

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

During the past decade and a half, the field of Contemplative Studies has slowly developed from a combination of traditional humanistic scholarship on the history and philosophy of religion, scientific research on the various forms of contemplative practice, and the direct personal experience of scholars and researchers. These three pillars of the field have a recursive relationship: the knowledge derived from each informs and reinforces the others. The field has also been developed in the crucible of college and university classrooms throughout the country and at numerous academic meetings during these last fifteen years. The theory and development of this field have been detailed in a number of publications to which I refer the reader.<sup>2</sup> But suffice it to say that for me, personally, my scholarship on the origins and early history of the classical Daoist tradition has developed in interaction with this emerging academic field.

The articles and book chapters selected here demonstrate a burgeoning interest in the contemplative foundations of the classical Daoist tradition that emerged over the course of my professional career—actually really over the course of my adult life. Starting with my undergraduate days as a student of Tu Wei-ming and Fritz Mote, I was drawn to the central problem of “self-cultivation” (*zixiu* 自修) that is one of the primary focuses of the classical Chinese philosophical tradition. This led me both into graduate work at McMaster University and the University of Toronto; to post-doctoral work at Tōhoku University in Sendai, Japan; and into serious and intensive personal engagement with a number of distinct traditions of contemplative practice.

In 1969 Professor Tu introduced me to a Japanese master from the Rinzai tradition, Kyōzan Jōshū Sasaki Rōshi, who had come to America in 1962 at the request of the overseas Japanese community in Los

Angeles. I eventually became involved in setting up and helping to run an annual series of seminars, held at Sasaki's affiliated Zen Centers and associated, over the years, with UCLA, Cornell, and the University of New Mexico. These lasted from 1977 until 2012. The purpose of these seminars was to bring the study of Buddhism into a monastic setting in which the usually abstract and removed academic approaches were combined with the direct experience of meditation practice. I came to see that this approach has considerable value: it takes the often-recondite study of philosophy and history and grounds it in the direct subjective experience of individuals.

Over time I gradually came to see that prior studies of the early history of Daoism were hampered in their understanding of its contemplative foundations by limits derived from a set of unreflective assumptions that restrict human cognitive possibilities to merely those that were deemed possible by our own European cultures.<sup>3</sup> Most pernicious of these are two: that all human beings have a genetic predisposition to a belief in gods or other supernatural beings; and that veridical human cognition is restricted to either reason or emotion—categories established by the European Enlightenment. These products of an unreflective Eurocentrism have largely contributed to a failure to recognize that early Daoist thinkers could possibly have derived their ideas about human psychology, human nature, and the nature of the cosmos through anything other than abstract rational thought or emotional responses. These cultural blinders have also contributed to the idea that contemplative experiences can never be epistemologically valid, and because of this non-veridicality, attempts to ascertain the contemplative foundations of classical Daoism are either unnecessary or, even worse, deluded.

The more I worked on Daoist origins, the more I saw that the distinctive philosophy of this tradition emerged directly from its practices of self-cultivation, practices that were essentially contemplative in nature. The evidence for these practices was embedded in the surviving textual and material traditions. While some scholars such as Arthur Waley<sup>4</sup> had briefly touched upon them, they were to a great extent being ignored in attempts to ascertain the historical origins and development of this very complex tradition. Because of this, it seemed, there was a failure to perceive how the tradition had developed in the times before it formed readily identifiable religious institutions at the end of the Eastern Han dynasty (ca. 180 CE). The essays that have been collected together in this volume attest to the ways in which the

awareness of these contemplative bases of classical Daoist thought came to provide a decisive influence on my investigations of its historical and intellectual origins.

Humanistic cross-cultural scholarship and scientific studies of contemplative practices clearly show that they involve distinctive modes of mental concentration. These can include focusing attention on a particular object such as a sacred word, sound, or idea; or on the subjective experience of both body and mind, such as the breath. They can be done when one is sitting still or when one is moving. And, with consistent application over time, they frequently lead to deepened states of concentration, stillness, and insight into the nature of self-identity and of consciousness itself. A developing understanding of this humanistic and scientific research came to significantly broaden my perspectives on the contemplative foundations of classical Daoism and to see links among surviving texts that were previously difficult to detect. This then came to fundamentally alter my understanding of the origins of this tradition and to see through a number of extant beliefs about them that had precluded serious study of its contemplative foundations.

Scholarly perspectives in Early China Studies and in Daoist Studies have shifted markedly since I began my scholarly career more than three decades ago. Beliefs about the origins of the Daoist tradition were still attached to a number of major shibboleths, the most lasting of which is still rather prevalent in East Asia today, though no longer so in Europe and the United States.

