8-21-2020 10:00 AM

An Ontological Critique of the Self: The Daoist 'Non-self' at the Heart of Jung's Analytical Theory

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Theory and Criticism
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Recommended Citation

Abstract

This research attempts to formulate a critique of the Jungian self from the Daoist, Lao-Zhuang notion of non-self. In post-modern societies an ontological critique of the self is also ideological, for the self is an indispensable device of neoliberal government. Because for Jung the self is an essential and autonomous reality, he advances a dualism that not only legitimizes the current economic and political order, but—focal to this analysis—also complicates the 'realization' of the ultimate spiritual 'goal,' and his own purpose of treating psychological suffering. Thus, the critical power and political potential of the Daoist non-self serves to demystify analytical theory, evidence the fundamental emptiness of the self, and present the ensuing paradox of the 'spiritual process' as consisting of a getting rid of something—i.e. the self—that is, ultimately, not there. Consequently, guidance of 'spiritual processes' is encouraged where the non-self remains a valid possibility.

Keywords: Non-self, Self, Daoism, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Analytical Psychology, Jung, Subjectivation, Non-humanism, Nihilism.

Summary for Lay Audience

The idea that we have of ourselves is historic and cultural. It plays a crucial role in the ordering of current societies, since *we are* the entities where government is transformable into action and conduct. Psychology has had a significant participation in the production of the idea of ourselves. Along this line, the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung established 'the self' as the central concept in his therapeutic theory. In his opinion, the self is the deepest reality of who we are. Yet, although particular elements of the self can be known, he says it is impossible to know it in its entirety. So, while in his eyes we can never relate to the nucleus of who "we are" completely or directly, the concept remains useful to govern and control our self-conception and our conducts.

This research attempts to question and undermine Jung's idea of the self through the Daoist notion of non-self. It is concerned with the non-self's viability of—contrary to the Jungian self—allowing us to "know" and live the reality of who "we are." The non-self can be thought of as the expression of the ultimate spiritual 'realization,' and a condition of understanding that frees us from suffering. Hence, because the non-self is, in practice, impossible for Jung, it serves to present his theory as incapable of guiding people out of suffering and in the final step of the spiritual 'realization.' For this reason, this examination encourages the guidance of 'spiritual processes' in non-psychological contexts, where the non-self remains a valid possibility.

Para papá y mamá,
por su amor incondicional.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis attempts to formulate a critique of Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the self from the Daoist, Lao-Zhuang implicit notion of the non-self. Chapter one begins with a brief review of the socio-political and philosophical context in which philosophical Daoism emerged. The chapter then concentrates on unveiling the Daoist non-self by expounding the categories that reveal it, namely, Dao, the Daoist sage, non-action (*wu wei*), non-knowledge, being (*you*), and non-being (*wu*). This section ends with a succinct analysis and discussion on the non-self, equanimity and emptiness.

Having introduced the non-self, chapter two elucidates the Jungian conceptualization of the self in relation to some of Jung's biographical events and experiences, its alchemical and gnostic symbolism, its function as the ordering and unifying principle of the psyche, its central position as archetype, and its significance as *imago Dei* and union of opposites. A short biographical report of the author and an exposition on the ego-self relationship contextualizes this account. The chapter closes with an exploration of Jung's perspective on 'Eastern philosophies' and his theoretical affinities and discrepancies with Daoism.

Chapter three, presents the Daoist, ontological critique of the analytical self by deploying the analyses from the previous sections. I discuss Daoist and Jungian ontologies and develop the dialectics of the self, tackling the tensions between ego and self, the conscious and the unconscious, and, of course, self and non-self. Using *sheng,* the Daoist category that refers to the constant transformation and evolution of all phenomena, the last portion of this chapter argues for the vacuity of the self, thereby presenting the paradox of the spiritual process, which confronts

the inquirer with the oxymoron of getting rid of something—i.e. the self—that is, ultimately, not there.

The conclusion preserves the Daoist categories from the first chapter and considers positive aspects of the Jungian self. However, the stress will be on using the non-self and its related notions to undermine analytical psychology's self and ontological stance. If it is true that the self is an empty signifier, this means *we are not necessarily who we are being told we are, and not necessarily who we think we are*. Daoism, like analytical therapy, endorses spiritual advancement. But, whereas the Jungian paradigm supports the modern and subsequent discourses of the self, and contributes to the construction of the final spiritual realization as unachievable, the Daoist sage realizes Jung's unrealizable union of opposites, substantiating a counter-discourse of the self, which moving beyond its ontic and philosophic repercussions, bolsters the possibility of existing in accord with the dynamic of the universe and its truth, as opposed to constraining human existence to neo-liberal interests and standards. Furthermore, being unable to surpass dualism and accomplish the union of opposites, analytical psychology is not only disabled to deal with fundamental spiritual questions, but from a Daoist and a Jungian view, simultaneously, it is also disqualified to definitively treat psychological suffering. As a tool that undermines dualism, the Daoist idea of *sheng* is revealed conductive to tackling suffering with more success.

Before going any further, it is vital to set a common ground with the reader regarding the concepts that are central to this project. Non-self refers to the final condition of understanding in which the self (and ego) have been dissolved in a context of self-transcendence. Notions like equanimity, emptiness, vacuity and undifferentiation, all relate to, and may be interchangeable with that of non-self. As I take it, self, simply alludes to the opposite of the non-self. The self is

everything that the word "I" includes and relates to. "I", ego, selfhood, subjectivity and interiority are, in my opinion, synonyms of the self.

Even when understanding that each of these concepts has a different history and that the self's is much larger than the ego's, which is originally limited to the psychoanalytic tradition, I believe it is vital to equate these expressions. In my view, they all point to the same phenomenon, but generally, depending on the context or philosophical tradition, there has been an inclination to favour some of them and reject and even vilify others. Adorno and Horkheimer make a distinction between subjectivity and self in which they state that the subject's substance or living entity is supressed by the self, and that the ego's or self's "substance is as illusory as the immortality of the slaughtered victim" (Adorno and Horkheimer, in Brassier 2007, 36). In other words, they understand the self as an illusion and the subject as an essential reality. Another case is observable in today's New Age movement and transpersonal psychology settings, where the ego is often conceived as an undesirable entity (of the self), while the self is held as divine, untouchable and unquestionable. This distinction makes less sense if we accept that— contradicting Jung—these terms indeed refer to the same phenomenological reality. As Ho (1995) affirms, "the self 'belongs' to itself (as reflected in the possessive 'mine')" (128). But do not the ego, selfhood, subjectivity and interiority belong all to themselves as well? Our efforts for differentiating between them may serve only to defend a self-preservation instinct and remain under the controlling illusion of the self. Thus, I argue, that transcendence of the ego is unimportant if it does not involve transcendence of the self.

The general frame of this research fits within critical psychology[1] as the contemporary

psychological, scientific and discursive construction of the self takes place within acute power

dynamics and truth regimes that translate into sophisticated government techniques that are

essential to the current state of neo-liberalism (Hoyos Lozano and Muñoz Restrepo 2018). From a

post-modern angle, a critique directed at Jung could confront, for instance, his orientalist

tendencies,[2] or his sexist assumptions.[3] According to Asher (2014), Jung's sexism filters itself

into the deepest layers of his theory, because he understands the Jungian self as "an idealized

masculine image…that is removed, unmoved, unaffected by others, unfeeling, exercising

arbitrary and coercive power over others—patriarchy at its worst" (10).

Nonetheless, this investigation will focus in construing an ontological critique, as in relation to

critical psychology, that project is possibly the most profound. "Even though psychology has

many sub-fields, one can by and large conclude that the individual (or the Subject) is the key

focal point bringing certain coherence to the discipline's diversity" (76). Thus, in questioning the

absolute presumption of the *reality* of the self, psychology's very own foundation and object of

study is being relativized. "Following this logic, the deconstruction of the individual [or the self]

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[1] Critical psychology can be understood as the disciplinary field that, through the use of critical theory, reflects on the historic, social, power-structured, political and economic dilemmas of psychology to foster a psychological practice that avoids issues around intersectional injustices and ideological conveniences.

[2] To cite an example, in Coward (1985), Jung writes: "In the East, there is the wisdom, peace, detachment, and inertia of a psyche that has returned to its dim origins, having left behind all the sorrow and joy of existence as it is and, presumably, ought to be" (87).
Clarke (2002) mentions that Jung "has been easy prey for postmodern orientalist-hunters, who have detected in him a colonialist frame of mind and have seen him as propagating an essentialist East – West binarism that continues to give privileged status to the latter" (127). As the author says, Jung treats the Western and the Eastern "man" as if they pertained to different natures. He relies on this abstract distinction to justify aspects of his own theory, like the necessity of developing completely Western methods for the spiritual development of the Western modern man. In privileging the status of the Western over the Eastern man, Jung is also legitimizing the Western normative lifestyle, its homogenic values and ideologies—e.g. Christianity, liberalism, capitalism.

[3] Women's "logos is often only a regrettable accident. It gives rise to misunderstandings and annoying interpretations in the family circle and among friends. This is because it consists of *opinions* instead of reflections, and by opinions I mean *a priori* assumptions that lay claim to absolute truth. Such assumptions, as everyone knows, can be extremely irritating" (Jung 1978a, 14-5; italics in the original).

would be like pulling the rug from under psychology's feet" (Beshara 2016, 76). This thesis aspires to advance such relativization and deconstruction by challenging the self that analytical psychology designs (and prescribes).

The timeliness and relevance of this undertaking as an ontic deconstruction is expressed in the self's central position in contemporary society and government. Hence, I wish the reader to consider the political and material implications of the following discussion, bearing in mind that psychology "is a power/knowledge *dispositif* (psy-complex) embedded in a larger apparatus (global capitalism), which produces and reproduces the types of knowledge, or beliefs, that maintain the social order and that sustain asymmetric power relations via structural violence" (Beshara 2017, 4) and coercion. So, in the same sense that Foucault (1996) speaks of a synthetic and political link between the modern man and work (63), it is possible to speak of a synthetic and political link, often established with help of psychology, between us and ourselves. As I see it, the self is the most critical of those *beliefs* maintaining the status-quo, for it is *the* interpelable entity in which discourse and ideology transmute into action and conduct, bonding our interiorities with capitalism and its ideological apparatus. In this way, a psycho-ontological formulation, like the analytical, will always have political repercussions and ideological implications.

 Thus, when transpersonal, analytical, or analytical-inspired psychologies advocate for any sort of inner *development*, they are backing our own production as subjects for the capitalist and neoliberal structure. These psychological theories, part of a larger New Age movement, "are oriented towards the construction of a subject within spiritual discourses who does not move away from the capitalist trajectory, but represents, instead, its continuity" (Hoyos Lozano and Muñoz Restrepo, 6). Stanley (2012) provides an example of this when he writes that,

contemporarily, mindfulness is treated "as a self-regulatory improvement practice to adapt the person to society—enhancing his or her subjective wellbeing, health, work, and relationships within capitalism" (70).

Contrary to psychological theories that promote the integration, development or approach toward the self—like Jung's—spirituality entails taking seriously the non-self argument and adopting a perspective that cultivates "a critical distance from, and challenge to, the notion of the autonomous modern self and related social values" (Stanley, 70). All in all, "spiritual transformation indicates" selflessness and "non-duality" (Jackowicz 2017, 157). Having said this, I hope that this project helps to demystify Jung's theory. That is, to refrain from viewing it as a religious or spiritual endeavour. Rather, I wish to frame it within the specific relationships that are essential to the modern and capitalist structure.

As Ho writes, the Western idea of the self has become "the measure of all things" (128). The present thesis, is an effort to—following his suggestion—"no longer remain culturally encapsulated and ignore ideas that have informed selfhood and identity for centuries in the world's most populous communities" (115). The first chapter will give the reader a notion of the Daoist political ideas, but for now, it is enough to mention that "social problems are ultimately traceable to people's departure from *dao,* and if they return to *dao,* politics will become redundant" (P. Li 2012, 224). And, also, as Moeller (2007) says, that when "people do not feel that they are governed [they] develop no desire to govern themselves" (134).

Chapter One: The Non-self in Daoism

Although the explicit references to a 'non-self' in the two founding texts of Daoist philosophy are scarce, many, if not all of their core concepts, images, and ideas, point in the direction of this key notion. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to extract the implicit notion of the non-self in Daoist philosophy, specifically in the *Daodejing*—or the *Laozi,* as others call it—and the *Zhuangzi.* The findings will be analysed, supplemented and confirmed through more recent scholarly developments on Daoism. Having explored some of the most significant elements and constitutive aspects of the non-self, it will be possible to use it in the third chapter to contrast it with, and to reflect on, the Jungian idea of the self, questioning one of the most incisive theories that has contributed to the production and understanding of the contemporary concept of 'self,' and consequently, our very own self-perception.

It should be mentioned that, following Hans-Georg Moeller (2007), I chose to "speak of the sage and, particularly, the sage ruler as 'he' [because] in the historical context of the *Daodejing* [and Daoism] rulership was, however unfairly, associated with men" (ix). Regardless of this, I do consider that women, as well as all genders, are fully capable of developing the characteristics of a true Daoist sage. For this reason, when the context does not refer to the Daoist sage explicitly, I will deploy the feminine pronouns instead. A further clarification, following Henricks (2000), is that, in this thesis, I will be using "the pinyin system of romanization instead of the more familiar but dated Wade-Giles system. This may initially confuse some readers, who will find 'Laozi' where they expect to see 'Lao Tzu,' [*Daodejing*] where they expect to see *Tao te ching*" (xi), and Zhuangzi where they expect to see 'Chuang Tzu.'

Before starting, it should also be mentioned that I come to these texts from a very particular position, for my approach cannot be other than that presented by a post-modern subject, with its respective historicity and constitution as such. Since the core sources for this chapter are ancient texts—Watson (2013) believes "that both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Daodejing* circulated in something like their present form from the second century BCE on, that is, from the beginning of the Han dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE)" (xiv)—some of my interpretations necessarily lack contextual details of the period. For this reason, and also because the following reflections are product of an initial approach to Daoist theory, it would be irresponsible on my part to think that I may speak authoritatively for Daoist thought, and the same applies to the section devoted to Jung's thought. I am, however, interested in understanding what the Daoists meant when they alluded to or implied a 'non-self,' and how this concept may be problematic for Jung's construction of the self, in particular, and, by extension, for psychology's foundation of the modern self. In short, I plan to unveil the critical and political potential of the Daoist 'non-self' in relation to Jungian psychological theory.

