and other influential works, different schools of metaphysical thought emerged during these early stages. After the beginning of the Han, there was a shift from Classical to the Middle Period of Chinese Philosophy (206 BCE-1644 CE). For the Daoist tradition, this meant an exploration of the cosmological aspects of the *Dao* as well as ethical and social deliberations (Baird 362). Huang-Lao-Daoism was the school of thought most often followed by members of the Han imperial court. It was political in nature, and focused on the *Dao* as a source of knowledge on how to properly organize society. The name refers to Huang-di or “the Yellow Emperor, a legendary ancient ruler who was revered as an ideal monarch and founding father of Chinese civilization” (Moeller 12,13).

The School of Pure Conversation also developed at this time as a sort of anti-thesis to Huang-Lao-Daoism. The virtuous life was one absorbed in contemplation and discussion of the arts and philosophy. Hedonism was stressed over abstinence. Also necessary to the virtuous life was indulgence in “eating, drinking, recreation, travel, friendship, and family life.” (Baird 362) Although indulgent and hedonistic, The School of Pure Conversation also emphasized the importance of refinement. Yang Chu’s work *The Liezi*, sometimes referred to as “the third classic of Daoist philosophy,” was largely responsible for inciting the development of Hedonist

interpretations. This ethos found its zenith in the school of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove who were “said to have carried Daoist completely spontaneous behavior to excess” (362).

The metaphysical discourse of Daoism slowed at this time. The second century CE saw Daoism evolve under the adoption of a framework for mystical belief and practice. The group of “celestial masters” was founded by Zhang Daoling as the first group to self-identify with the newly emergent mysticism (Moeller 18). Zhang Daoling “called himself *Tianshi* (Heavenly Master)” and had a substantial group of devotees “with whom he roamed the countryside in search of the elixir of life. Sometimes he would take them to the top of Cloud Terrace Mountain (Yuntaishan) and there invent ordeals to test their magic powers” (Sullivan 101). For Zhang Daoling and others after him, Laozi was revered as “the creator of the universe (and) was believed to have intervened innumerable times in human history” (Verellen 322). Whereas metaphysical conceptions had previously spurred dialogue on political efficacy, they now manifested as practices and beliefs designed to align the *qi* of the body with the movements of the *Dao*.

Elements of the Chinese indigenous religion formed the basis of Doaist cosmology. In order to understand the nature of the *Dao* as synchronous movements, whose reciprocal nature unifies dual forces, it is necessary to recognize the cosmological conception of emanations. It was from emptiness and nothingness (*wu*) that all things sprang (Moeller 15). From nothingness, the *Dao* emerges. From the *Dao* emanates a descending hierarchy of various manifestations of its nature. This hierarchy is more aptly described as one of synchronicity, not subservience (Littlejohn 21). *Dao* is the essence of existence, but as it transcends life and death so too does it transcend existence and nothingness. It is found in the dynamic relationship between all dual

forces. Not only is it found within the movement of destruction and reproduction dualities create, it is the unifying whole to which both belong (Kohn 133).

All existence is manifested through the *Dao*. All materialized things form through an aspect of the *Dao* known as *qi*. *Qi* is a form of vital life force, through which things gain their physical expression. The opposing aspects within *qi* activate the existence of the material world. All things exist, not as stoic realities as we perceive them, but as constant transmutations of *qi* during its ceaseless movements between *yin* and *yang* aspects (Kohn 133). It is in this perpetual flux of *yin* and *yang* that *qi* is embodied, giving existence to the material world. The *yin* and *yang* aspects of *qi* exist within the nature of the *Dao*; as it is an existential pattern of movements to which all things, even existence and non-existence, adhere.

This cosmological conception gives unity to different focal perceptions and frameworks of interpretation. It is apparent in all influential texts, regardless of a politicized message. The emanative quality within the nature of the *Dao* is addressed in the *Daodejing*:

“There was something undifferentiated and yet complete, which existed before heaven and earth. Soundless and formless, it depends on nothing and does not change. It operates everywhere and is free from danger. It may be considered the mother of the universe. I do not know its name; I call it *Tao*” (Baird 376).