This first shibboleth rests on the beliefs—now almost two millennia old—that the Daoist tradition began in the sixth century BCE with Lao Dan 老聃 and his singularly authored work the *Dao De jing* 道德經. Further, this person founded a Daoist “school” that included Zhuang Zhou 莊周, the sole author of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and other eponymous works created by later disciples such as Liezi 列子 and Wenzi 文子. Together they created and transmitted a Daoist school that contained a lofty mystical philosophy that accepted death as a natural transformation and maintained a cosmology of the Way and its Inner Power or Potency. However, this tradition of so-called “philosophical Daoism” or “Lao-Zhuang” 老莊 became singularly corrupted by its contact with superstitious peasant beliefs in longevity and immortality and polytheistic deities to form the organized Daoist religion that emerged in the second century CE and that persists to this day. This position was typified in a number of articles by Herlee Glessner Creel collected in his

famous book “*What is Taoism?*”<sup>5</sup> But as A. C. Graham once succinctly put it, “No doubt one may think of this (Daoist) church like others as debasing the pure doctrine of its founder, but the Christian churches never departed quite as far from the gospel as this.”<sup>6</sup>

While European Sinologists including Marcel Granet, Henri Maspero, Max Kaltenmark, Anna Seidel, Kristofer Schipper, and Isabelle Robinet<sup>7</sup> had all pointed to the long-standing basis of Daoism in both the folk and classical traditions of Chinese religion, it wasn’t until the seminal publications of Nathan Sivin and Michel Strickmann in the late 1970s that opinions of scholars in the English-speaking world started to change to focus more on the complex and varied traditions and institutions of the Daoist religion, from its origins to the present day.<sup>8</sup> However, in successfully challenging the shibboleth of a school of lofty mystical Daoist philosophy contrasted with a superstitious organized Daoist religion, Strickmann, in particular, established a new shibboleth in the field, and one that has stood well into the current century: that there is absolutely no “Daoism” before the millenarian movements of the later second century of the Common Era.

Unfortunately, this shibboleth does not pass the test of historical accuracy any more than the first one does. And I’m not sure that Strickmann believed it either—at least not to the same extent as do his many influential disciples who now dominate the field of Daoist Studies. I met Strickmann only once in my life: at the “Universities of Southern California China Workshop” organized in the spring of 1988 by Robert Buswell and held at the University of Southern California. On that day, an important one in my early academic career, I presented a talk that is very closely related to the first chapter of the current collection. As one will see by reading it, the argument that day was sufficiently hesitant (referring to the traditions I was identifying as “Daoistic” rather than “Daoist”): but the intent was clear. Given his somewhat fearsome reputation, I fully expected the renowned acerbic professor to launch into a serious critique of my position. Instead, to my great surprise, he had nothing but praise. Driving with Buswell and Strickmann to dinner after the workshop, I asked him directly why he hadn’t been more critical of my talk, given his public stance on this topic. He replied that he had really only asserted that there was no Daoism before the end of the Han in order to correct the extreme bias of the field of Daoist Studies in favor of “Lao-Zhuang,” the supposed foundational school of Daoism to the detriment of the organized Daoist religion that followed.

Another set of factors that these fields were beginning to take into account was the information coming from the first great discovery of excavated manuscripts, at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in 1973. There an important cache of texts was discovered that included works that were known—most famously, as the two untitled manuscripts of what would shortly thereafter be called the “*Dao De jing*” (or *De Dao jing* 道德經, given the order of its two main sections<sup>9</sup>)—and others that were previously unknown—most significantly, the so called “Four Canons of the Yellow Thearch” or *Huangdi si jing* 黃帝四經 and a group of seven medical texts.<sup>10</sup> When I started publishing, we were just beginning our fascination with trying to figure out the implications for the study of the *Laozi* 老子 traditions and to see if the Huang-Lao texts were some kind of fusion between “Daoism” and “Legalism.” This, of course, presumed that there were distinct “schools of thought” among the historically renowned “Hundred Schools” that could really be identified by these labels. As the new millennium dawned, even this hallowed notion of pre-Han schools of thought came under increasing scrutiny.

Sarah Queen, and Michael Nylan and Mark Csikszentmihalyi wrote two very influential articles questioning the existence of pre-Han “schools of thought.”<sup>11</sup> In these, they argued that Sima Tan, the scholar who first coined the term “Daoism” or the “Daoist School” (*Daojia* 道家), along with the other five “schools” (e.g., Confucian, Mohist, Nominalist, Naturalist, Legalist), wasn’t accurately describing extant and real intellectual traditions, as has been believed for two millennia; he was organizing extant texts into bibliographic categories. While their arguments provided a welcome challenge to the anachronistic model that there were pre-Han “schools of thought,” they also unintentionally reinforced the Strickmanian view that there was no “Daoism” before the end of the Han.