This chapter will present a historical contextualization of Daoism, especially in relation to Confucianism, as well as discussing the different available versions of the *Daodejing* and the authorship of this text and the *Zhuangzi*. I will attempt to deliver a 'definition' of the *unnameable* Dao to familiarize the reader with the defining concept of Daoism. Then, the chapter will plunge into the notion of the non-self. First, I tackle it from other central concepts of Daoist philosophy—the Daoist sage, non-action or *wu* wei, non-knowledge, being (*you*) and non-being (*wu*)—which unequivocally relate to the very notion that is being distilled; and, second, in direct analysis. Subsequently, Laozi's and Zhuangzi's notions of 'non-self' will be differentiated. I conclude with a concise analysis and highlighting the most relevant points to this project.

Contextualization

Confucianism determined Daoism in many ways. Daoism emerged as a critique of the manner in which Confucius argued that his contemporary society, which was in 'chaos,' should get back on track. As P. Li points out, many of the philosophies flourishing at this time, like Legalism and Mohism, attempted to answer the question of "what is the right Way (*dao*)?" (156). Their fundamental concern was political, as they all shared the commitment to restore a lost order in society; but obviously, they differed on how this should be done. In this context and given that Confucianism was the immediate predecessor of Daoism, it is unsurprising that some of the core ideas of the second may be traced back in Confucian philosophy. One of these ideas is that "the restoration of social harmony must begin with the training of exemplary persons (*junzi*)" (86). In fact, P. Li understands Confucianism as the Way or "doctrine of becoming exemplary persons" (117) through humanness (*ren*)[4] as practice, righteousness, moral will, ritual propriety (*li*)[5] and non-theist ethics. In a few words, Confucius' proposal was that "the first thing we should try to do is to get to know the Way (which encompasses broadly appropriate personal and social behaviours, [as the ones just mentioned, and] including those that enable one to lead and govern a state)" (115). In Daoism, the 'exemplary person' (*junzi*) or the 'Daoist sage' is also known as "Perfect," "Holy" or "True" Man (Watson, 42). As the exemplary person in society, the Daoist sage is the one who meets all the necessary conditions to become an ideal ruler, allowing society to be naturally or spontaneously (*ziran*) ordered.

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[4] "Arguably the most important idea in Confucius' teachings, signifying the moral ideal, the most fundament virtue, and the defining character of *junzi*, or exemplary persons. *Ren* has been translated into English in a number of ways: 'benevolence,' 'goodness,' 'humanity,' 'perfect virtue,' and 'authoritative conduct or persons.' *Ren* is to be realized in concrete situations. Thus, Confucius offered no fixed formula for how to practice *ren*, but he did provide specific examples and give general guidance for it" (P. Li, 321-2).

[5] Refers to "codes of correct conduct or right procedures for doing things in Confucianism; true *li* has to do with inner attitudes and emotions, and is not sheer formalism" (P. Li, 323).

Having said this, it is evident that even the concept of Dao or 'Way' was not introduced in

ancient Chinese philosophy through Daoism, but through Confucianism. However, as it will be

made clear later, this concept became much more complex as it was developed by Daoist

thinkers. To the point which, for example, the Daoist sage was characterized by having become

one with *Dao* or the Way.

'Heaven' is another important concept that Daoism borrowed from Confucianism. In this respect,

P. Li writes:

> Heaven and the mandate of heaven are recurrent ideas in the *Analects* [Confucius' best-known work].
> Many instances of these terms in the text seem to point to a personal deity. For example, Confucius spoke
> of people committing a sin against heaven who would have no God to pray to. (111)

In this line, Confucius also pronounced: "Only the heaven knows me" (in P. Li 112). With these

two examples, it is perceivable how, for Confucius, the term acquires a divine character, and

could be replaced in both cases by the 'God' of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, for instance. As

the author further explicates,

> in the *Analects,* the word 'heaven' is sometimes used to refer to the ways or the conditions of the natural
> world. When Confucius claimed that heaven does not *speak* anything and four seasons run their course,
> he was implying that there is no personal deity for governing the natural world, for heaven is silent. (P.
> Li, 112-3)

From this last quotation, we learn two relevant points. The first is the connection between

'Heaven' and 'Nature,' which *Zhuangzi* understands as interchangeable synonyms. Watson

confirms this in his preface to the masterpiece as he declares: "I have rendered *Tian* as 'Heaven'

or 'heavenly' in nearly all cases. Zhuangzi uses the word to mean Nature, what pertains to the

natural, as opposed to the artificial, or as synonym for the Way" (xxviii). So, at least in

Zhuangzi's branch of Daoism, 'Heaven,' 'Nature,' and 'Dao,' may be equated. The second point

is a sort of pantheism, materialism or secularization of the 'divine' that Daoism inherited from

Confucianism, denying the existence of a separate entity that creates and directs the universe.

Moeller (2007) notes that, "given the archaeological evidence, I would go as far as to speculate

that the *Daodejing* 'secularized' the ritualistic and cosmological imagery of Chu[6] and

transformed it into a philosophical imagery that expressed a political vision of social order and a

cosmology of the Dao" (xvi). The Confucian approach to materialism also backs up this point, as

in Confucius' view "the world we live in is a given, not created by some external deity or

spiritual beings. For him, this mundane world we inhabit is the only real world we have; any

other world below or beyond is simply fiction" (P. Li, 114). It is for this reason, that "for

Confucius, moral life is based on one's self-sufficiency, so there would be no need to rely on any

external force or to petition a God for assistance" (112). Also, possibly, this made it easier for the

Daoists to conceive of an intraworldly Dao.

Now, the authorship of the two central texts under discussion, the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi,*

has been matter of debate within Daoist scholars for centuries. To begin with the *Daodejing,*

"tradition attributes the authorship of the work to Laozi (Lao Tzu, literally "The Old Master")"

(P. Li, 155). According to a well-known legend that finds support in Sima Qian's[7] biographical

account of Laozi, the sage would have "decided to withdraw from [Chu] society…in his later

years to live in solitude. He rode an ox to Hangu Pass (in modern Henan Province) where the

pass officer Guan Yi implored him to write down his doctrine" (155). Presumably, this is how

Laozi's ideas took form in the collection of poems known as the *Daodejing*. Nonetheless,

scholars seem to agree about the "lack of reliable historical evidence to support this legend"

(155). Hansen further explains: "The traditional biographical information about Laozi is largely

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[6] "The *Daodejing* is…associated with the Chu culture, and ancient Daoism is believed to have developed or at least to have had a 'stronghold' there" (Moeller 2007, xiv), where the Chu people had established themselves.

[7] Sima Qian (c. 145 – 90 BCE) is probably the most renowned historian of "the earliest general history of China" and author of the "*Shi Ji* (*The Records of the Historian*)" (P. Li, 155).

either fanciful (he lived to be 160 to 200 years old), historically dubious (he taught Confucius), or contradictory (his hometown, official posts, age)" (in P. Li, 156). Thus, today, it seems much more tenable to argue that different minds participated in the poesy and philosophy of the *Daodejing*. Moeller (2007), for example, refuses to consider Laozi the author of the text. Instead, he believes that the document "is really an ancient 'hypertext,' with inputs from many hands over several centuries" (ii).

In this regard, Henricks adds that, "it is conceivable, after all, that there never was an 'original' version of the *Laozi* [since] Michel LaFargue and others…point to signs of 'orality' in so many parts of this book" (13). Indeed, Moeller (2007) agrees "that the *Daodejing* consists of orally transmitted sayings" (196) and sustains that the collection, as we know it today, "evolved over a long period of time" (viii). In this way, "if we agree that at least some of this material circulated orally before it was written down—[then] even [the] more difficult question of when the material was first 'composed" (Henricks, 22) arises.

Sima Qian also reports biographical data about Zhuangzi, asserting that he "was a native of the state of Song" (194), also in modern Henan Province. As opposed to Laozi's biographical anecdote, there appear to be more reliable facts to think that Zhuangzi was truly a historical character in ancient China. For he "is commonly believed to have been a contemporary of Mengzi[8]" (P. Li, 194) and, according to Moeller, (2006a) "is supposed to have lived from 369 BCE to 286 BCE" (10).

The work of the *Zhuangzi* is divided in three parts: the inner, the outer and the miscellaneous chapters, all of which add up to thirty-tree in total. The first seven and so-called inner chapters,

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[8] Confucian philosopher from Chu, disciple of "Zi Si (492 – 432 BCE) who was himself a second-generation disciple, as well as grandson, of Confucius" (P. Li, 124).

most probably comprise "the oldest layer of the text [going] back to…Zhuangzi, or 'Master Zhuang,' [himself] after whom the book was named" (Moeller 2006a, 9-10). "It is generally agreed that the seven 'inner chapters,'…constitute the heart of the Zhuangzi. They contain all the important ideas [and] are written in a brilliant and distinctive—though difficult—style" (Watson, xviii-xix). As such, they represent "the core of Zhuangzi's Daoism" (P. Li, 195). In contrast to this, the "outer" and "miscellaneous" chapters of the *Zhuangzi* appear as "a mixture" (Watson, xix), and the thought they display "sometimes merely apes, at other times departs from, or even contradicts, that of the "inner chapters" (xxi).

> Earlier scholars, who believed that the *Zhuangzi* was mainly, if not entirely, the work of a single writer, suggested that Zhuangzi fashioned these later chapters to act as "commentaries" or "explications" of his basic text, the seven "inner chapters," and this view is by no means untenable, though it seems more likely that they are the work of somewhat later writers. (Watson, xix)

Yet, as with the *Daodejing,* there are plenty of signs supporting Watson's position and hypothesis of the involvement of different minds in the oeuvre of the *Zhuangzi*. One of these is Waley's assertion that "some parts are by a splendid poet, others are by a feeble scribbler" (225 in Watson, xxi). Second, is the general belief among sinologists "that some portions of the 'outer' and 'mixed' chapters were composed by immediate followers or later students of" (Moeller 2006a, 10) Zhuangzi, as the above quotation suggests. And third, the fact that "the titles of the…'outer' and 'miscellaneous' chapters…are taken from the opening words of the chapter [in contrast to what happens in the first seven sections] and often have little to do with the chapter as a whole" (Watson, xviii). Finally, Watson recommends to approach sections 28-32 of the "miscellaneous chapters" with special distrust "for reasons of both style and content. Section 30 is particularly suspect because it lacks any commentary by Guo Xiang[9] and has little or nothing

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[9] "Our present version of the *Zhuangzi*…was edited by Guo Xiang (d 312 CE), one of the leaders of the Neo-Daoist movement. Guo Xiang appended a commentary to the text, the oldest commentary now in existence, which may in

to do with the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*" (xx). So, it is precisely for these reasons that I have decided to focus on the initial seven chapters, attempting to remain faithful to what seem to be Zhuangzi's original ideas, and particularly in regard to the notion of the 'non-self' that these sections depict.

In any case, historical information is still insufficient to verify and allow us to be certain of the existence of a philosopher called Zhuangzi. This is why Watson concludes: "Whether [the 'inner chapters'] are the work of a man called [Zhuangzi] we do not know, but they are certainly in the main the product of a superbly keen and original mind, though [as he was already arguing,] they may contain brief interpolations by other hands" (xix). Repeating Watson's words, "I shall simply state that from here on, when I speak of Zhuangzi, I am referring not to a specific individual known to us through history but to the mind, or group of minds, revealed in the text called *Zhuangzi,* particularly the first seven sections of that text" (viii-ix). Not being certain of Laozi's historical existence as a philosopher or author of the *Daodejing*, I will also use his name, as P. Li does, simply "for the sake of convenience" (156). Conclusively, Hansen (2017) notes: The *Daodejing* "and the *Zhuangzi* are composite texts written and rewritten over centuries with varied input from multiple anonymous writers".

Unlike the *Zhuangzi*, for which there is an exclusive 'original' source—Guo Xiang's— there are three different, accessible versions of the *Daodejing*. The most common and diffused of them is known as the *received version* and was edited by Wang Bi, another Neo-Daoist that lived from 226 to 249 CE (P. Li, 154). "If one holds an English (or French or Spanish or German) translation of [the *Daodejing*] in one's hands today, it is most likely" (Moeller 2006a, 1) this. Then, there are

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part be the work of a predecessor, Xiang Xiu, who lived in the first half of the third century CE. In any event, it is the text and commentary of Guo Xiang's edition of the *Zhuangzi* that form the basis for all our present versions of the book" (Watson, xviii).

the *Mawangdui silk copies* which, dated around 200 BCE, were unearthed in 1973 (P. Li; Moeller 2007). Finally, the *Guodian bamboo strips,* were excavated in 1993 (P. Li) and "buried around 300 B.C." (Henricks, 22). Although the *bamboo strips* represent the most antique "widely known Daoist writing" (Moeller 2006a, 4), it does not constitute under any circumstances an "original writing,' or someone's ideas or words written down for the first time…The scribes who made these slips were 'looking at' their sources—presumably other slips—as they were writing" (Henricks, 22). That said, this only serves to lay out the question concerning the sources that were used to make this copy and how old they could be. To end up problematizing the issue of a hypothetical 'original' *Daodejing,* Henricks adds that "different versions of parts of the text could have been written down, *for the first time,* at different times in different parts of [China]" (13; italics in the original). Taking this under consideration, as part of my methodological approach, I chose to study the three different available versions of the *Daodejing.* My Spanish edition, by Curro Bermejo, is a copy of the *received version.* Whenever I will be quoting this, it will be my own English translation, attempting to emulate Bermejo's interpretation as literally as possible. The other publications that I will be using correspond to Hans-Georg Moeller's 2007 printing of the *Mawangdui manuscripts*, and Robert G. Henricks' 2000 revision of the *Guodian bamboo slips.*

Humanism and Non-humanism in Ancient China

I now turn to the issue of humanism and non-humanism in ancient China to continue with the task of contextualization. While Confucianism can be widely regarded as a humanist approach to the social problems that Chinese philosophy was trying to wrestle and overcome, Daoism was concerned with having the 'human' as the philosophical nucleus. But, for Daoism, it was even

more problematic to think that humans—or today's empowered subjects—with their 'agency', 'morality' and 'humanness,' would be capable of solving anything. For Confucius, the cultivation of exemplary persons largely relied upon responding "to the fundamental moral demand of humanness" (P. Li, 89), which P. Li sums up as a demand to "being and becoming human"[10] (89). It may be deduced, then, that "ethically speaking, one is not born with certain substantive properties that make one a human being" (91), but that becoming human is a moral endeavour in Confucianism. In this sense, the *Analects* are considered "the 'Bible' of Chinese ethical humanism" (120). Furthermore, Ho has written an interesting analysis exploring how Confucian 'proper conduct' entails a specific ethic—or dogma—of human relationships, and how the significance of such relationships produces a unique definition of identity. In this context, the writer uses "the term *relational identity* to refer to identity defined by a person's significant social relationships" (116). As a consequence of this, and in contrast to the Western tenet of individualism, Confucian philosophy does not regard "the individual…as a separate being, but as a member of the larger whole" (116). Hence, insofar as "the self is not distinct and separate from others" (130-1), "the boundary between self and nonself[11] is not sharply demarcated (130).