“Heaven obtained the One and became clear. Earth obtained the one and became tranquil. The spirit beings obtained the one and became divine. The valley obtained the one and became full. The myriad things obtained the one and became full.” (Baird 380).

“Man models himself after Earth. Earth models itself after heaven. Heaven models itself after *Tao*. And *Tao* models itself after Nature” (Baird 377).

The *yin* and *yang* aspects of *qi* are symbolic of all opposing forces, existent in a constant movement toward balance. The *yin* aspect is the “female as passive, supple, warm and dark.” *Yang* is the “male as aggressive, rigid, cold and light” (Littlejohn 21). Typically the female is identified as temporal, the male as ethereal, but specific representations of qualities have some

variance. *Yin* and *yang* exist in constantly changing phases of existence. The phase of existence that manifests is dependent upon how much *yin* energy is present in relation to the amount of *yang* energy present. The possible combinations of *yin* and *yang* energy give rise to the conception of “the Five Phase Worldview” (26). The Five Phase Worldview recognizes that the tangible world is an expression of the five combinations of *yin* and *yang* energy. The interactive relationship of *yin* and *yang* is embodied in the phases of “lesser *yang*, greater *yang*, *yin-yang*, lesser *yin*, and greater *yin*”. These distinctions of varying combinations of *yin/yang* that give material world its existence have corresponding directions, colors and aspects. Far from any kind of “static solidity” these manifestations of *qi* “move into each other continuously”. The physical aspects produced from the five phases of transition are wood, fire, earth, water and metal (Kahn 43,44).

As humans, we exist as a microcosm of this cosmological creation. Livia Kohn describes our existential nature as

“A physical cosmic form, the body is nothing but a mixture of the powers of heaven and Earth. The spirit, the most important aspect of the human being, is formless and of highest numinosity. It is identical with the *Dao* of the cosmos and represents it on the human level. When the spirit is at peace in the physical form, the human being is complete as a cosmic and spiritual entity” (133).

The hierarchy of emanations is so that even humans in their lowly role as one of the “ten thousand things” equitable to “straw dogs” (ceremonial objects which are immediately discarded after serving their purpose) are given a nature that is explicitly reflective of the eternal and all encompassing *Dao* (Baird 376-381). We do not exist in subservience but as a synchronous microcosm of the cosmic whole. However, our role in this metaphysical existence is to reflect the truth of the *Dao*, as it is the numinous force through which all things exist. A final condition in this cosmological conception is our natural call to align with the cosmic principle through the

individual aspect of the *Dao* we each possesses as *de*. There is a natural structure through which power flows unimpeded, any lower aspects being a direct reflection of the highest aspects. However, should we disrupt the synchronicity of this natural power structure we will interrupt the emanative flow of energy. The danger lies in ego-cultivation and attachment to the senses, because this places the ego ahead of *de* as we begin to rely on our own will, not alignment with the *Dao*, to cause personality characteristic and life events (366). It is the discourse on correcting the emanative flow of energy that is central to all interpretations of Daoism.

A distinguishing feature of Chinese thought is the conception of reality as hierarchical but engaging in synchronous movements because the principles correlations. As has already been stated, the inner world, natural world, and the aspect of divinity are seen as possessing mirrored qualities of one another (Coward 478). Man is a microcosm of nature, which in turn is a microcosm of the universe, which exists as a reflection of the *Dao*. The notion of synchronicity and its importance in both metaphysical and mystical Daoism is related to but transcends the structure of emanations. Other religious traditions such as Shinto, Sufism, Hinduism, and gnostic Christian traditions similarly use a doctrine of emanations in cosmological interpretations (*New World Encyclopedia*). If the hierarchy of emanations has an implicit valuation system it cannot support an axiom of synchronicity. This is because synchronicity reflects the pattern of correlation; all similarly constituted things existing in the same proportions. It is the dynamic relationships within a correlative existence that give shape to a great pattern of movement: the essence of the *Dao*.