It is precisely these four shibboleths that have impeded our understanding of the contemplative nature and historical contours of classical Daoism:

- that there was an original “school” of philosophical Daoism called “Lao-Zhuang”
- that there was a great contrast between this “philosophical school” and the later so-called “religious Daoism” that was supposed to be descended from it;
- that there is no such thing at all as “Daoism” before the late Han millenarian rebellions;

- and that there were absolutely no “schools” of thought or even coherent and identifiable lineages in the classical Chinese philosophical and religious traditions of the pre-Han and early Han periods.

The quarter century of research contained in this volume presents significant challenges to all of them.

The contemplative foundations of classical Daoism are grounded in a distinctive form of practice that I came to define as “inner cultivation” after a work that had been glossed over by many scholars, “Neiye” 內業 or “Inward Training” (ca. 330 BCE), one of seventy-six texts in a major collection from the state of Qi 齊 on the Shandong peninsula, the *Guanzi* 管子 (compiled between 340 and 150 BCE). The surviving evidence for these practices can be found in this work, in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and in a number of other classical texts of mixed traditions, including the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂士春秋 (239 BCE) and the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (139 BCE). The distinctive ideas of inner cultivation begin and end with the Way or Dao 道 as the ultimate source of the cosmos and Potency (*De* 德) as its manifestation in terms of concrete phenomena and experience; Non-Action (*wuwei* 無為) as the definitive movement of the Way, and Formlessness (*wuxing* 無形) as its spatial mode are both essential as well. There is also a common self-cultivation vocabulary that includes such results as stillness and silence (*jimo* 寂漠), tranquility (*jing* 靜), emptiness (*xu* 虛), and a variety of “apophatic,” or self-negating, techniques and qualities of mind that lead to a direct apprehension of the Way. These contemplative practices that were transmitted in classical Daoism involve, first and foremost, the apophatic emptying of the normal contents of the conscious mind through concentrating on the breath and various objects of internal visualization. Specific techniques for moving meditation were also known as well, although they are most often found in the context of health and longevity practices, such as we find in the famous painting of the various positions of what archaeologists called the “Guiding and Pulling Diagram” (*Daoyin tu* 導引圖) that was found at Mawangdui. The classical Daoist Inner Cultivation tradition referred to its practices as *yangshen* 養神 or *yangxing* 養性 (“nourishing the inner spirit or innate nature”). While this tradition of practice shared concepts and some techniques with these health and longevity practices (often referred to as *yangsheng* 養生 or *yangxing* 養

形—“nourishing vitality or nourishing the body”), they practiced them much more assiduously, and they were careful to differentiate themselves from others they thought of as health freaks, as made clear in *Zhuangzi* 15, “Keyi” 刻意 (“Ingrained Opinions”), and *Huainanzi* 7, “Jingshen” 精神 (“The Quintessential Spirit”).<sup>12</sup>

In the early stages of my research, represented in the first two chapters of this collection, I was more hesitant in how I referred to these contemplative practices, referring to them by the more general category of “self cultivation practices” in “early Daoistic thought.” As my work developed, I came to see that without understanding these contemplative foundations, it was significantly more difficult to see the connections among the various surviving textual and epigraphic sources that attest to a classical Daoist tradition. Further, the very fact that coherent contemplative practices were identifiable from text to text had to imply the existence of certain social organizations, lineages of teachers and students who taught and studied the practices and kept them alive across the generations until more organized and readily identifiable religious institutions formed at the end of the Han dynasty.

Gradually in my thinking, a heuristic framework emerged that helped to make sense of the distinctive set of technical terms I was finding in these extant texts. As detailed in the second and third chapters of this collection, three distinctive categories of these technical terms were repeatedly present and could be linked to three authorial voices that a number of scholars, including Guan Feng, A. C. Graham, and Liu Xiaogan, found in the *Zhuangzi*. More than just labels that pertained to the *Zhuangzi* alone, these distinctive categories of terms were signs of overlapping chronological “phases” in the development of a classical Daoist tradition. The “Individualist” phase contains specific technical terms of a cosmology of the Way and of inner cultivation theory. Principal sources for this were the “Neiye” (Inward Training) text from the *Guanzi* collection and the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi*. The “Primitivist” phase has the terminology of cosmology and inner cultivation of the Individualist phase, but added to this a political philosophy of creating simple agrarian communities governed by a sage who was, in essence, an inner cultivation adept. Examples of this are the *Laozi* and a section of the *Zhuangzi*, chapters 8–11. The “Syncretist” phase also has the same cosmology of the Way and inner cultivation practices as the first two phases but contains, instead, a syncretic political philosophy

that advocated using the best ideas of other early intellectual lineages and subsuming them within a framework of inner cultivation cosmology and practice. The “Four Canons of the Yellow Thearch” and the *Huainanzi* are among the texts that contain the distinctive ideas of this phase.