Nonetheless, the fact that Confucianism conceptualizes identity as a *relational identity,* reflects a need for "self-monitoring" (Ho, 129)—resembling self-government—in order to constantly verify that one is acting in agreement to the "code" of 'proper conduct.' As such, "the self-in-relation-with-others [is] in short…the phenomenological representation of selfhood in Confucianism" (117), making self-realization the critical drive in Confucian theory (Tu 1985 in Ho). This is how self-cultivation comes to occupy "a central position in the Confucian conception

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[10] This strikingly resembles the contemporary prescription of neo-liberal government—and psychology's effects—in their interest of subjectification for social alignment.

[11] Although here the nuance of 'nonself' implies otherness and not ontological negativity or indeterminacy, as I am using it, it still functions as a contrast and opposition of self.

of selfhood" (Ho, 117). As opposed to this, the art that the Daoist sage will have to master is

negative self-cultivation. "He has to dehumanize himself into an ego-less, shapeless being"

(Moeller 2006b, 71); and he "is the only human who perfectly masters this art of

dehumanization" (Moeller 2007, 162). That is where Daoism puts an end to the Confucian

humanist doctrine. If the self-other distinction is not clear in Confucianism, Daoism radically

negates it, for "the [D]aoist self is a part of and in harmony with the cosmos, not distinct,

standing apart from, or in opposition to it" (Ho, 131). And consequently, as Baudrillard sharply

states: "if there is no other, there is no self" (Baudrillard in V. Li 2006, 1).

That Daoism plays the role of a "Chinese counterculture" (Ho, 119), at least with regard to

Confucianism and humanism, is made clear by the third stanza in Chapter Thirty-eight of the

Daodejing:

> After the Dao is lost there is virtue.
> After virtue is lost there is humanity.
> After humanity is lost there is righteousness.
> After righteousness is lost there is ritual propriety. (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 93)

'Humanity' is only necessary where there is no virtue. Virtue is only necessary when one has

departed from 'the Way' (*Dao*). In this sense, the *Daodejing* was more concerned with urging

humans to flow with Dao, than "helping humans understand what they are" (Moeller 2006b, 57).

With that aim in mind, it served as an instructional guide for "a human ruler [about] how to rule

humans" (57). And such a human ruler would be required to gather all the characteristics of a

"nonhuman ruler" (67), the most important of them being the capacity to act as an empty and

non-present centre. Only "his non-presence in the midst of [the subjects'] presence guarantees

that their ambitions are held in check, that their activities will not 'autonomize' themselves" (67).

As the Daoist sage-ruler empties himself, he is not only clearing himself of sentiments, but also of humanness or species, suggesting that, in the *Daodejing,* the cosmic and natural pierce the heart of the human (Moeller 2006b). Consequently, "the order and structure of human life is not different from the larger order and structure of the Dao" (55) and what is taken to be human cannot be thought of independently of "nature." In Daoism, the conventional split between nature and culture is denaturalized (Moeller 2006b), and this is perhaps one of Moeller's (2007) arguments to see the *Daodejing* as a "meta-political" (xvi) text.

As a peripheral, rather than central piece of the cosmos—because the Dao orbits about an empty centre and not humans—they do not enjoy a privileged 'dignity' or obligation toward "being" (Moeller 2006b). In fact, "there is nothing special about humans" and "man is not the measure of all things" (55). In this order of ideas, it is easy to note that the *Daodejing* "is certainly not a humanist text, and Daoist philosophy, in general, is not humanist either" (55). Further, the "negative" virtues of Dao, that the sage is expected to echo, "are obviously nonhumanist" (Moeller 2007, 48). Zhuangzi, beautifully articulates this idea when he writes: "men [that] wander beyond the realm…look on life as a swelling tumor, a protruding wen, and on death as the draining of a sore" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 50).

In this fashion, the Daoist attitude could be described as non-humanist. Since Laozi and Zhuangzi both advocate for the outdoing of "man," their philosophy defends a "trans-rational" (Feng Youlan in Moeller 2006a, 22) perspective, which—like paradoxes and the union of opposites—is somehow necessarily alien to man itself. Trans-rationality functions as the returning-rationality that seeks its origin and absence.

Today, there is a massive, almost generalized reception of the humanist ideals, that—as Moeller (2006b) in regard to 'modern' societies notes—may be traced back to the influx of the

'Enlightenment' in social and political matters, positioning notions such as 'human rights,' 'democracy,' or 'progress,' as standard goals of current societies. For us, it has become *natural* to think that whatever is 'humane' is necessarily good and desirable. *We* hold beliefs of what is good for us, even if *we* remain completely ignorant about existence and 'ourselves.' In psychology, the humanist rationality has been introjected by almost every practicing psychologist, regardless of their school of training. There is at least one reason why this should be called into question, and that is, because our opinions and actions—which, as psychologists do not only affect 'ourselves'—are being directed by our ignorance and assumptions that 'being,' 'expressing,' 'freeing,' 'integrating,' and 'developing' 'ourselves' *is* good. Like this, we seem more Confucians in that we are constantly "sensitive to the principle that distinguishes right from wrong, and that one should respond to right and wrong in different ways" (P. Li, 95). But it is exactly in our human categories, judgments and preferences that all 'human' miseries take shape.

The Dao

This section will attempt to provide a definition, or perhaps more accurately, a description of the Dao, so that there is some clarity of this essential concept before diving into the ideas that refer to the non-self and its particularities. Again, the immediate translation of the term corresponds to 'the Way' (Kohn 2020; Moeller 2007; Watson). P. Li explains that while "for Confucius, it primarily refers to social order; for Laozi, it denotes the material reality, its patterns, right ways of operation, ethical guides, and so on" (320). In this fashion, "Dao [in Daoism] was an expression of a scenario for ultimate order and ideal effects…a sort of way of all ways, a method of all methods, a pattern of all patterns" (Moeller 2006a, 25). Because "reversal is the movement

of the Dao" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 97), and "the cosmos [is] *dao* unfolding itself" (P. Li, 170);

it is possible to define Dao as "a mystic reality" (Schwartz 1985 in Li, 159) as well.

Beyond these hints, however, the student of Daoism faces the opaque unnameability (Seidel,

Strickmann & T. Ames 2019, in Grava 1963) of the notion. In illustrating this point, the first

chapter of the *Daodejing* has been repeatedly cited:

> As to a Dao–
>   if it can be specified as a Dao,
>   it is not a permanent Dao.
> As to a name–
>   if it can be specified as a name,
>   it is not a permanent name. (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 3)

As this shows, the Dao puts us in "the awkward position of being unable ever to articulate what

[it] really is" (Ho, 119). Although nameless, the paradoxical Dao is describable and indescribable

(P. Li, 157). Moeller (2006a) suggests that this occurs because in Daoism "the nameless is an

integral part of the named" (147). Names can be given to Dao from the viewpoint capable of

naming, but this does not extinguish its namelessness or make it nameable. In this sense, "the

Dao is not 'beyond' names, it is simply the unnamed element in the midst of all names" (147).

A complementary way of approaching the unnameability of Dao is in Grava's terms. He

understands that "the nameless *[D]ao* is viewed from its state of potentiality [while] the

nameable *[D]ao* from its state of creativity in process, or actuality" (240). In my opinion, P. Li is

right to emphasize that the moral of this riddle is that "language…does not act as a substitute for

experience" (165), and thus, that the representation and signifier of 'Dao' should not be confused

with its actuality.

Now, it is important to abandon "the temptation to assume that the term '*dao*' in its multiple

occurrences must have the same meaning" (P. Li, 156). As it will be evident, there are

circumstances in which the Dao may be taken to be 'empty,' and others in which it depicts a perfect unity or duality and game of contrasts or oppositions. Sometimes, it symbolizes threeness or trinity, while in other cases, it denotes a process in which emptiness, oneness, twoness, and threeness participate to produce 'the realm' that they themselves are, and which we live as reality.

From Laozi it is clear that "the Dao is empty [*wu*]" (in Moeller 2007, 11). Zhuangzi's words announce it rather differently: "The Heavenly Gate is nonbeing [*wu*]" (in Watson, 195). Knowing that for the philosopher 'Heaven' is a synonym for 'Nature,' one may deduce that what he is trying to say is that *wu* (emptiness or non-being) is the gate through which nature manifests itself, making all possible. Thus, in Daoist reasoning, only non-being [*wu*]—and not being [*you*]— gathers the conditions, or potentials, to produce being (Zhuangzi in Watson). As Laozi himself states: "The things of the world arise from being [*you*], And being [*you*] comes from non-being [*wu*]" (Lao Tzu in Henricks, 77). But the opposite process is also true; non-being comes from being. And noticing their interdependency is what makes it viable for Abe (1975) to acknowledge that "Emptiness' [*wu*] is simultaneously fullness [*you*]" (189), and for He Yan, to see *wu* as "absolute[,] complete and capable of accomplishing anything" (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2019).

In this way, *wu* is different from "nothingness." Therefore, I hold it necessary to contradict Wang Bi's assimilation of *wu* with emptiness *and* nothingness, as referred by Moeller (2006a) in his section on Daoist Mysticism (Wang Bi in Moeller 2006a, 15). *Wu* is simply characterized by "indeterminacy, [and an] absence of perceptible qualities" (Seidel, Strickmann & T. Ames) that simultaneously contains "a primordial and undifferentiated energy" (P. Li, 162). Grava illustrates this point this way:

> One of the greatest dangers that lurk at every corner on the way toward a correct interpretation of the original meaning of *[D]ao* is the tendency to equate "non-presence" or "not-yet-being" with "absolute

non-being," and commit to the fallacy of confusing potentiality of a "field" with empty space or absolute void, or the mathematical zero with nothingness. The original meaning of *[D]ao* points to an immense reservoir of pure potentialities, out of which things emerge through the process of emanation and not through creation *ex nihilo*." (238)

In short, *this* reading of Dao speaks of "a creative void [that] possesses the potentiality of becoming bipolarly actualized" (Grava, 248). Possibly one of the most remarkable features of Dao as *wu,* which appears in the Daoist cosmological essay entitled *The Great One Gave Birth to Water*, is that being 'nothing,' it "is something that heaven cannot destroy, [something that] earth cannot smother, and Yin and Yang cannot produce" (Taiyi shengshui in Henricks, 123-4). In his commentary on Chapter Eleven of the *Daodejing,* and in line with this interdependency of ontological opposites in Daoism, Moeller (2007) writes: "Emptiness alone is not enough and does not 'exist' for its own sake. A center needs a periphery to be a center. Daoism is not one-sidedly focused on emptiness or nothingness. It is only one (but literally the central) aspect of the Dao that cannot be isolated" (26).

Since nothing can alter *wu* and anything is foreign to it, "there is nothing external to [Dao]" (P. Li, 169). And thus, Dao is consolidated as oneness. Dao, then, is not only conceived as *wu,* but as well as "the 'One'" (P. Li, 167). Moeller (2006a) explains: "The Dao is identified with the number one and with oneness in its double sense, and also with emptiness and nonpresence" (133). Dao combines the aspects of emptiness and wholeness into 'the One,' and as such, it composes a perfect structure and scenario (Moeller 2006a). But *Wu,* writes Moeller (2007) in his breakdown of the *Daodejing's* Chapter Four, "is not 'ontologically' separated from that which it originates" (10). So necessarily, the Dao, in its oneness, assimilates its two aspects, its twoness, its Yin and Yang (Moeller 2006a).

Now, we turn to the third possibility of fathoming Dao: "One Yin, one Yang" (Dazhuan in Moeller 2007, 84). What Grava means with the bipolar actualization of Dao is precisely the interaction between the negative (potential, *wu*) and the positive (actual, *you*). Henricks also understands Dao as "both the 'process'…and the 'source of the process" (123). However, the interaction between these two opposite modes generates 'a third element,' something that cannot simply be considered the sum of them. Fung identifies this third factor as 'a resulting harmony' (in Grava, 243), Dazhuan, as "the rhythm of Yin and Yang or the pulse of the world" (in Moeller 2007, 84) and Moeller, (2006a) as the "perfect pattern of order that is constituted by *wu* and *you*" (137). In any case, the production of a 'resulting harmony,' 'rhythm,' 'pulse,' or 'pattern of order' is what makes it possible to equate Dao, now not merely with the duality of *yin* and *yang*, but with Threeness or the trinity. From this, arises a fourth valid description of Dao.