Synchronicity can be teased out directly from the cosmology of subsequent processions suggested by the statement, “The principles of the cosmos are the same as the principles of my mind.” (Coward 478) The relationship of *yin* and *yang*, which gives shape and form to material

existence, is also present in the human soul. The celestial aspect of the human soul is *shen* and is a reflection of the *yang* principle. The terrestrial part of the human soul is *gui*, and is a reflection of the *yin* principle (479). In this way, the correlation of similar principles leads to a parallel and concurrent cosmic force operating in all levels. This “interrelation of heaven and man” is referred to as *Tian-ren zhi qi*, as all manifestations of the Dao have inherently the same nature and are subject to the same processes, our inner psyche must necessarily have a “corresponding meaning in the external reality.” The implications apparent in this were the inspiration of Jung’s conception of the archetype and collective unconscious (481). The effects of synchronicity may give the appearance of cause and effect. However, cause and effect relationships are not adequate descriptors because the forces described operate from interdependence rather than causation. A disruption in one area does not necessarily *cause* a disruption in another corresponding area, but it will be repeated because of its incorporation in the great pattern to all things (482).

The *Secret of the Golden Flower*, a work probably written by Wang Chongyang around 1150 CE, remarks on developing the self as “an enrichment of consciousness which will unite the inner and outer worlds of reality”. In this work the *Dao* is said to create the myriad forms of existence through the aspects of *hun* and *po*. *Hun* is bright and ethereal, while *po* is dark, sexual and temporal. After death, the *po* aspect decomposes as part of the pattern of destruction and renewal on the terrestrial plane. The *hun* aspect is also recycled but it recycles into the “animating principle of the cosmos”. The *Secret of the Golden Flower* relies on the notion of synchronicity through correlation in its conception of the self. Here our human egos are discarded in favor of a heavier reliance on our inner *de*. The self exists at the perfect balance of *hun* and *po* & *shen* and *gui* aspects. The self is in perfect harmony with individual and cosmological principles. As we move into the balanced state of self our perception moves in

ever widening circles of encompassment. Influenced by the harmonious center of correlative aspects, Carl Jung coined the term “circumambulation” to describe the continual enlargement of consciousness as increased freedom from “inner and outer bondage” is attained (Coward 485-488).

The metaphysical understanding of all things within and without of existence being correlated, and part of a synchronous pattern of movement has implications for notions of duality. All things occur through the aspect of *qi*, and the interaction of *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* and *yang* are the dual notions of the passive, dark, feminine and the aggressive, light, masculine (Littlejohn 21). Although these notions exist as duality, they challenge conceptions of duality as representing a meaningful dichotomy. *Yin* and *yang* do not exist in opposition to each other, signifying disunity and separation. They are actually complimentary forces, which create, sustain, and destroy one another. The dualities of existence are therefore, not true divisions, but complimentary components of some greater whole. The opposing aspects of duality are not true partitions, but are perfect compliments the absence of whom would destroy all meaning. If we were to imagine that beauty and ugliness existed perfectly divisible from each other, and we esteemed beauty as good and ugliness as bad, we might think ugliness less than beauty and attempt to destroy it. To do so would be a great error because “not even beauty should strive to be only beauty, because in this striving it will destroy itself.” (22) Without ugliness beauty has no significance.

This method of recasting duality from divisible, oppositional forces into complimentary parts without which there is no meaning calls into question our capacities from constantly making and recognizing distinctions. Distinctions become particularly problematic, because not only do they see dichotomy when there is unity, they also necessarily elevate one and devalue

another. By its nature the *Dao* is a synchronous pattern caused by the interactions of principles that are all fundamentally the same. The nature of duality is what gives meaning to all things. This complimentary quality of duality creates unity, as the two component parts are now defined by a system of relation that constitutes a larger whole (Baird 365).