One of the great challenges in identifying the contours of a classical Daoist tradition is that so little concrete evidence has survived. We are, to all intents and purposes, working with a vast jigsaw puzzle in space and time for which only a few fragmentary pieces survive. Making sense of how these fit together and how they imply other pieces requires not only a fidelity to the evidence, but also a sense of imagination and the exercise of reason. Texts do not exist in a vacuum, and they do not magically compose and transmit themselves. Human beings compose and transmit them, and they imply at least a minimal social organization. There were no bookstores at which one could buy a text and then study its contents. Circulation of written manuscripts was much more limited than many imagine. Especially in the Warring States period, before lineage masters were gathered at local courts to debate one another and advise local rulers (starting with Jixia 稷下 in the state of Qi around 340 BCE), you had to receive a text within a concrete lineage of teachers and students. And when you did that, you also received a direct transmission of the methods and techniques on which these ideas were founded: ritual practices for “Confucians”; techniques of bureaucratic organization for “Legalists”; techniques of argumentation for “Sophists”; methods of defensive warfare and reason for the “Mohists.” As we shall see, these labels are not only bibliographic categories created by Han dynasty historians. These categories would have no meaning if they were not based on actual coherent lineages of teachers and students who formed lines of transmission of these texts and ideas over the generations. For classical Daoism, these lineages transmitted the practices of Inner Cultivation and the ideas on cosmology, psychology, and politics that were derived from them. These lineages—decentralized and with minimal social organization—formed the institutions that constituted classical or original Daoism. It was not until they became much more organized and became involved with large-scale political movements that these institutions finally garnered the attention of the official historians of the central government in the millenarian rebellions of the Way of Great Peace and the Celestial Masters in the latter half of the second century CE.<sup>13</sup>



## Part I: Contemplative Foundations and Textual Methods

The first part of this collection is devoted to the careful textual analysis of the major extant sources of classical Daoism to derive evidence for both its contemplative foundations and its historical and social contexts.

Chapter 1, “Psychology and Self-Cultivation in Early Daoistic Thought,” argues that the traditional belief that the origins of Daoism are found exclusively in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* is misplaced. That there is a much broader range of works that complement these foundational texts, and when we take them all into account, a much broader and deeper understanding of this tradition begins to emerge. These include the four “Techniques of the Mind” (*Xin shu* 心術) texts from the *Guanzi* compendium, the four “YellowThearch” texts found at Mawangdui (“*Huangdi si jing*” [ca. 275 BCE]), and the *Huainanzi*. When we take these texts and their key ideas about human nature and psychology and contemplative practice into account, we start to see links among them that give us a more accurate understanding of what I then called “Daoistic Thought,” but which I now feel comfortable in calling “original” or “classical Daoism,” within the larger parameters of the Daoist tradition. In particular, the textual evidence provided here shows that from the very beginning, the tradition conceived of self-cultivation in terms of working and transforming energies of mind and body that later were central to organized Daoism: *qi* 氣 (“vital breath/energy”), *jing* 精 (“vital essence”), *shen* 神 (“numen” or “spirit”), and *jingshen* 精神 (“numinous essence” or “quintessential spirit”). Moreover, when we understand the contemplative practices of self-cultivation that are directly mentioned or implied in these texts, and understand the key role that these contemplative practices play in the creation of the distinctive philosophy of these works that distinguish them from other early traditions of thought and practice, we come to see that there is a much greater continuity in the entire Daoist tradition, from the classical period through the rise of the organized Daoist religion to the present day than had previously been assumed.

Chapter 2, “Who Compiled the *Zhuangzi*?” begins by examining how closely the definitions of the “Daoist School,” which I think is more accurately thought of as a loosely organized lineage of teachers and students who followed a set of shared practices of “inner cultivation,” fit the evidence found in the texts of this early tradition identified in chapter 1. This chapter goes on to delineate the basic ideas of an early lineage

that shared in these practices in terms of three important categories of thought: cosmology, psychology, and politics; and, further, sees evidence for all of them in the distinctive sections of the *Zhuangzi* that have been identified by Graham, Guan Feng, and Liu Xiaogan: original Zhuangzi writings (chapters 1–7); the “Primitivist” or “Anarchist” sections (chapters 8–11 [first part]); and the Syncretist or “Huang-Lao” sections (parts of chapters 12–14, all of 15 and 33). Relying heavily on an analysis of the key ideas in this last authorial voice in the text, this chapter demonstrates its clear parallels with *Guanzi*’s “Xinshu, shang” 心術上 (Techniques of the Mind, I) with the *Huainanzi*, and with Sima Tan’s definition of a “Daoist school.” The chapter finishes with an argument that the *Zhuangzi*, which transmitted the thought and practice of an original teacher, Zhuang Zhou, and his followers from the late fourth century BCE through the early Han, was likely compiled at the court of Liu An, the second king of Huainan 淮南 and the sponsor and editor of the *Huainanzi* compendium.