In reference to Dao's plasticity, Moeller (2007) explains in relation to Chapter Forty-two of the *Daodejing*:

> At the center of the process of generation is the Dao which is identified with…(*wu*) or emptiness as well as with the number one (note: not zero) that stands for both singleness and totality. Explained with the help of the image of the wheel, the Dao is both the empty and single hub…as well as the whole wheel…The whole scenario of the Dao consists of the rhythm of Yin and Yang…Thus, the monistic whole encompasses "twoness." This oneness and twoness together constitute the Threeness that stands for the multiplicity of the ten thousand things. Seen as a totality, the Dao is one, but its oneness is just the frame of a fundamental twoness that is at the heart of change and reproduction. This duality, in turn, gives rise to all there is in the world. (100)

The last-mentioned chapter substantiates this 'complete image' of Dao with the following words:

> The Dao generates Oneness.
> Oneness generates Twoness.
> Twoness generates Threeness.
> Threeness generates the ten thousand things. (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 103)

In my own terms, I like representing this view of Dao under the following equation:

$$0 = 1 = 2 = 3 = 10000$$

It is probably worth clarifying that in Daoism 'the ten thousand things' serves as a metaphor denoting totality and every-thing in the world (Seidel, Strickmann & T. Ames). So, both passages are helpful to equate Dao with anything in existence. In such fashion, any object, tangible or intangible, is defining of Dao since, without it, Dao would be incomplete, and thus, would not be itself. Everything pertaining to the field of *you*, relates to *wu* since it is its origin and limit. And because every-thing is likewise important and aids in construing Dao as-it-is, Zhuangzi points at Dao, or Nature, as "Heaven the Equalizer" (in Watson, 11), and affirms that "Great [D]ao is all-embracing without making distinctions" (quoted from Bary *et al*. 1960, 81 in Ho 1995, 120). According to my reading, what this conveys, is that the most minute, banal and dreadful, is as vital to Dao as 'Heaven' itself or nature as a whole. From this perspective, then, nothing is better or 'superior' than anything else, and any sort of hierarchy is deeply fictitious. Despite this, there is a complementary perspective indicating that *wu* is indeed superior to *you*, but we will examine this later.

Ultimately, "Dao [as *wu*] is unchanging—but in the paradoxical language of Daoism this means: it is the unchanging change, the permanence of the impermanent, the cyclical course of time that goes on endlessly but consists of temporal and passing segments of time" (Moeller 2007, 62). This vision introduces a new way of approaching Dao. That is, understanding it as a process [*sheng*][12]. Unlike the Judeo-Christian notion of 'God,' Dao "is thoroughly within the continuous, reproductive process of change [and] is this very process" (122). From the Daoist view, the universe is "an endless process of 'giving birth,' 'producing,' 'growing,' or 'evolving;' not to be

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[12] As P. Li specifies, "*sheng*' is a term that means generally 'happening' and implies an activity or process going on. [However,] Laozi uses *sheng* as a technical term to signify the continuous process in which everything in the world participates" (166).

understood as creation *ex nihilo*" (P. Li, 323). It is something "caused but [that] is in constant self-production" (169) and decay.

But what does all this theory mean in the practice? According to Zhuangzi's observation, "only human beings can be off the track (*dao*), and also return to it. In contrast, animals…are primordially in tune with *dao*; they neither deviate from *dao* nor return to it" (in P. Li, 223). He is also sharp when advising: "One should not seek after *dao* that is allegedly outside or independent of concrete everyday activities. *Dao* [for *us*] only exists as concrete *daos*—the *dao* of cooking, the *dao* of planting, the *dao* of weaving, the *dao* of driving, and so on" (in P. Li, 227). To the Daoist sage, "Dao as a process of change" (Moeller 2007, 12) is all that there is, and that is why he "would not impose closed subjective views or rigid categories on the diverse and constantly changing world" (P. Li, 213). In this order of ideas, and regarding Chapter Sixty-seven of the *Daodejing,* Moeller (2006b) sustains that having identified "with the *process* of change rather than with individual substances, [taking] an 'ontology of process' rather than an 'ontology of substances,' then death [and life lose, to the Daoist sage, their positivity and] negativity" (125).

The Daoist Sage

The Daoist sage, who, as I have said may be also called "True," "Perfect," or "Holy" man (Watson, 42), models himself in accordance with Dao (Moeller 2007). There are plenty of indications to support this premise. First and foremost, the sage is supposed to emulate Dao's stillness and emptiness, as opposed to "hop[ing] for plenitude" (Tse 2004, 39). Seidel, Strickmann & T. Ames show this distinctly when asserting:

> The Daoist mystics…create a void inside themselves that permits them to return to nature's origin. Laozi, in trance, "wandered freely in the origin of all things." Thus, in ecstasy he escaped the rhythm of life and

death by contemplating the ineluctable return: "Having attained perfect emptiness, holding fast to stillness, I can watch the return of the ever active Ten Thousand things".

Since emptiness is his unavoidable destiny, the practice of the sage ruler is negative self-cultivation. Only by excelling in this practice, which involves "getting 'rid of egocentric thinking" (P. Li, 171), he will "reach [Dao's] state of oneness" (Moeller 2007, 68) and become "the world's pattern" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 71). To succeed in this, he also requires—echoing Dao—to be "without any quality" or "specific characteristic" (Moeller 2007). Consequently, he acquires "the typical Daoist noncharacteristics: [he is] secret and subtle, dark and thorough, deep and unfathomable" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 39). In order to reach this "not humane," 'Dao state,' it is of utmost importance that humans are able to follow *zi ran*[13] (P. Li). Thereby, they become "all the more natural" (Moeller 2006b, 135).

And being natural, they are totally aware of "what it is that Heaven does, and…what it is that man does" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 42). Zhuangzi himself, states that in discriminating what lies upon the possibilities of 'our' agency and the possibilities of nature dwells 'the perfection of virtue' (in Watson). So, recognizing our human limits while developing acceptance of the situations that we cannot influence is essential to this process. Further, such perfection is not associated with what is *over* but what is *under*. "The Daoist sage is thus not an '*over*man,' but rather an '*under*man' *who remains below the threshold of human individuation*[14]—as opposed to all other human individuals" (Moeller 2006b, 135; last italics added). As a ruler, he establishes himself "not so much [as a] representative of his people [but as] a 'representative' of 'heaven and earth' within society" (73). In this form, he is capable of clearing his heart-mind away and in his

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[13] Crucial characteristic of Dao that is usually translated as naturalness, spontaneity or self-so-ing.

[14] This is to be kept in mind and contrasted with Jung's view on *individuation* as the therapeutic, psycho-spiritual process.

heart nothing personal remains. Because it is empty "he can make room there for the hearts of all others" (59).

Also, like Dao, the Daoist sage knows how not to make distinctions and have no preferences, even when it comes to life and death. Zhuangzi asserts this when he writes: "The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death" (in Watson, 43). Although he is capable of recognizing "this" and "that" as distinctive, he appreciates that neither "is substantial" (P. Li, 211). For him, there is no doubt about the interdependence of "this" and "that," or the dwelling of "this" in "that," and vice versa. Having such perspective, he has the capacity to 'even things out' (P. Li) and act in accord with the equalizing principle of "Heaven." So, "because he pays special attention to specific 'times' and 'circumstances,' and to what is suitable in concrete situations" (214), he "is at ease with himself wherever he dwells. Since he has transcended all conventional distinctions, external changes do not bother him anymore" (223), and he "can accept the world as-it-is" (213), "identifying the 'highest' guidance with 'whatever happens" (Hansen).

Here, the famed image of the mirror becomes relevant: "The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror—going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing. Therefore he can win over things and not hurt himself" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 59). Acting as a mirror, the sage allows himself to enjoy pleasurable things for the time they are to be. Once they are not there, he does not cling or lament because they are gone. And when disagreeable or painful things emerge, the sage carefully and objectively observes them as part of the process of change until they are gone. This is what Zhuangzi calls "not using the mind to repel the Way, not using man to help out Heaven. This is what [he calls] the true man" (in Watson, 43). Correspondingly, acting as a mirror, the sage is proficient in not judging things "as intrinsically good or bad according to [his]

completed mind[15]" (P. Li, 214). And because he has lost the perspective that enables one to identify things as inherently good or bad, he does not "inwardly wound [his person]' with [things]" (Moeller 2006b, 135), escaping from the scope of suffering. In this way, "he refuses to recognize poverty as any less desirable than life [and] he does not in any literal sense withdraw and hide from the world [as doing] so would show that he still passed judgement on the world" (Watson, xi).

So, since "the sage is the only human who has no desire to prefer" (Moeller 2006b, 135), the comparison with the mirror is also useful for illustrating the abandonment of desires as another defining feature of the Daoist sage. Already in Chapter One, the manuscript advises "to be permanently without desires in order to see the subtleties" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 3). As a ruler, the Daoist sage has no self-interest in 'being at the centre of society' or producing himself as a politician. "His only self-interest is to eliminate his selfish interest" (Moeller 2006b, 63), diminishing thereby all his *human* drives (Moeller 2006b). Nevertheless, he is also expected—recapping P. Li's interpretation of Laozi—"to keep people's desires to a minimal level" (187), for, as far as they remain "deep in their passions and desires, they [will also be] shallow in the workings of Heaven" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 42). "Such a state of want" Moeller (2007) adds, "is the cause of war, social disorder, and strife" (110). The relinquishment of desires emerges, in this fashion, as a persistent idea throughout the *Daodejing* and Daoism in general. Chapter Forty-six of the same book presents perhaps the most persuasive words in this regard:

> Of crimes, none is greater
>   than to allow for desires.
> Of disasters, none is greater
>   than not to master satisfaction.
> Of calamities, none is sadder
>   than the desire to acquire.

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[15] The term completed or fixed mind refers to "a state of mind/being that fixates on an egoistic, narrow perspective or prejudice, and judges everything from this perspective and imposes this perspective on things; a state of mind that does not adjust itself when things have changed" (P. Li, 320).

Thus,
the satisfaction of the mastery of satisfaction
is constant satisfaction. (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 111)

Mastering satisfaction, or cessation, is "discerning when it is enough" and "knowing when to stop" (*zhi zhi*) (Moeller 2007). As Moeller notes, "the art of satisfaction" is inextricably related to "the overcoming of the yearnings and cravings of one's ego," and ultimately, "the overcoming of oneself" (80). Thus, "the Sage desires not to desire" (Lao Tzu in Henricks, 120), and even forgets the desire of being in accord with Dao, for, as long as he does not, he will also fail at dwelling in Dao (Moeller 2007) and becoming a Daoist sage.

The *Zhuangzi* discusses some methods of 'forgetfulness' such as "breathing techniques" and "practices of meditation" (Moeller 2006a, 17), since they are closely related to the development of a state of equanimity. This state is crucial for the Daoist sage (Moeller 2007, 116), inasmuch as it condenses the wisdom related to the apprehension of *sheng,* of 'seeing all things as equal' and losing the meaning of judging, all of which are likewise reflected in the mastery of cessation. Hence, equanimity is, in my opinion, the ultimate skill of the Daoist sage. By practicing equanimity, he "minimizes his personality [emptying] himself of all selfishness until nothing 'positive' remains" (152). This should develop in the sage's observance of forgetting his "ego" in every action. And correspondingly, all actions are to be considered fulfilled only as long as the "ego" has not intervened (Moeller 2006a). To be certain, Moeller identifies two characteristics of the sage-ruler in the *Laozi*: "he is *inactive* and *without personal qualities*" (59; italics in the original). As we will shortly see, "the first aspect is expressed in the famous 'doctrine' of non-action (*wu wei*), and the second in the important role of *wu* or non-presence" (2006b, 59). In this

manner, the relationship between equanimity and selflessness derives in the sage's related method of *non-action*.[16] On this subject, P. Li notes:

> for Zhuangzi, non-action is also linked to the idea of happiness [via equanimity]. As he puts it, "I take [non-action] to be true happiness" and "the highest happiness, keeping alive—only inaction gets you close to this!" Now it must be noted that keeping alive is not merely surviving in a state of indolence. It is about accepting the natural transformation of things and staying in tune with it. (222)

Non-action (*wu wei*)

If until this point we have not been confronted enough with Daoism's paradoxical fashion, the proposed practice of *wu wei* will certainly accomplish it. Modern Westerners are seen as devoted to *doing*. As such, this is most of the times the sole imagined method to achieving goals, big or small. Conversely, the *Daodejing* proposes that only "doing nothing…nothing is [left] undone" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 115). And even more straightforwardly: "do the nondoing. Fulfil the task of no task. Taste the tasteless" (145). Because "to proceed" means "distance" (63), "the Sage…does not follow the Way" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 15). However, as P. Li convincingly claims, "Laozi does not suggest [rulers] that they leave everything alone, do nothing, and say nothing. He mentions that rulers get their 'task done and work complete" (183). In the same line, Watson explains that by *wu wei* Zhuangzi does not mean "a forced quietude but a course of action that is not founded on purposeful motives of gain or striving" (xi). But how, then, is *wu wei* supposed to operate?

Like those of the wandering sage, "all human actions become as spontaneous and mindless as those of the natural world. Man becomes one with Nature…and merges himself with Dao, or the

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[16] The notion of non-action or *wu wei* means "not-doing-things (in a coercive way)". It is "a general Daoist *de* (virtue) that one…has to cultivate through knowing *dao;* not to be misunderstood as simply 'doing nothing" (P. Li, 324) "but rather letting things be what they are" (221). Zhuangzi prefers explaining such difference with the following metaphor: "It is easy to keep from walking; the hard thing is to walk without touching the ground" (in P. Li, 223).

Way, the underlying unity that embraces man, Nature…all that is" (Watson, xi) and is not in the universe. From this, then, it is palpable that *zi ran* is the core principle of *wu wei.* One who puts non-action into practice, is to follow the way of the cosmos, in its naturality and spontaneous process, "support[ing] the own course [*ziran*] of the ten thousand things and…not dar[ing] to act on them" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 149). That said, *wu wei* could be better understood as not allowing private wills, categories or preferences to intervene in the spontaneous course and unfolding of life. In other words, what this notion indicates is that whenever our *self* is involved in any action, we are acting against the (natural) Dao. So, non-action is basically the human action in which no 'self' is involved. Thus, Laozi says: "Few things under heaven are as instructive as the lessons of silence, Or as beneficious as the fruits of non-action" (Tse, 97). As Hansen points out, then, "philosophical quietism is also motivational and intentional quietism." Further, following Laozi, "*zi-ran*…can [not only] teach us important lessons about how to live a better human life [but also] about how to govern a state" (P. Li, 182).

As to the sage-ruler, because he, like Dao, is constantly 'returning,' his model of action is to retreat (Moeller 2007), "not cling[ing] to act" and "not cling[ing] to having acted[17]" (P. Li, 188). In his frugality (Moeller 2007), he appears weak but avoids contention and conflict (P. Li), what is more important than defending *honour* and showing up. The latter, would correspond to *you wei*—notion that surfaces as an antonym for *wu wei*—and "implies 'doing things in possessive, coercive, and self-aggrandizing ways" (185); being this precisely what characterized Confucius' and Mozi's political directions (P. Li). Contrary to this view, the Daoist sage-ruler plays the role of the empty centre that unites society and assists its efficacious functioning. "His leadership [takes the form of] a leadership that does not lead" (Moeller 2006b, 71) through the mastery of

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[17] *Wu yu wei* is the Chinese term designating this complementary aspect of *wu wei* (P. Li).

non-action. A related *negative* task corresponding to the duties of the ruler is, "according to Laozi," not "to rouse people's desires that are beyond their natural or spontaneous needs" (P. Li, 186). This is expressed in Chapter Three of the *Daodejing* when it mentions that "the ordering of the sage…weakens [people's] wishes [and] persistently…makes [them] have no knowledge and no desires" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 9).