Daoism conceptualizes duality as being an inherent force of unification, not of separation. All things and their apparent opposite must now be understood as perfectly complimentary and signifying unity. The reason for unity to appear as duality is because it is necessary for motion, for change, for the synchronicity that is the *Dao*. Without duality there would be no existence, there would be only stoicism and non-being. The interaction of dual aspects is the only way that ‘being’ can be generated. That dynamic quality of movement and relation that embodies the dualistic relationship propels us out of non-being. The functionality of duality as being an intrinsically equalizing force ensures that all things come full circle; day will turn to night, and life will turn to death. This is the cycle of return, where all moving things move towards a point of balance (Baird 365, 366).

It can be said to be true that the oppositional forces we experience do exist; such as strong and weak, health and illness. Although dualities are complimentary components of a unifying whole, saying they are equal is not saying they are exactly the same (Littlejohn 22). A serious problem arises, if the correlative and unifying aspects of duality are forgotten. When dual forces are conceptualized as distinctions great social ills arise. Although distinctions create morality, beauty, and treasure, they also create immorality, ugliness and thieves. To distinguish something as “mine not yours” delineates society into those who have and those who have not, poverty and crime will necessarily follow (19). These distinctions cause “all the strife in the world and usurp the perfect understanding, which is one of unity,” (16).

Distinctions arise as a result of separation from the *Dao*. Intention and deliberation are seen as oppositional forces to acting with knowledge of the *Dao*. A person must act “spontaneously and naturally” because this alleviates us from the constrictions of human cultural institutions (Littlejohn 18). A strictness of values and the dogmatization of ideals increases by degrees of separation from the *Dao*. The farther we move away from spontaneity and naturalness, the more social bindings is needed to keep it in place (33). Rational thought represents a disordering of relationships, because it places human constructions and the ego in a place of supremacy over the *Dao* (35). In order to return to living inside the *Dao*, an individual must cultivate emptiness. Famously quoted for its pronouncement in favor of emptiness, the *Daodejing* reads “it is what is not there in a wheel that makes it useful, and what is removed that makes something such as a cup, pitcher, door or window what it is.” Without knowledge of the *Dao*, rational thought and distinctions suffocate the mind, inhibiting spontaneous or natural action. One must learn to “not desire the fullness of the world’s knowledge, but . . . want to make themselves empty.” (19)

The individual concerned with aligning his consciousness with the principle of the *Dao* can have a direct mystical experience, in which a subjective truth may be experienced. This is the secret *Dao*, which is unknowable with words and indescribable with human conceptions, but through which all things manifest (Littlejohn 15). The symbolic nature of our speech prevents it from having any subjective truth. The language we use can only allow us to represent reality symbolically. To distinguish something as a “dog” is to call upon our notions of what a dog is, and it is the notions-not the actual dog-that find expression in speech (Baird 366). As we cannot rely on speech, or ideas concerning truth, the only way we may find alignment with the *Dao* is through *de*. *De* is the aspect of the *Dao* present inside each individual. Without rational thought

or speech, it is here we find the driving capability “to become fully and authentically human.”
(366)

We learn to access our *de* through acting with *wu-wei*. Sometimes the concept of *wu-wei* is interpreted as the necessity for non-action. Far from advocating nonaction, it is the direction to be supple and flexible-to rely on *de* and an alignment with the synchronous movements of the cosmos to produce spontaneous action. First we must recognize the limitations of our human distinctions, then we must accept that continuing to adhere to them causes a disruption in the structure through which *qi* should flow freely (Baird 366). *Wu-wei* is a relationship between release and action where we find the “paradoxical way of allowing the most effective and perfect action to occur.” (Moeller vii) Hans-Georg Moeller describes *wu-wei* in terms of a practiced runner whose conscious mind is no longer focused on controlling the mechanisms of the body, here, “perfect emptiness or non-presence (of the runner) gives way to perfect fullness or presence (of the run).” (Moeller 26) We must find a state of emptiness to allow the fullness of acting with *wu-wei*.