In chapter 3, “Redaction Criticism and the Early History of Daoism,” I begin to use the methodologies of textual criticism found in Biblical Studies: in particular, form criticism, composition criticism, and redaction criticism. These involve the analysis of the ideas in a text as they are influenced by the literary form of the text (e.g., rhymed verse; argumentative essay, didactic narrative) and by the composition techniques by which the text was put together and subsequently augmented. Form criticism conducts an analysis of the standard genres or forms in which oral (or early written) tradition is cast. Redaction criticism attempts to identify the theological or ideological viewpoints of the people who assembled the various literary forms into texts and to understand the historical conditions in which they may have been created. Composition criticism examines the literary techniques of the early redactors of a tradition, and how they arranged and assembled their inherited material to create unified works. The true pioneer in applying these methods in a deliberate and self-conscious way to early Chinese works was Michael LaFargue.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter I apply these methods in a highly focused fashion to determine the relationship between two essays that I identified in chapters 1 and 2 as being part of the Daoist works in the *Guanzi*, “Neiye” (“Inward Training”), and “Xinshu xia” 心術下 (Techniques of the Mind II). While previous theories have ranged from their being damaged versions of the same text to the notes of two different students from the lectures of their master, a careful line-by-line textual analysis and redaction criticism of these two works yields a different conclusion, one that is extremely important in establishing the

contours of classical Daoism. There is a key relationship between these two texts that testifies to an important development in any attempt to reconstruct something of the social and historical conditions in which original Daoism developed, the moment when a text from what I call the “Individualist” phase becomes applied to the complex political theories of the “Syncretist” phase. In this chapter I focus further on the three interlocking categories of technical terms that I have found in the texts of this early Daoist tradition: “cosmology,” “inner cultivation,” and “political thought,” and provide further details of essential ideas in each category. After a detailed analysis of these two works, I conclude that “Xinshu xia” is a deliberate redacting and reorganizing of the textual material from the Individualist “Neiye” to support a program of sage rulership. This regimen is based on a cosmology of the Way and contemplative inner cultivation practices that include the emptying out of the normal contents of consciousness in a systematic fashion through a kind of breath attention training leading to the state of complete emptiness in which the adept is able to become one with the Way. An additional conclusion I came to in this chapter is that the Syncretic Daoism of the last third and early second century BCE is a direct descendant of the earlier Individualist Daoism of the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi* and *Guanzi*’s “Neiye.”

In chapter 4, “Evidence for Stages of Meditation in Early Daoism,” I continue with more detailed textual, philosophical, and contemplative testimony to the existence of a distinctive tradition of early Daoism that we are justified to call “original Daoism.” It becomes clear from the distinctive rhetorical structures for stages of meditation that I present from a variety of classical Daoist works that a common contemplative practice of inner cultivation had to have been both widespread and foundational to the tradition of original Daoism. The presence of this unique rhetorical structure was surprisingly found in a variety of texts that span almost two centuries in time. This rhetorical structure consists of:

- a preamble with a varied series of “apophatic” prefatory exercises through which the usual contents of consciousness—thoughts, feelings, and desires—are removed;
- a sorites-style argument in which the stages of meditation are presented in a consecutive fashion;
- a denouement that discusses the noetic and practical benefits of having attained these stages.

What this rhetorical structure indicates is that original Daoism was grounded in a practice of breath meditation whose goal was to produce a profound transformation in adepts in which the individual self is ultimately transcended in a unitive mystical experience of merging with the Way. After this, when adepts return to engaging the dualistic world again, their consciousness is radically transformed so that they spontaneously “take no action yet leave nothing undone.” This provides further evidence for the conclusions that original Daoism was not a philosophical school but rather consisted of one or more related master-disciple lineages that centered on the contemplative practice of inner cultivation. This practice formed the distinctive “technique” (*shu* 術) around which these lineages formed and from which they eventually took their self-identity.