Concluding this concise discussion of *wu wei*, it is important to mention that "in the *Zhuangzi*, th[is] notion…includes at least three aspects: [1] skilfully and spontaneously doing something [2] not imposing on things whatever is unnatural and unfitting [and 3] living a life transcending worldly conventions (of, for example, ethics, politics, economics, society, family)" (P. Li, 221-2). Complementarily, for Laozi, the practice of *wu wei* necessarily integrates *wu yu wei* and their jointed meaning may be rendered, depending on the context, in diverse ways such as "not-contending…not-possessing, not-expecting-reward, not-lingering-when-work-is-done, not-lording-over…not-self-aggrandizing (*bu-wei-da*), not-manipulating…not-meddling…casting-off (selfish thinking)…withdrawing-when-task-is-done…knowing-when-to-stop…knowing contentment…decreasing-'doing'…and being-tranquil" (189). Observing examples in the *Daodejing* for almost each of the aforementioned categories, P. Li resolves that "given so many pieces of advice on the practice of *wu-wei* and *wu-yi-wei* in the *Daodejing,* we may even regard the text as a comprehensive manual of*"* (189) these two concepts.

Non-knowledge

As indicated above, one onus of the Daoist ruler in relation to his subjects is to keep them without knowledge. The foundation for this pillar of Daoism is that "paradoxically, the more we know, the less we know—since we have more unanswered questions" (P. Li, 224). Laozi, as well as

Zhuangzi, advises the favouring of non-knowledge. The former recommends: "Suppress your learning, and you will not undergo further harassments" (Tse, 49), while the latter endorses: "You have heard of the knowledge that knows, but you have never heard of the knowledge that does not know. Look into that closed room, that empty chamber where brightness is born!" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 26). Here, the idea that Zhuangzi is trying to convey is that exclusively when "perception and understanding have come to a stop" (in Watson, 19) it will be possible to flow in unity with Dao. Noteworthily, P. Li draws attention to the similarity of these ideas with "the author(s) of Ecclesiastes [who affirms that] "with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (1:18); [and] "be warned my son…of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body (12:12)" (225).

Zhuangzi, however, he stresses the importance of recognizing the personal limits in regard to knowledge and being aware of its unlimited nature (in Li 2012). He points out that such a defining feature of knowledge contains its own threat, for being bottomless, to reach a state of satisfaction about what is known, is hopeless, unless 'virtuosity of cessation' has also been attained in this regard. His own voice suggests: "If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger. If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger for certain!" (Zhuangzi in Li 2012, 224). In any case, Zhuangzi's position towards non-knowledge is entwined with his *Discussion on Making All Things Equal*. Possibly the most enigmatic aspect of this relationship is, that being aware of the limitedness of knowledge, he still affirms—without assuming the existence of an *objective* truth—that human beings "are the only species who can know *the* truth" (P. Li, 227; italics in the original). Having said this, it is crucial to remember that "from Zhuangzi's Daoist point of view, all differences and opposites are essentially human conceptualizations [and] the problem is that humans are normally obsessed

with differences and opposites" (215). In this sense, it is conceivable to conjecture that—

following the guidelines of *wu wei*—the truth is only accessible to human beings in their *return*

to the Way. Hence, this is only possible for the sage who has approached knowledge from a

selfless perspective, without the mediation of a *self*. Likewise, the enlightened human being, who

has discovered, and therefore dwells in truth, is free from the 'humane' tendency "of imposing

their own perspectives on others" (227).

In synthesizing the Daoist ideas of non-action and non-knowledge, hardly any other words suit

better than those reflected on Chapter Forty-eight of the *bamboo slips:*

> Those who [toil at] their studies increase day after day;
> Those who practice the Way, decrease day after day.
> They decrease and decrease,
> Until they reach the point where they do nothing at all.
> They do nothing, yet there is nothing left undone. (Lao Tzu in Henricks 2000, 87)

Being (*you*) and Non-being (*wu*)

While in certain forms of Christianity, along with Platonism, non-being is assimilated as the

sheer absence of being (Abe), "just as darkness was considered to come to exist where light is

lacking" (181), Daoism categorically denies the possibility of a being that precedes non-being *or*

vice versa. *You,* term that is most frequently translated as "being," "depending on the

context…can [also be rendered as] 'existence/existing,' 'presence/presenting,' or 'form/taking

form' (P. Li, 324). "As a verb," Moeller (2006a) clarifies, that it may also mean "being there' or

'being present,' and also 'to have' and sometimes 'to own.' It can denote both the existence and

the possession of something" (129).

Wu, which is "simply the negation of *you*" (129), is usually translated as non-being, but it can

signify "not-existence," "nothing," (Moeller 2006a, 129) or "a prohibiting or warning "don't…

absence', 'no-object-ness', or 'not-taking-form/formless' (P. Li, 324). In its verbal form it suggests something "not being there' or 'not being present," and also 'not having' or 'not possessing" (Moeller 2006a, 129).

It is interesting to note that whereas Moeller (2006a) advises translating the corrsponding terms as "presence" and "nonpresence," Grava descredits the standard rendering of the terms as "being" and "non-being," prefering the notions of "actuality" for *you* and "potentiality" for *wu.* In this regard, he expounds that the matter of *you* and *wu* "is not a question of polarity between 'absolute being,' which 'exists externally' (having a Parmenidean flavor) and 'absolute non-being" (238). This will become relevant as we get to discussing the different connotations of these terms for Laozi and Zhuangzi.

As it was noted above, the elements of *wu* and *you* are the components of the cosmological structure in Daoist theory. Chapter Forty of the *Daodejing* presents this concisely: "The things of the world are generated from presence (*you*). Presence is generated from nonpresence (*wu*)" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 97). The same idea is developed by Moeller (2006a), as he asserts that "the structure of the Daoist Way is built upon only two elements…Emptiness and Fullness, or, more technically, Presence and Nonpresence" (25). In structural terms, *wu* is located at the centre of the formation, while *you* constitutes its surroundings. And exactly because of their structural arrangement is that either's absence would cause the impossibility of the figure, making "*you* and *wu…*complementary concepts like *yin* and *yang*" (P. Li, 175). Thus, Laozi posits: "Presence and nonpresence generate each other" (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 7); and Zhuangzi enquires: "Who knows that being and nonbeing, life and death, are a single way? I will be his friend!" (in Watson, 196).

Nonetheless, some say that in Daoism *wu* is superior to *you.* It is implied on the above quotation

from Chapter Forty, where *you* is said to result from *wu,* as well as in Chapter Eleven, where

Laozi states that "not-being, we may contemplate [Dao's metaphorical] essence. Being, we just

see its appearance" (Tse, 11). Seidel, Strickmann and T. Ames support this idea too when they

assure that nothing [*wu*] "in Laozi's view…is superior to Something [*you*]." Be that as it may, I

back the position that Daoism defends the equality of all things—including *wu* and *you*—and

thereby raises a philosophical criticism of hierarchies, be they 'natural' or cultural. P. Li agrees

with my view when analysing the mentioned Chapter Forty, for he maintains that:

> Laozi is simply stressing the importance of "absence," as it is commonly ignored and neglected when
> people are dealing with things. He is not suggesting that "absence" does *not* rely on "presence," nor is he
> suggesting that "absence" is the ultimate First Cause of things in the world…Rather, he is suggesting that
> *you* and *wu* co-arise" (175).

Furthermore, this citation argues that there is indeed something crucial in the accent that Daoism

places on *negativity* as a whole. My interpretation is that while *wu* and *you* are certainly

interdependent, and even contain each other, we, humans, have overlooked the role of *wu* and

negativity as a rule, almost exclusively focusing on *you,* the *positive,* nameable and perceptible.

This has produced a 'synthetic' unbalance in our realm, affecting the natural symmetry of Dao,

which would rather[18] stress equally the positive *and* negative aspects. It is in this sense that in

"…the East, [and] especially in [D]aoism and Buddhism, negative principles are not secondary

but co-equal to the positive principles and even primary and central" (Abe, 191). Yet, this does

not only apply on the cultural and physical levels, but on the personal and individual as well.

Solely by stressing on *negative* self-cultivation and values, and practically realizing the emptiness

(via the temporary nature) of our 'selfs,' it is possible to restore the original balance of *wu* and

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[18] Please keep in mind that Dao, as the Daoist sage, does not hold to any kind of preference.

you in the human and 'synchronizing' what we experience as 'internal' with the 'external' world.

I imagine that in no other way—but regardless, of course, of any specific form, theoretical or

religious paradigm—the 'human' dao could finally harmonize again with the Dao of Heaven.

This is supported by Abe as he asserts that "the realisation of negativity is crucial to reveal

ultimate Reality" (191). This point will be crucial in construing the ontological critique of the

Jungian self which I address in chapter three.

At this juncture, a key clarification is needed. Both, P. Li and Watson draw attention to the fact

that "a significant lesson we can learn from [comparing] Zhuangzi and Laozi is that there is often

diversity within any given 'school' of philosophy" (229) and that "Zhuangzi's brand of Daoism,

as is often pointed out, is in many respects quite different from that expounded in the *Daodejing"*

(Watson, xiii). So, while Laozi and Zhuangzi are regarded as the most prominent Daoist thinkers,

it is certain that their thought is in both cases unique and they have their very own particularities.

One central respect in which this becomes true is in their understanding of *wu.* Laozi seems

unclear in distinguishing *wu* from nothingness, inasmuch as being and non-being are constituted

as exact opposites. In this way, 'non-being' surfaces more as 'nothingness' than an 'emptiness'

with potentiality or a 'creative void,' and this is likely why in Moeller's (2007) analysis of the

text, *wu* is sometimes interpreted as nothingness. In the *Zhuangzi,* however, we find a "more

radical" (Abe, 184) approach and *two different levels of non-being*. The earliest of them is

ultimately comparable with being, as reflected on Zhuangzi's own thoughts. The following

passage is good in demonstrating both appreciations:

> There is a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is being. There is nonbeing. There is a not yet beginning to be nonbeing. Suddenly there is being and nonbeing. But between this being and nonbeing, I don't really know which is being and which is nonbeing. (Zhuangzi in Watson, 12-3)

Here, the first level of 'non-being' is depicted by the expressions "a not yet beginning" and "nonbeing," while the second level is referred to as "a not yet beginning to be a not yet beginning to be a beginning" and "a not yet beginning to be nonbeing." In Giles' translation, the latter is interpreted as "a time before [nothing existed]—when even nothing did not exist" (184). In either interpretation, it is manifest that the author is alluding to *something* prior to non-being. Also manifest from the above passage is his not-knowing-how to distinguish 'being' from 'non-being,' indicating a conflation of the second level of non-being with being. This results in that "even the very words [Zhuangzi has] just now uttered,—[he] cannot say whether they have really been uttered or not" (Chuang Tzu, translated by Herbert A. Giles 1926, 23 in Abe, 184).

Hence, I understand that in Zhuangzi's sense, "non-being…should not [only] be interpreted, on the metaphysical plane, as absolute non-existence" (Grava, 235). Rather, it should be discriminated between both levels of non-being, knowing that the first of them is, as in Laozi's conceptualization, a non-being which already has the required potentialities to yielding being, and the second, nothingness *and* being. It is in the second level of *wu,* "absolute nonbeing," which is the same to say "absolute being," where Zhuangzi's "sage hides himself" (in Watson, 195); and also, where he realizes a "thoroughgoing negation to reach the ultimate reality which is completely beyond beginning and end, existence and no-existence, somethingness and nothingness" (Abe, 184).

The Non-self Itself, Equanimity and Emptiness

> *"Manifest plainness, embrace simplicity,*
> *Reduce selfishness, have less desires,*
> *Abandon learning, have no worries"*
> (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 49)

"Therefore I say, the Perfect Man has no self;
the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame"
(Zhuangzi in Watson 2013, 3).

For Zhuangzi, the sense of self (*wo*) relies upon two elements: the physical and "psychological" functions, on one side, and on the will to prefer, judge, and choose, on the other. To this, he adds that the former is a 'natural' and 'spontaneous' reliance, while the latter is absolutely not (P. Li). As a matter of fact, Zhuangzi is firm in assuring that "all the troubles [and entanglements] of human life arise from an obsessive sense of 'I'" (in P. Li, 206) (*wo*),—or what according to P. Li is the same—from the completed or mind given. In this order of ideas, Zhuangzi himself comments: "If a man follows the mind given him and makes it his teacher, then who can be without a teacher? Why must you comprehend the process of change and form your mind on that basis before you can have a teacher?" (in Watson, 9).

The anecdote of "the ancient Greek [C]ynic Diogenes [who] asked Alexander the Great to step aside because he was blocking the sunlight" (P. Li, 229), is illustrative of the effect of the completed mind, or *wo,* over Dao. Unlike flowing water, the sense of self acts as an antinatural blockage, splitting the unity of the One. In this line, Moeller (2006b) remarks that "man seems to be the greatest obstacle for the unimpeded working of the Dao" (56); and, that "who indulges in a cult of personality—is bound to fail" (2007, 60). Accordingly, whoever practices the Dao, gains by loss (Moeller), and by decreasing, participates in Dao's movement of reversal (Laozi in Moeller 2007), advancing her 'self' toward the non-self. In Daoism, "the ideal is thus selflessness" (Ho, 120).

Links to this ideal abound in primary as well as secondary Daoism sources. For example, Laozi states that "to overcome oneself is to be strong" (in Moeller 2007, 81), that "the sage takes back

his own person" (19), and advises to "lessen self-interest. And make few your desires" (Lao Tzu in Henricks 2000, 28). Along with this, Ziqi, one of Zhuangzi's characters simply declares: "Now I have lost myself" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 7). As to the contemporary literature, in Moeller's analysis of the Eleventh Chapter of the *Daodejing,* it is clear that "the sage is supposed to empty his mind to bring himself in order" (26). And in this regard, he makes the reader note that "the structure of an empty center and a full periphery functions not only "materially" or "mechanically" but also "spiritually" or "mentally" (2007, 26).