To achieve emptiness and the ability to act with *wu-wei* a person must learn to sever the attachments that are held to sensory images. The senses and our sensory experiences are only fleeting and impermanent transmutations of *qi*. The nature of *qi* is movement, passing through the various phases as the aspects of *yin* and *yang* strive for balance. The dynamic nature of *qi* gives us being from non-being, but it also means that all things are impermanent and forever changing. Our attachments to the transitory sensory perceptions fill our consciousness. *Qi* declines with sensory attachment. As the sensation that generated attachment continues along the synchronous pattern of transmutations, our *qi* will travel with it (Kohn 130)

Perfect alignment with *qi* and the infinite existence of the pattern of transmutations both became associated with different concepts of immortality. For both metaphysical belief and mystical practice, immortality was simply a matter of complete unity with the divine principle, the *Dao*. Unity with the divine took metaphysical connotations in the notion of perfect acceptance of transmutative universal energy patterns and the rejection of distinctions, leading immortality through transcendence of the life/death dichotomy (Moeller 83). Mystical interpretations on the eternal nature of the *Dao* created practices that were aimed at harnessing the immortality of the cosmic order through perfect alignment with the *qi* force (26).

In the metaphysical sense, immortality lies with the unifying transcendence of dual forces. Life and death represent the complimentary dualities within a larger relationship of unity. The complimentary nature of these component parts insures that “no phase is privileged. All phases are equally valid and real. They replace each other because they are part of the natural process of change.” (Moeller 83) If our experience of life and death causes us imagine them as distinct and separate occurrences, we may begin to value one and devalue the other. The clinging to life and fear of death is a denial of *wu-wei*, “it is as groundless to esteem life as real and death as unreal as it is to believe that it feels better to be awake than it does to be asleep.” (86). If distinctions can be set aside, the ultimate acceptance of dualities as complimentary components within the larger whole means that neither death nor life are natural reflections of one another and neither should receive preference. True acceptance of unity and only the mere appearance of separateness free an individual from the confines of being alive or dead. Total immersion in the experience of unity allows transcendence of the component parts of living or dead. Immortality exists because the individual has moved outside of life and death (89).

Rather than seeing immortality as a movement made by the individual to go beyond life and death, mystical practice was aimed at the physical longevity and escape from death. An individual could escape death, sickness and aging if aligned perfectly with all aspects of the *Dao* (Heimbeck 361). The vital energy possessed by an individual depletes through interactions with the outside world. The transitory nature of sensory experiences will draw *qi* away from the body if we become attached to what we experience. To retain *qi* potential and prevent degradation, attachments to what we perceive must be given up. Active engagement with the outside world must end, and the individual must become a world onto oneself, where all *qi* remains concentrated (Moeller 80). This abandon of the outside world and perfect alignment with the *Dao* will cause the transmutation of the physical body into a closed microcosm of the eternal order. In hopes of achieving mortality certain meditation and “unusual dietary and gymnastic practices” as well as “alchemy, and the ingestion of magical plants sought in remote places” developed into the mystical practice of Daoism (Heimbeck 362). The fruits of the immortals, thought to grant ever-lasting life, were highly sought by emperors who sent expeditions in search of the sacred realms where they could be found. Chinese medical practice also resulted from these mystical practices focused on longevity.

The human body represents the cosmic dualities, between form and spirit-life and death, so it seems only natural that various interpretations of the *Dao* would find their ultimate expression within it (Kohn 131). The most interesting thing about the theosophical tradition of Daoism is the complexity of its expression. The cosmological constructions central to Daoism have inspired such a wide variance in perceptions of the proper way the *Dao* is to be experienced. The reintegration of dual forces and the representation of the *Dao* as the

synchronous movements to which all things adhere are timeless constructs and remain as poignant today as they were 2500 years ago.

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