In chapter 5, “The Yellow Emperor’s Guru: A Narrative Analysis from *Zhuangzi* 莊子 11” I return to the *Zhuangzi* to apply a fourth type of literary criticism from Biblical Studies, “narrative criticism,” to one story in this rich narrative-filled collection. Narrative criticism is focused on the critical analysis of stories and their didactic intent. It examines which characters represent the voice of their author, which represent opposing viewpoints, and identifies the viewpoint that the author is espousing and its audience, the group at whom the narrative is aimed. While not a primary concern of narrative criticism, the development of hypotheses concerning the historical context in which the narrative was written is also part of the information that can be derived from its analysis. In this chapter, I apply narrative criticism to analyze the meaning and significance of one passage from the *Zhuangzi*, the story of the dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and his “guru” Guang Chengzi 廣成子 “Master Broadly Complete”) from chapter 11, “To Preserve and Circumscribe” (*Zai you* 在宥). The central meaning of this narrative is very relevant to the early history of the Daoist tradition. Herein the Yellow Emperor symbolizes the coordination of the realm of human beings with the greater patterns of Heaven and Earth, as he does in other pre-Han philosophical and medical literature, and Guang Chengzi symbolizes the contemplative inner cultivation techniques that were characteristic of classical Daoism. The latter’s teaching of these techniques—in the literary form of the same genre of rhymed verse we find in Individualist sources such as “Inward Training” and the *Laozi*—herein symbolizes the synthesis of Daoist contemplative methods and a Syncretist political philosophy of setting up the human polity—as microcosm—in parallel to the greater patterns of Heaven and Earth—as macrocosm. This, in many ways, typifies the synthesis of viewpoints contained in the “Huang-Lao” teachings

that formed the final phase of the original Daoist tradition as found in the Mawangdui Yellow Emperor texts, some of the later chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, the *Huainanzi*, and most definitely in the purview of Sima Tan 司馬談 when he established the parameters of what he was calling “Daoism.” The apex of this passage is the apotheosis of Guang Chengzi into a near-immortal who has “cultivated my own person for 1,200 years so that my form has never deteriorated.” This provides additional evidence that the goals of longevity and immortality were as much a part of original Daoism as they became in later institutionalized Daoism.

In chapter 6, “An Appraisal of Angus Graham’s Textual Scholarship on the *Zhuangzi* 莊子,” I present an overview of the unique version that Graham created in his translation of this foundational work of the classical Daoist tradition. I examine his reasons for creating it and his method of doing so. Graham realized that each chapter of the text was a compilation of various literary styles and that they didn’t always fit together perfectly well. His translation breaks up the chapters he translates into sections and he avoids the translation of different sections as if they were a continuous text. He also only translates those passages whose meaning he understands, which leads him to omit about 20% of the entire text. Furthermore, after translating in full the Inner Chapters as a distinctive block of related text, he then divides the remainder of the work into topical sections. In addition to examining his textual methodology, I present original research on some of these sections. I propose an earlier date than his 205 BCE for the “Primitivist” chapters: circa 243–37 BCE, and argue that there was an early version of the textual materials that became the 52 chapter original recension of the *Zhuangzi* present in the Qin court where this author wrote these chapters. I further argue that the chapters that Graham attributes to the followers of the individualist philosopher Yang Zhu 楊朱 were likely compiled by the Primitivist author to use in his defense of his “Daoist” interpretation of the concept of human nature (*xing* 性). I then present data that the authors of the “Syncretist” sections of the *Zhuangzi* shared a common vocabulary of inner cultivation practice and its results with the authors of four chapters of the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mister Lü* (*Lüshi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋) that was created at the Qin court during this time period. Additionally I link this shared perspective with that of the authors of the Han dynasty Daoist compendium the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and speculate that this group could have brought what I later call the “proto-*Zhuangzi*” to Liu An’s 劉安 court at Huainan. Finally, I conclude that chapter 16 of the *Zhuangzi*, “Menders of Nature” (Shan *xing* 繕

性), is the likely product of a disciple of the “Primitivist” author who transmitted his writings with his copy of the *Zhuangzi* textual materials after the fall of Prime Minister Lü Buwei in 237 BCE and the fall of his intellectual enterprise in the Qin court.

In chapter 7, “Daoist Inner Cultivation Thought and the Textual Structure of the *Huainanzi*, I apply the hypotheses I have reached in the earlier chapters of this collection to a detailed analysis of the intellectual filiation of this important early Han philosophical work that was finally translated in 2010 by a team that included John Major, Sarah Queen, Andy Meyer, and me.<sup>15</sup> As a group, we often discussed this problem: was this text properly categorized as “eclectic” (zajia 雜家)—the category to which it was assigned in the bibliographical monograph of the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*; was it “Daoist?”; or is it an intellectual work with so varied a content that it cannot be classified into any other category than its own? One thing on which we all agreed was that the *Huainanzi* was composed and redacted according to a specific structure. The first eight of its twenty-one chapters contains a set of ideas that are foundational to the work; these constitute the “root” of the text; the remaining chapters constitute its “branches.” In the further analysis I undertook in this chapter, the first two *Huainanzi* chapters provide the foundation of the entire work. And, further, each chapter of the text begins with a “Root Passage” that contains its core ideas. This forms a multilayered compositional structure that is used to reinforce the contemplative Inner Cultivation foundations of this intentionally syncretic work. This emphasis on the core contemplative practices and derivative insights of what we have identified as “original Daoism” proves that, far from being a text without affiliation, the *Huainanzi* is a rich and complex doubling down on the fundamental teachings of the final or syncretic phase of the classical Daoist tradition. In many ways, it represents its most sophisticated expression and constitutes what can be thought of as a “last-ditch attempt” to convince Han Emperor Wu that these ideas should be the ones through which the empire should be governed.