One of the immediate effects of the realization of selflessness is the evaporation of the "distinction between 'I' and 'other" (Ho, 120), making possible an entirely spontaneous acting (*wu wei*) (Ho). Hence, "the selfless person thinks of others as 'I'" (131), losing the preference for 'herself' and being able to give 'others' unlimitedly; like the valley or the exit that do not get worn away. As such, selflessness derives in oneness (Ho), unity with Dao and its "purposelessness" (Moeller 2007, 18). It is not viable to reach this unity with the most minimum remnant of a self, because "nature does not know selfishness" (18). In this way, "no one is as qualified as [the Daoist sage] for integrating humankind into the selfless but steady course of nature" (18). Moeller draws attention the fact that "it is exactly this purposelessness and lack of self-interest that the Daoists associate with permanence or, rather, the permanence of change" (18). For only being selfless, and thus in unity with Dao's naturalness, the sage is one with the stillness and shifting nature of the absolute. In consequence, it is in the possibility of selflessness that lies the likelihood of immortality, which, in my interpretation, means to the Daoists to eternally dwell in unity with the unconditional Dao. Synthesizing these points, Zhuangzi advises that:

> To release us from our own [the self's] suffering and bondage [it is indispensable] (1) that we see the arbitrariness of human-centred (and self-centred) values, including the narrow mindedness and the

imposing nature of doctrines, such as Confucianism and Moism, and (2) that we…realize the inevitability of change, big or small, in human life and in the natural world. (P. Li, 196)

Both points that P. Li is highlighting from Zhuangzi's philosophy, intersect once again with the concept of equanimity[19]. "The sage ruler's indifference [and] 'heartlessness,' [is what] enables him to treat every member of the community with perfect equanimity" (Moeller 2007, 116) and any sort of predilection. He does not go sad "when it rains [and] the sky 'looses' (*shi*) its water," nor happy when "the earth 'gains' [the same water] which allows for things to grow" (Moeller 2007, 57). He is able to hold on to this perspective, as he does not see the sky or the earth as other, but both as different aspects of the same "rhythmical pattern" that composes the overall process of Dao. Conversely, the image of the sky and the earth is also illustrative of self-centred or egoic scenarios in which we, subjects, tend to identify with one side of a particular process being unable to escape our narrow mindedness, and, hence, subduing ourselves to the corresponding partial emotion that we have 'chosen' to participate in. Here, 'subduing' seems an appropriate term because despite the quality of a specific emotion, as long as we identify ourselves with it, we are bound to suffer. This is more obvious when it comes to negative emotions, but positive ones have the same consequence as, first, we are susceptible to develop attachment to anything that we perceive as pleasing, and second, they are essentially transitory.

Zhuangzi

> saw the natural ills of disease and death. But he believed that they were ills only because man recognized them as such. If man would forsake his habit of labeling things good or bad, desirable or undesirable, then the man-made ills, which are the product of man's purposeful and value-ridden actions, would disappear, and the natural ills that remain would no longer be seen as ills but as an inevitable part of the course of life. Thus in Zhuangzi's eyes, man is the author of his own suffering and bondage, and all his fears spring from the web of values created by himself alone. (Watson, x)

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[19] In Zhuangzi's words this may be understood as serving "your own mind so that sadness or joy does not sway or move it" (in Watson, 27).

The relief that equanimity is able to deliver expressly relates to the practical knowledge that the natural ills are also transient; but ultimately, it represents the attitude that when perfected, will allow us to appreciate every pleasant thing and experience every pain in life, without losing any cheerfulness for the passing of the 'desirable' nor the presence of the 'undesirable.' As it has been insinuated, equanimity can also be comprehended as the forgetting of the recognition of human categories, judgments and preferences that results in an unalterable emotional balance. Interestingly, Zhuangzi openly refers to the method of "Sitting in Forgetfulness' (*zuo wang*) [which] is an expression for the practice of Daoist philosophy…designat[ing] a type of meditation which results in the 'losing of the 'I" (*sang wo*) (Moeller 2006a, 26). In his own words, he guides: "Forget things, forget Heaven, and be called a forgetter of self. The man who has forgotten self may be said to have entered Heaven" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 89).

The practice of forgetfulness entails emptying "the center of one's existence" (Moeller 2006a, 26). 'Emptiness' is another central concept in relation to the non-self and the process of decentering[20] of the self. In this regard, Laozi candidly advises: "Reach absolute Emptiness. Decidedly cling to the inner peace" (Tse, 41), and "take emptiness to the limit; Cautiously guard the void" (Lao Tzu in Henricks, 60). The same point is exemplified in the dialogue in the *Zhuangzi* between Confucius and Yan Hui, his "favorite disciple" (Watson, 22), when the master instructs: "The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind." To this, Yan Hui replies: "Before I heard this, I was certain that I was Hui. But now that I have heard it, there is no more Hui. Can this be called emptiness?" And Confucius responds conclusively: "That's all there is to it…Now I will tell you…make oneness your house and live with what cannot be avoided" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 25).

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[20] Ho indicates that "the concept of selflessness [is] common to [D]aoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism….To be selfless is to be decentered. And to be decentered is an effective antidote to the cognitive biases of the totalitarian ego" (134).

Concerning Daoism, then, it is safe to state that "to reach emptiness—this is the utmost" (Laozi

in Moeller 2007, 41); and, to close the present argumentative circle, Ho clearly explicates that

"emptiness means the mind empty of self and its cravings" (Ho, 122). Yet, Abe notes that "in

order to attain true Emptiness, Emptiness must 'empty' itself". Emptiness must become non-

Emptiness" (187). And reminding Zhuangzi's second level of non-being (*wu*), he continues:

"Thus, the result is that true Emptiness is wondrous Being" (187-8). Finally, following this point,

he adds: "The existential realisation that true Emptiness 'empties' itself indicates that it is not a

static state which is objectively observable but a dynamic activity of *emptying* in which you and I

are also involved. Indeed there exists nothing whatsoever outside of this dynamic whole of

emptying" (188). So, following the Daoist idea that "reversal is the movement of the Dao" (Laozi

in Moeller 2007, 97), it is possible to see the universe as an inalterable emptying dynamic. And

since we are naturally part of that universe, our 'selfs' do not—and it would only harm

themselves if they attempted to—escape such movement or dynamic.

In further elucidating how "true Emptiness is wondrous being" (Abe, 187-8), Grava's affirmation

that "atoms…are themselves mostly volumes of 'emptiness" (246) gives an important hint.

Graham's interpretation of the "view of death as part of endless change," is also very useful in

this regard, as he writes that "[i]n losing selfhood I shall remain what at bottom I always was,

identical with everything conscious or unconscious in the universe…extinction of self does not

matter since at bottom I am everything and have neither beginning nor end" (in Li, 218); and

after all, the self is an empty phenomenon, equal to its opposite: the non-self. Basically, how I

understand his citation, is that only by completely dissolving one's own 'self,' and becoming

empty, one may delude the boundaries between 'one' and 'the rest,' to finally become the

universe itself, which includes not only what makes part of it, but also what does not; because the

universe that I am referring to, is, as its own definition should sufficiently imply, absolute. This said, "how do we know that this 'I' that we talk about has any 'I' to it?" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 51). Where is the being of being?

However, the path towards emptiness, the Dao, is many times unappealing and can often get tiring and boring. Or what meditator has not experienced resistance to 'sit in forgetfulness?' It "is a smooth way—but because it is so smooth it may cause those who walk on it to look for more 'exciting' alternatives" (Moeller 2007, 124). These are undoubtedly some of the difficulties for practicing the Dao. Yet, as we have already explored, 'exciting' is a synonym for misfortune. And even if "misfortune is as heavy as earth [,] nobody knows how to stay out of its way" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 32). This is, on one hand, because the practice of the Dao is not reflected by means of the possession of a certain knowledge, but as we have also seen, in surrendering to non-knowledge. And on the other hand, because the negative agent in the last citation— nobody—is required to "keep still" and evade being to dodge misfortune. Zhuangzi maintains: "Fortune and blessing gather where there is stillness. But if you do not keep still—this is what is called sitting but racing around" (in Watson, 26).

On the note of stillness, Moeller in *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (2006b) states:

> The aspect of the *Laozi* that I find philosophically most interesting…is its challenge of human agency. The modern Western philosophical tradition, which started off with the discovery of subjectivity, has been so focused on the ego and its powers that the position of the *Laozi* may be perceived as somewhat scandalous. Its maxim of "non-action" (*wu wei*) leads to a general view of the world—including human society—as a mechanism that is not so much based on individual activities as it is on a functioning which happens "self-so" (*ziran*) or spontaneously. It is this "autopoietic" alternative that I find exciting (xii).

Finally, it should be noted that "the selfless person retains human attributes" (Ho, 120). So instead of repressing emotions or merely mimicking the inert, a selfless person may, in fact, enact strong feelings. But despite her performance, if she has truly emptied her heart-mind, her inner

quietude will not be even slightly affected. Further, there are certain 'human attributes' of which

we may think as related to selflessness. Perhaps the most important of them is modesty, humility

or simplicity. In fact, several of the authors that have supported the argumentation throughout this

chapter coincide in this respect. Moeller (2007) makes "a call to modesty for the sake of one's

sanity" (60). Ho, notes that Daoism and other "Eastern conceptions negate the Western centrality

and sovereignty of selfhood in different ways. [Supporting the position that] the self is not the

measure of all things. Humility rather than a sense of sovereignty is the hallmark of the Eastern

ideal" (132-3). In coherence with this, Laozi also asserts: "Certainly, humility is the root from

which greatness springs, and the high must be constructed with the low as its base" (Tse, 87). In

Chapter Twenty-four he develops the same idea, but this time in negative terms:

> One who makes oneself shown
>   is not apparent.
> One who makes oneself seen
>   does not shine.
> One who acclaims oneself
>   has no success.
> On who is conceited
>   cannot last long. (Laozi in Moeller 2007, 61)

Finally, Zhuangzi, in a corresponding 'negative' fashion, touches on this thought too. And with

these compelling words I will consider this section complete:

> Do not be an embodier for fame; do not be a storehouse of schemes; do not be an undertaker of projects;
> do not be a proprietor of wisdom. Embody to the fullest what has no end and wander where there is no
> trail. Hold on to all that you have received from Heaven, but do not think you have gotten anything. Be
> empty, that is all. (Zhuangzi in Watson, 59)

Analysis

Abe aptly makes the reader observe that "Heidegger takes the issue of 'nothingness' seriously

and, perhaps, [to be] the most profound…in Western history" (192). Further, the German

philosopher considers the history of Western metaphysics as the history of the forgetfulness about 'Being' (*Seinvergessenheit*)" (192). This seems to have been the starting point for Daoism. Nonetheless, there is a nuance that for an instant complicates this assertion, as Daoism holds "the self [as] one of the countless manifestations of the [D]ao [and] an extension of the cosmos" (Ho, 120). As such, the 'self' is something given, 'natural,' and thus, it is something that needs to be accepted as a component of Dao's totality. This is a common psychological reading of the Daoist 'self,' and although not completely misguided, it excludes some crucial points in order to reify that notion. One of them is the fact that the 'self' is essentially constituted by its opposite, i.e. the non-self and vice versa. But perhaps, more importantly, is the stress that Daoist authors put on *sheng* and the changing nature of all phenomena, which includes the self as much as the non-self. Both, as *impermanent states*, are constantly moving towards its contrary and none of them can reach a state of purity, for when they do, they have basically become their 'other.'

Thus, once we have recognized our self-centred and subjective state, the only Way or Dao, corresponds to actively allowing ourselves to flow in the direction of the non-self and 'our' opposite, instead of clinging as forcefully as we usually do, to 'our' actual state of *being*. The same applies when a state or 'experience' of emptiness, nothingness or community with totality takes place; as clinging to that state, would immediately reflect a narrow mindedness and preference that has the 'self' as its core. This is precisely why, in the plane of the transcendence of the self, the non-self, and hence equanimity, is so critical. Only an equanimous point of view will prevent *us* from judging our most frequent, "less spiritual" state of *being,* and leave us dwell longer in the also impermanent self-emptying state, as no 'desiring self' arises during the length of such state. Finally, equanimity will *make all things equal* (Zhuangzi in Watson) in the best imaginable way, dissolving for us the boundaries of both of those states, to let us live them as

their opposite; the quotidian, 'material' life as the absolute, spiritual realm, and those 'spiritual'

peaks, openings and experiences, as the most radically immediate, material and concrete. Grava

supports this argument when sustaining:

> there is a functional-structural affinity between what we commonly call "matter" and "mind." It is only our relative viewpoint that makes us separate them into two different realms. But, however hard we try to dissociate them, the ever-recurring identical pattern puts them together again, that is, symbolizes them in their primeval, original togetherness. (249)

Having reached this point, Zhuangzi would simply add: "Forget the years; forget the distinctions.

Leap into the boundless and make it your home!" (in Watson, 17).

But the Daoist non-self is not only useful in decentring the self and subjectivity but the idea of a

transcendent and primordial being—i.e. God, or Jung's self—as well. While referring to a

passage in the *Zhuangzi,* P. Li bluntly asserts:

> there is no self-conscious agent behind all the soundings; they just spontaneously happen. There is no omniscient God who designs everything in the cosmos. In other words, for Ziqi,[21] there are all these soundings, but there is no agent that picks or chooses among them, no value judgement of them. (P. Li, 210)

Although it is worth clarifying that the theoretical insubstantiality of the universe, relates to, but

is not the same as, the changeability of sensible objects themselves, it is fair to conclude that

Daoism questions the solidity of anything and the whole ontological domain. And again, the

notion of *sheng* or transience is the first contention against the endurance and unchangeability of

any specific substance, being or object. This is particularly conductive to casting aside dualistic

and monistic metaphysics. Abe and Moeller (2007) refer to the Daoist cosmovision as explicitly

non-dualistic. The latter, however, goes on to identify it as monistic. Yet, from my perspective,

this is not completely accurate. Monism stands for oneness. But in the cosmogony of Daoism,

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[21] In chapter two of the *Zhuangzi: Discussion on Making All Things Equal.*

zero (non-being) is equivalent to, and mutually constitutive of one (being). For this reason, and also because what defines Dao is its movement and dynamic and not a static substance of some sort, I prefer referring to Daoism as *adualistic*. This does not mean that Daoism rejects the idea of an "original" cause for the existence of the universe, but the insubstantiality and changeability of such cause. To put it in Western philosophical terminology, according to my interpretation, in Daoism a more viable a cosmological understanding is one based on *becoming* rather than on being. Thus, adualism challenges the concept of being as concept, as well as the actuality that it usually implies.