## Part II: Contemplative Foundations and Philosophical Contexts

In the second part of this collection I take the foundational understanding of the contemplative basis of classical Daoism derived from the textual and historical analyses in Part I and apply it to specific texts and ideas from this tradition.

In chapter 8, “*Laozi* in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis,” I analyze the evidence for mystical practices and concomitant philosophical insights contained in this foundational Daoist text. What I argue is that the *Laozi* is a complex work that contains both advice on how to govern effectively as well as concrete references to contemplative practices that involved breath cultivation, practices that share methods and metaphors with many other early sources of Daoist inner cultivation such as “Inward Training” and the *Zhuangzi*. All exhibit a complementary relationship between an apophatic introvertive meditation practice and the extrovertive application of these introvertive experiences that leads to the spontaneous ability to, in the famous phrase of this work, “take no action yet leave nothing undone” (*wuwei er wu bu wei* 無為而無不為). This basic pattern of what I called in chapter 6 complementary states and traits of Daoist apophatic inner cultivation practice can also be seen in many of the other early sources of this original Daoist tradition. This contributes to the substantial textual evidence for a common set of mystical practices that show that the *Laozi* is an important part of this tradition, but not its sole foundation.

In chapter 9, “Bimodal Mystical Experience in the “*Qi wu lun*” of *Zhuangzi*,” I extend these arguments about the complementary introvertive and extrovertive—or “bimodal”—mystical experiences that characterize inner cultivation practices to what is arguably the most important chapter in this thirty-three-chapter collection. Contra mysticism theorist Walter Stace, I argue for the primacy of both these dimensions of mystical experience in traditions throughout the world using the analysis of this original Daoist text as the basis. Contra Lee Yearley’s argument that the *Zhuangzi* avers an exclusively “inwardly” mysticism, I maintain that both aspects are present in abundance in the text. While the “*Qi wu lun*” is often regarded as containing the essence of what scholars have alternately deemed “skepticism,” “relativism,” or “perspectivism” in the *Zhuangzi*, what I argue in this chapter is that it advocates using apophatic inner cultivation practices to attain a literally “enlightened” or “Dao-centered” mode of cognition (“great knowledge”) in which all the many and varied phenomena of our experiences and our world are seen from the same perspective: one that, in the literal translation of the title, “sees all things as equal.” In both this chapter and its predecessors, I have used methodologies derived from the comparative, cross-cultural study of mysticism to analyze key ideas in my original Daoist sources.

In chapter 10, “Nature and Self-Cultivation in *Huainanzi*’s 淮南子 “*Yuan dao*” 原道 (Originating in the Way)”, I provide a close

section-by-section reading of the foundational “Root Chapter” of this important work, which I regard as the ultimate and most sophisticated expression of syncretic Daoist thought. What this analysis demonstrates is that, for the author of this chapter, the world contains a normative natural order that is infused by a single divine force or power, the Way. Further, this order itself is holy and consists of natural patterns (*li* 理), innate natures (*xing* 性), natural propensities (*qing* 情), and numerical sequences (*shu* 數) that continually interact with one another in a seamless cosmic web. Human beings, while connected to this order by our innate natures, tend to fall away from it and must relearn to establish it through the “techniques of the mind,” the various methods of contemplative inner cultivation practice through which we can set aside the desires, preferences, and dualistic knowledge that cause this falling away. Rulers who are able to do this achieve complete success because they are governing in accord with the normative patterns and forces that infuse the cosmos. Thus we find in this chapter an evocative and succinct expression of the key ideas of original syncretic Daoist political thought that combine inner cultivation with political philosophy such as we see in such sources as *Guanzi*’s “Techniques of the Mind,” the Syncretist *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huangdi si jing* from Mawangdui.

In chapter 11, “The Classical Daoist Concept of *Li* 理 (Pattern) and Early Chinese Cosmology,” I provide a sustained analysis of the origins of this absolutely central concept to the original Daoist tradition. A sophisticated understanding of this idea is commonly thought to have been the almost exclusive purview of the Neo-Confucian tradition in its theories of a cosmology of *li* and *qi*. But a careful analysis of the classical Chinese sources of these ideas demonstrates that our original Daoist texts contain a particularly sophisticated theory and development of these key concepts. While this analysis shows the presence of *li* as an important idea in several of the “Techniques of the Mind” chapters of the *Guanzi* and several chapters in the *Zhuangzi*, it is the *Huainanzi* that places a singular emphasis on this concept: “. . . we wrote these (prior) twenty chapters so that the Patterns of Heaven and Earth would be thoroughly examined,” states the final summary chapter of this syncretic Daoist work, likely written by the sponsor and compiler of the entire text, Liu An 劉安, the second king of Huainan (?180–122 BCE). In accord with the root-metaphor for *li* contained in the original uses in classical China of this concept—the invisible guidelines along which jade naturally fractures—the inherent patterns of the greater cosmos contain *li* that are the guidelines that underlie all of human and cosmic experience. When