Before concluding with this chapter, I wish to tackle a difficulty that I find within Daoist theory and metatheory. Contrary to most translators, who render the Chinese character '*de*' as *virtue,* Moeller (2007) has opted to interpret it as *efficacy*. He does so, since "the *Laozi* takes no ontological approach and therefore does not try to answer the question of what 'being' is for humans. The text is instead concerned with human behavior or functioning—and how this behavior or functioning can be optimized" (2006b, 56). Although I understand the very different implications of both translation choices, and even if I am inclined toward Moeller's (2007) interpretation, I still feel unsure about his choice, given the huge affinities that such rendering may have with a neoliberal discourse that poses *efficacy* as one of its mainstay values. Furthermore, in the last quotation, the use of the word 'optimized,' reinforces this association, dangerously linking *de,* a central theme of the *Daodejing*, with the optimization of behaviour— and, consequently, the self—sounding to me, extremely psychological and even political in the sense of conduction of conducts. *Efficacy,* as well, contrasts with the majority of the Daoist values, which are inherently negative. In my opinion, there would be two ways of going around this issue. Either replacing this term for something that still reflects the author's notion of *de,* but

prevents evoking a neoliberal discourse, or simply clarifying that this *efficacy* has a negative quality, insofar as it is not meant to be efficacious in a capitalist context, but instead, in the diminishing and minimization of the self.

Related to this idea of self-diminishing, Ho compares "the [D]aoist conception of self" to Derrida's "deconstructed," "decentered and multidimensional" self, inasmuch as both are "without a center and [are] not hierarchically organized" (133). Thus, the self in the Daoist and Derridean sense "does not have dominion over other creatures, as in Christianity. It does not seek to conquer nature, but to submit to cosmic forces of which it is a part. It does not seek sovereignty, but selflessness—to be at home in the cosmos" (133). The author concludes his analysis affirming that Zhuangzi's perspective is still "more radical" (133) for he defends that "the great [D]ao is all-embracing without making distinctions" (Zhuangzi in Ho, 133). To this, nevertheless, he adds that "no one yet knows…what a deconstructed deconstructionism might look like" (Ho, 133). Zhuangzi provides a hypothesis, however, which responds to this concern. When the question of a deconstructed deconstructionism is posed, the latent issue is that of the negation of a negation, which in Zhuangzi's theory takes the shape of the non-being of non-being. This, we have named by his second level of *wu.* As it should be clear by now, the product of the negation of a negation turns out equal to the initial affirmation—being, in his case. So, in this order of ideas, I would adventure to pose that a deconstructed deconstructionism will look just as the deconstructed object before being subject to a deconstruction process. The same functioning will become apparent as we review the dialectics of the self, and the dynamic between the oppositions that it encircles and, in which, as polarity, it partakes.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter examined the Lao-Zhuang notion of the non-self. Initially, it did this by reviewing Daoist concepts that intersect with the non-self: the Daoist sage, non-action (*wu-wei*), non-knowledge, being (*you*), and non-being (*wu*). Concerning the Daoist sage, it was mentioned that he models himself in accordance with the Dao (Moeller 2007), and that, consequently, emptiness is his unavoidable destiny. He reaches such destiny through *negative* self-cultivation, not having preferences, and not making distinctions; what gives him the possibility of non-action and makes him equanimous. Non-action and non-knowledge were defined, correspondingly, as the action that occurs, and the knowledge that reflects, no mediation of a self. Respecting being and non-being—it was defended that they co-arise, are interdependent, and as components of Dao are ultimately equivalent. Moreover, this chapter referred to our cultural one-sided approach to reality, that in overvaluing being and overlooking non-being, creates an imbalance that can only be restored by 'realizing' negativity and through negative self-cultivation.

This study of the non-self ended with a direct analysis making explicit that, in Zhuagnzi's view, "all the troubles [and entanglements] of human life arise from an obsessive sense of 'I'" (P. Li, 206). Here, the role of *sheng* or the process of change was underscored in function of emptiness and equanimity as "psychological" qualities. The latter of which, was defined as the forgetting of the recognition of human categories, judgements and preferences that results in an unalterable emotional balance. Finally, and echoing the dynamic proposed between *you* and *wu*, it was concluded that although selflessness is *the* Daoist ideal, "extinction of self does not matter" (Graham in Li, 218), since, after all, it is an empty phenomenon like its opposite, the non-self.

Chapter Two: The Jungian Self

Just as the non-self gives cohesiveness to Laozi's and Zhuangzi's thought, the self is the

component that plays this role in Jungian theory. Contrary to the Daoists, Jung openly recognizes

that the concept of the self is the key point in his thinking and research (1989a, 208). He

reiterates that the self is not a metaphysical idea, but an empirical postulate that makes itself

evident through symbols. In fairy tales, Jung explains (1976, 437), the self is often represented by

superlative characters like the king, hero, prophet or saviour. Geometrically, it takes the shape of

totality symbols like the circle or the square; or in a paradoxical, but perhaps more appropriate

fashion, of the problem of *quadratura circuli* or squaring the circle, which entails another of its

vital expressions: the unity of opposites or *complexio oppositorum*. In this form, the self attempts

to appear as a transcended duality "in which the opposites are united" (438). Moreover, Jung

himself exemplifies this expression of the self with the symbol of Dao and "the interplay of yang

and yin" (438). Psychologically, the self also depicts a unity of opposites, since being formed by

the conscious and the unconscious, it indicates the total personality and unifying principle of the

psyche. Hence, "it encompasses both the experienceable and the inexperienceable (or the not yet

experienced)" (438), indicating that "there will always exist an indeterminate and indeterminable

amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self" (Jung 1972, 177).

Consequently, trying to emulate the Dao, the Jungian self emerges as a transcendental and

ultimately ungraspable entity. The self, moreover, can be regarded as the archetype of archetypes.

In fact, it is the numinous[22] archetype *par excellence.* In this way, it acts like a divine gravitating

force that—through the process of individuation—gives directionality and meaning to Jung's

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[22] This term was coined by the German theologist Rudolf Otto (1936), who had a considerable influence on Jung's work. In my own—perhaps simplistic—interpretation, the term condenses an attempt to secularize *The Idea of the Holy.*

subject. Accordingly, and due to Jung's Christian-inspired perspective, his theoretical project and psychotherapeutic approach can be understood as a take on the "ancient Christian view [of] self-knowledge [as] the road to knowledge of God" (Jung 1989a, 325), where the process of self-knowledge receives the name of individuation, and the self plays the part of a secularized, psychologized and subjectivized idea of God.

The complexity of this notion is apparent. In the next chapter my aim will be to criticize the Jungian concept of the self from a Daoist perspective, and more specifically, the Lao-Zhuang notion of the non-self. Here, I attempt to disentangle the intricacies of the Jungian self by explaining its most prominent forms (and functions) within his system. After a brief contextualization, I will present the relationship between ego and self, as Jung sees it. Then, I will recount some of Jung's early childhood experiences that seem to have a significant influence on his elaboration of the concept. I will continue with an exposition of the gnostic and alchemical symbols that Jung relates to the self, to later expand on the self as the ordering and unifying principle of the psyche. After tackling its role as archetype, *imago Dei*, and union of opposites, this chapter concludes by touching on the influence of 'Eastern Yogas' and Daoism in Jung, and an overall critical commentary of his theory and approach.

Considering the magnitude of Jung's oeuvre, I had to limit my study of his notion of the self to some of his key books and texts. In his *Psychological Commentary on "The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,"* he redirects the reader interested in learning about the self to his definition presented in *Psychological Types*. He also suggests reviewing his *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,* as well as *Psychology and Alchemy*, and *Part II, Aion*, specifically, chapters I and IV. I complement these readings with some of his other essential works, including *Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, Mysterium Coniunctionis, Psychology*

and Religion, and *Psychology and the East,* along with sencondary literature like Edward

Edinger's *Ego and Archetype* and additional recent scholarship.

Contextualization

Carl Gustav Jung was a prominent Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist. He was born on July 26,

1875 in the city of Kesswil and died on June 6, 1961 in Küsnacht. He founded the analytical

school of psychology (pertaining to broader depth psychology), which although importantly

influenced by Freud's psychoanalysis, departed from it on crucial aspects and, in fact, constituted

a critique of that theory as simplistic and reductionist. Jung's therapeutic method and its

theoretical foundation was a novel contribution that, whilst inspired by and critical of

Christianity, provided a frame to guide patients in terms of their spiritual development and self-

knowledge. Expanding on Freud's model of the psyche—which comprehends the conscious,

preconscious and unconscious—Jung proposed the existence of a collective unconscious that is

home to the archetypes. These are reappearing motifs, images and ideas with a deeply significant

and influential "possibility of representation" (Jung 1989a, 393) that surface in diverse cultural

expressions as well as psychological events. Additionally, Jung designed a personality theory

based on the behavioral and predispositional polarities that he identified as introverted and

extroverted (Fordham and Fordham 2019).

Though Jung was passionate about philosophy and religion, he decided to study medicine, and in

1900 and 1902, he graduated as a physician from the universities of Basel and Zurich intending to

become a psychiatrist. Soon after beginning his medical practice, he met Freud and collaborated

with him for five years. Their closeness was such that he became leader of the Psychoanalytic

Association and Freud's obvious successor (Fordham and Fordham). However, insuperable

differences of opinion regarding Freud's sexual theory (Jung 1989a, 150), plus some of the ideas that Jung expressed in *Psychology of the Unconscious*, were enough to end their personal relationship and professional collaboration (Fordham and Fordham). At that point, Jung continued on his own path, and by deepening in his ideas—particularly the relationship between psychology and religion (Fordham and Fordham)—he ended up developing a system and method that was coherent with his experience.

Following the demands of his time, Jung was concerned with producing a 'scientific' psychology. For this reason, he attempted to eliminate any sort of metaphysical speculations from his theory and proclaimed himself a dedicated empiricist. Psychology, he writes, "is not in a position to make metaphysical statements" (Jung 1978a, 198). In this sense, he wanted to believe that what makes it possible to conceive of the archetype of the self is not that it pertains to the realm of ideas but that it "stands in reality for something that exists and can be experienced, that demonstrates its *a priori* presence spontaneously" (31; italics in the original) through the emergence of "pictorial symbols" (194). According to Jung, these symbols, as epistemological tools, are the only thing that psychology can hold to be real; and what he resolved, is that the symbols of the self "have the character of 'wholeness' and therefore presumably mean wholeness" (194).

As we will see towards the end of this chapter, although Jung had found some clues in his researches in gnosticism, his final conceptualization of the self occurred in 1929 thanks to the Daoist ideas that he found in the treatise of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (Jung 1989b, v), "a late text of inner alchemy within the Complete Perfection denomination of Daoism" (Zhu, 508). That text "gave [him] undreamed-of confirmation of [his] ideas about the mandala and the circumambulation of the center" (1989a, 197). In some occasions, like when he writes that "light

is always born of darkness" (2017, 248), Jung reveals his comfort with Daoist ideas, indicating that Daoism was at least one of the sources of inspiration to formulate the dialectic nature of his notion of the self. Nonetheless, over the course of his career, he lost interest in the Eastern sources that had previously inspired him, and focused mainly on Western domains of knowledge—like gnosticism and alchemy—that presented related ideas to those of the East, but made it possible to pursue his conviction of construing a psychology informed by Western wisdoms.

That I have chosen to work with Jung's conception of the self in this project is not accidental. One motive is the inspiration he took from Daoism; but there are two additional reasons that make him truly irreplaceable in my schema. On one hand, there is his contribution to the establishment of psychology as a "human" science. This chapter will make evident that Jung's theory—being designed around a hypothetically existent self, towards which the individual is encouraged to develop, and considering that in such development the individual's conscious personality is *enlarged* and, ideally, fulfilled, thus, exalting the own person—effortlessly aligns with humanist ideology. This is confirmed as Jung (1978b) sets the development of personality and 'oneself' as the highest value when he asserts: "The development of personality is…a matter of saying yea to oneself, of taking oneself as the most serious of tasks" (20). Similar to the non-humanist critique of Confucianism, Daoism could also be used to undermine psychology's (and specifically analytical psychology's) humanist value, which tends to be more generalized rather than particular to what is properly regarded as humanist psychology.

Jung's influence on transpersonal psychology, on the other hand, also makes him exceptionally relevant to my project, as, in line with what I was saying, his method became a crucial model for the contemporary, "spiritual," psychotherapeutic, and counselling approaches that promote the

knowledge, development, constitution or identification with a total (or holistic) self. Because of this influence, questioning Jung's ontological postulates may have an impact on the more contemporary psychological understandings of the self that make use of this twisted "spiritual" discourse, which thoroughly supports the specific subjectivation needs of neoliberalism, as mentioned in the introduction.

The Ego-self Relationship

Jungian theory suggests a fundamental distinction *and* connection between ego and self (Jung 1978a, 5; Edinger 1992, 38). The ego, as well as the self, constitute sovereign psychic centers (Edinger, 4). Yet, whereas the ego is "the centre of [the] field of consciousness and appears to possess a high degree of continuity and identity," the self stands for the centre or "subject of [the] total psyche" (Jung 1976, 406), including the conscious *and* unconscious fields. Thus, the self encompasses the ego (406) and represents the psyche as a whole.

As we will see, the complexity of the interaction between ego and self is crucial to central aspects to Jung's therapeutic approach, such as the ego-self axis and the individuation process with its phases of inflation and alienation. In general terms, the individuation process is defined by the production of a "dynamic balance between [ego and self through] conscious integration [of] symbols" (Beyerle and Beyerle 2018, 81), and an awakening of the ego to the self in which "the individual [realizes] his or her divine identity" (81).