human beings adapt and comply with them, they succeed; when they ignore or depart from them, they fail. Because of their practice of Daoist inner cultivation techniques, the perfected adepts in this tradition act spontaneously and harmoniously because they are totally in accord with these underlying patterns. Thus *li* can be seen as a classical Daoist explanation for why such spontaneous and harmonious action by adepts and sages is possible. Because these adepts are grounded in the direct experience of the all-pervading Way, the ultimate sources for all these patterns, their actions will always be harmonious no matter what the situation.

In chapter 12, in the process of discussing my late mentor Angus C. Graham's (1919–1991) ideas on mysticism, I present a sustained analysis of the central experiences in the entire text of the *Zhuangzi* through the lens of the Contemplative Studies perspective. This perspective, which combines third-person, second-person, first-person, and no-person perspectives, is derived from the work of Francisco Varela, William James, and Kitaro Nishida. This “contemplative phenomenology” contains aspects of both cognitive sciences and humanistic philosophy. With this perspective, I argue for what I think is the central concept that holds together the entire diverse parts of the *Zhuangzi*: “cognitive attunement.” It is through the apophatic inner cultivation practices, which we have seen pervade the tradition of teachers and students that constituted “original Daoism,” that adepts are able to “embody the Way.” This state of experience leads to a transformed “flowing cognition” in which one sees all things as equal and is able to respond in the moment, spontaneously, and in a completely attuned harmony to whatever situation arises. Thus one is completely able to “treat oneself as other”: to have no more preference for *your* particular way of doing things than for anyone else's, and thereby “throw things open to the lucid light of Nature.” This contrasts with the all too prevalent “fixed cognition” in which we rigidly apply predetermined categories of true and false and self and other to the situations in which we find ourselves, like the monkeys in the famous narrative from the “Qi wu lun.” In the words of chapter 22 (“Knowledge Wanders North”), “The Sage neither misses the occasion when it is present, nor clings to it when it is past. He responds to it by attuning himself.” This is the key extrovertive metaphor of the original Daoist tradition, a complement to such introvertive metaphors as “cleaning out the lodging place of the numinous mind” from “Inward Training” and “sweeping clean your Profound Mirror” from the *Laozi*.

Chapter 13, “Against Cognitive Imperialism,” is perhaps the most theoretical work in this collection. It contains the initial rationalization

of establishing the new field of “Contemplative Studies” as a way to combat the narrow strictures into which the humanistic field of Religious Studies and the scientific field of Cognitive Science have been confined because of a narrow ethnocentrism that derives primarily from an Abrahamic worldview supplemented by a European hubris about the superiority of its own basic worldview. In this chapter I lay out an argument that is largely drawn from my prior work on the contemplative foundations of classical Daoism, with a particular reliance on my analysis of the *Zhuangzi*. It concludes with the call to expand the horizons of our conceptions of human psychology and human potential to embrace the vision that was originally derived from the contemplative insights of the sages who authored the texts of classical Daoism. I also argue that such an expansion in humanistic scholarship be reflected in research in the various Brain Sciences as well.

In an Afterword, I apply what I call the “contemplative hermetic” to the more recent controversy on whether or not a historically attested single author, Zhuang Zhou wrote the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* and present a new textual analysis of the parallel passages between chapter 23 of this work and the Inner Chapters of the same. This represents a direct application of the various hypotheses, data that support them, and arguments I have made throughout the prior chapters of the book to this very vexing problem.

The essays that form this collection, written over a quarter century, are aimed at countering the four shibboleths of Early China Studies and Daoist Studies that have previously prevented the field from identifying, in a historically plausible, contemplatively grounded, and textually justified fashion, some of the basic contours of classical Daoism. It remains for others to discover the details through which the practices, texts, and traditions of teachers and students from this formative classical period connected with the later and more clearly organized religious institutions of the late Han and post-Han periods. Indeed, some of this work has already been done in publications by such scholars as Livia Kohn, Fabrizio Pregadio, Mark Csíkzsentsmihalyi, Ronnie Littlejohn, Steven Eskildsen, and Louis Komjathy, to name a few.<sup>16</sup> It is my hope that such research will be able to continue and develop even closer associations between the classical and the later periods of development in the very complex Daoist tradition, based on some of the foundations of the work contained in the present volume.