To begin with, Jung writes that the ego "is never more and never less than consciousness as a whole" (Jung 1978a, 5). Like Zhuangzi's first constitutive element of the sense of self (*wo*), the Jungian ego "rests on….the somatic and the psychic" (3); yet, the analyst specifies that it is

formed due to "the collision between the somatic factor and the environment" (5). From the perspective of the ego, the self is "the strange non-ego" (Jung 1993, 117), its 'other' and opposite. In terms of causality, Edinger explains that "the Self [is] the original totality prior to the ego" (5). Jung expands in this regard when saying that "the ego stands to the Self as the moved to the mover [and that] the Self…is an *a priori* existent out of which the ego evolves. It is, so to speak, an unconscious prefiguration of the ego" (1973, 221). In Jung's eyes, the sense of self (*wo*) or the ego-consciousness owes its existence and is subordinate to the unfathomable unconsciousness of the self (Jung 2017, 212). In this sense, the relationship between ego and self can be represented by the dynamics of part and whole, in which the ego is the part (Jung 1978a, 5) and the self the complete, "supreme psychic authority" (Edinger, 3). However, because the relationship of these two elements is imminently dialectical—exactly like that of part and whole—they are unavoidably interdependent; "the ego needs the self and vice versa" (Jung in Coward 1985, 164).

In explaining the Jungian relationship between ego and self, the concept of the *ego-self axis* is crucial. Edinger elucidates the ego-self axis as "the line connecting [the] ego-center with [the] Self-center" (6) that is responsible of ensuring the ego's psychic stability (6). This link also functions as a communication line "between the conscious personality [ego] and the archetypal psyche [self]" (38). One of the reasons that make this link so vital, according to Edinger, is that the "sense of acceptance is conveyed to the ego via the ego-Self axis" (40). He explains this dynamic insofar as the self is a psychic whole that accepts everything without discrimination. So, via the ego-self axis, the ego receives, from the self, its force and solidity. Congruently, one symptom of damage in the ego-self axis is evidenced by problems of self-acceptance (40). But because "damage to the ego-Self axis impairs or destroys the connection between conscious and

unconscious" (38), this can result not only in lack of self-acceptance, but a range of psychological complications. This is why for the analytical practitioner it is of utmost importance to take care of the ego-self axis. For them, it is the fundamental link for psychic wellbeing and, as such, it should be guarded.

Nonetheless, when it comes to the practice of analytical psychology, individuation is perhaps an even more important concept at the centre of the interaction between ego and self. Jung (1972) himself defines individuation as the process of "becoming an 'in-dividual,' and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization'" (173). In this way, the drive of individuation is moving from the 'divided' state of the ego to a state of psychic completeness characterized by the self. As an individual progresses in this movement, Edinger clarifies, their ego gains awareness of its original unity and "dependence upon the archetypal psyche" (xiii) or self. Expressing the ego's orientation toward wholeness, in his commentary *On The Tibetan Book of the Dead,* Jung emphasizes on the possibility of equating individuation to selfhood (Jung 1978b, 71). But the utopian nature of the self is implicit as we find out that the ego's goal is unachievable. Moreover, individuation cannot be expressed linearly. Because it is a process (Edinger, 96), in a way like enlightenment, or the equanimity that the Daoist sage constantly observes. Its goal is always moving forward, never completely reachable. In this scenario, the best that the ego can do is to continue to move towards the self, and the greater the amount of unconscious content that is acknowledged by the ego, the closer it gets to the self (Jung 1978b, 142). Finally, the psychological experience of the individual's encounter with the self would be comparable to the direct experience of God

(Edinger, 104). Because in experiencing the self the ego must have been left almost fully behind, Jung (1989b) writes that such experience[23] "is always a defeat for the ego" (546).

But I should expand on the unattainability of individuation's goal, for, as I have said, this *telos* was nurtured by Jung's understanding of the Daoist *coincidentia oppositorum.* Beyerle and Beyerle (2018) note how "individuation advances the process of self-realization through the integration of opposites" (81). Along this line, Jung (1978a) observes that the alchemists seemed to grasp the existence of a process akin to individuation, which they used to represent through the apparent paradox in the symbol of the uroboros or the snake that eats its own tail (190). It was, however, with *The Secret of the Golden Flower,* a Daoist meditation guide, that Jung ratified that the development towards the self was a cyclical progression, a circumambulation in which "everything points toward the center" (Jung 1989a, 197) or self. Thus, Jung's concept of the individuation process owes to the Daoist dynamic between centre and periphery, being and non-being, emptiness and fullness. This making of the mandala, "psychological circulation'…'movement in a circle around oneself" (Coward 1985, 50) or process of circumambulation, as Jung properly names it, is, for him, the process of individuation, psychological integration and healing (50), and what the Jungian therapist is expected to facilitate.

The practice of this therapeutic model reveals that life and the processes of circumambulation often involve the two contrary phases of inflation and alienation. Edinger suggests that these, as opposites, are oriented towards each other when he writes: "The inflated state, when acted out, leads to a fall and hence to alienation. The alienated condition likewise, under normal

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[23] This is contradictory for, here, Jung is implying that the actual experience of the self is a possibility. But in reality, as we will see, the analyst reiteratively insisted on the *impossibility* of a comprehensive experience of the self.

circumstances, leads over to the state of healing and restitution" (62). What individuation seeks is

a state in which the ego is recognized as a manifestation of the self, "without being identified

with it" (96). Or in other words, the assimilation of unconscious contents but with a "critical

approach" (Jung 1978a, 23). If assimilation is not critical, the ego is "easily overpowered and

becomes identical with the contents that have been assimilated" (23). In this case, the ego is not

making an authentic progression towards the self, but experiencing an inflated state. Edinger says

that according to analytical psychology, inflation can be experienced as a regression "where the

ego is identified with the Self" (13). Yet, it can also represent the starting point of many

psychoses illustrating "the identification of the ego with the Self as the center of the universe, or

the supreme principle" (13). For these reasons it is decisive that individuation pursues unity of

the ego and the self without incurring in an ego's confusion of identity. Inflation, however, also

has the desired effects of—through the sense of "power, responsibility, high self-esteem and

superiority" (Alschuler 2008, 304) that it brings—encouraging the ego to continue its

development and bolstering its capacity for accomplishment.

Contrary to the aggrandizing effect of inflation, alienation is related to the damage of the ego-self

axis and, as I said, problems related to self-acceptance. In this state, the ego can feel hurt,

meaningless or rejected. Mythologically speaking, alienation is depicted by the expulsion from

paradise (Edinger), like in the story of Adam and Eve. Alienated individuals experience an abrupt

return to their abandoned and separated egos, slowing down their advancement towards 'unity.'

Nonetheless, Edinger says that alienation, like inflation, also brings a positive effect. In the

feeling of abandonment or rejection, it is common to experience a sort of existential *emptiness*

that is only available as the ego is undermined. Since the alienated ego "has been emptied of its

own inflated fullness," it may "experience the support of the Self" like "a vessel for the influx of

grace" (Edinger, 56). All in all, "the problem [of individuation] is to maintain the integrity of the ego-Self axis while dissolving the ego's [uncritical] identification with the Self" (12).

In dealing with the polarities of inflation and alienation, the therapeutic formula that Edinger, the Jungian scholar and analyst suggests, is "a circular one" (5) embracing the alternation between the moments of ego-self separation and ego-self union. Because these are unavoidable states that humans repeatedly experience in life, it seems honest for Jungian therapists to expect their emergence as they accompany their patients in their individuation processes. In these cases, the key is guiding individuals out of such positions so that the movement of circumambulation may continue, and hence the sharp approach of the individual towards the self. What Jung expects, is, that at some point, the circumambulation, together with "the exploration of the unconscious [would lead] the conscious mind to an experience of the archetype" (1993, 19) of the self. And when this happens, the individual ego will find itself "confronted with the abysmal contradictions of human nature" (19-20) and the evidence of the unity of opposites.

In any case, the (utopic, unpractical) goal of analytical psychology, as Jung (1978b) puts it, "is transformation—not one that is predetermined, but rather an indeterminable change, the only criterion of which is the disappearance of egohood" (154). This is extremely relevant to my present project, because it means that the final purpose of Jungian psychology, hypothetically speaking, is a "healthy" dissolution of the subject in its original, transcendent cause (self); naturally resembling the final, but, in that case, practical, goal of Daoism, and—as Jung calls them—most of the Eastern yogas. He makes an analogous point, not only by comparing "Eastern religions" and "Western mysticism," when writing that their "goal…is the same…the shifting of the center of gravity from the ego to the self, from man to God" (Jung in Coward 1985, 163); but also in his understanding of *satori,* the Zen term designating enlightenment as "a supersession of

the ego by the self" (Jung 1978b, 143). Although these similarities are by no means dismissible, analytic psychology's ontological stance still deserves being juxtaposed with that of Daoism's, while being examined on the basis of their very distinct ideological, practical, and material repercussions. In the end, Jung continues to conceive the goal of dissolution as a utopic, absolute expression of individuality (Jung 1993, 19) that pertains to the self and never fully to the ego. In fact, for him, achieving 'full' individuality would require dissolving the ego, and that would be comparable to a psychotic state.

In sum, the relationship and distinction that Jung proposes between ego and self, "has become sufficiently clear…[in] that [even if] the self has as much to do with the ego as the sun with the earth…they are not interchangeable" (1972, 238). Because for Jung they are essentially different, it seemed to upset him how frequently people would incur in a misunderstanding of his theory by conflating ego and self (Jung 1993, 355). Though there are different reasons that could lead one to conflate ego and self, he indiscriminately labels those who do—and I am one of those—as "heretics" (Jung 1978b, 130). In opposition to the limited ego, he concluded, "the self must remain a borderline concept, expressing a reality to which no limits can be set" (Jung 1993, 355).

The self

In Jung's Childhood

In this section I wish to consider some of Jung's early childhood experiences and the way they might have influenced his concept of the self. These experiences have become known, mainly, through his autobiographical account on *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1989a), where he refers to them as deeply significant for his personal life and his own psychoanalytic vision. On this tone, he declares: "My life has been in a sense the quintessence of what I have written, not the

other way around. The way I am and the way I write are a unity" (xii). Also, when he mentions

that his life was "a story of the self-realization of the unconscious" (3), we realize that he thought

of his life through his own conceptualizations and psychological model. The first of Jung's

experiences that I want to present, can be taken as a description about the realization of his own

ego-consciousness. His narration of the event is the following:

> I had [an] important experience at about this time. I was taking the long road to school from Klein-Hüningen, where we lived, to Basel, when suddenly for a single moment I had the overwhelming impression of having just emerged from a dense cloud. I knew all at once: now I am myself! It was as if a wall of mist were at my back, and behind that wall there was not yet an "I." But at this moment I came upon myself. Previously I had existed, too, but everything had merely happened to me. Now I happened to myself. Now I knew: I am myself now, now I exist. Previously I had been willed to do this and that; now I willed. This experience seemed to me tremendously important and new: there was "authority" in me. (Jung 1989a, 32-3)

Taking a Jungian frame, the interpretation of this account could depend on the stage of life in

which it is presented. Knowing that the traditional take within this theory suggests that the first

half of life should be therapeutically directed to the configuration of the patient as an individual,

and the second half-of life as an individuated individual (Edinger, 5)—who has therefore an

established relationship with the self—one might be tempted to think that if Jung's previous

account had taken place in his later years, he would be describing an experience of encounter

with the self. However, since the story appears in the "School Years" chapter of his

autobiography, the experience is probably referring to the analyst's encounter with his conscious

personality. In the account, the cloud likely represents the veil of unconscious undifferentiation,

acting like a metaphor for a state previous to the recognition of individuality as a separate entity,

whose desires do not necessarily correspond with the outer happenings. Further, the "authority"

that Jung identified as an outcome of this experience denotes the empowering effect of an inflated

state.

Nonetheless, also during Jung's school years, he relates an experience that can indeed be regarded as one of the sources for his earliest intuitions of the self. In this occasion, he also describes the presence of a hazy entity:

> But from the moment I emerged from the mist and became conscious of myself, the unity, the greatness…the superhuman majesty of God began to haunt my imagination. Hence there was no question in my mind but that God Himself was arranging a decisive test for me, and that everything depended on my understanding Him correctly. (Jung 1989a, 39)

Given the manifestation of a symbolical mist in both experiences, it is possible to talk about a parallelism between them. As I am saying, however, the first of them concerns the symbolical emergence of an egoic self-consciousness, while the second, a relation with an ego-transcending unity. In any case, the above quotation also importantly demonstrates the link, which Jung himself implies, between this experience and the significance of his vital work. Jung's life was a quest for 'understanding Him,' understanding God correctly; and he attempted to systematize this quest in the theory and practice of analytical psychology. Even previous to the discussed experiences, Jung affirms having questioned his own identity and having identified himself with an "other." According to his account, he was only a schoolboy as he wondered: "Am I the one who is sitting on the stone, or am I the stone on which he is sitting?" (Jung 1989a, 20). This reflection was a premonition for the later set of affairs that he categorized under the names of Personality no. 1 and no. 2.

As Coward (1985) reports, from very early in his life, Jung "had become aware of a kind of split within his personality, as if two opposing souls were housed in the one breast" (13). In his own words, Jung confesses:

> Somewhere deep in the background I always knew that I was two persons. One was the son of my parents, who went to school and was less intelligent, attentive, hard-working, decent, and clean than many other boys. The other was grown up old, in fact skeptical, mistrustful, remote from the world of men, but close to nature, the earth, the sun, the moon, the weather, all living creatures, and above all close to the night, to dreams, and to whatever "God" worked directly in him. I put "God" in quotation marks here. For nature

seemed, like myself, to have been set aside by God as non-divine, although created by Him as an expression of Himself. Nothing could persuade me that "in the image of God" applied only to man. In fact it seemed to me that the high mountains, the rivers, lakes, trees, flowers, and animals far better exemplified the essence of God than men with their ridiculous clothes, their meanness, vanity, mendacity, and abhorrent egotism all qualities with which I was only too familiar from myself, that is, from personality No. 1, the schoolboy of 1890. Besides his world there existed another realm, like a temple in which anyone who entered was transformed and suddenly overpowered by a vision of the whole cosmos, so that he could only marvel and admire, forgetful of himself. Here lived the "Other," who knew God as a hidden, personal, and at the same time suprapersonal secret. Here nothing separated man from God; indeed, it was as though the human mind looked down upon Creation simultaneously with God.

…At such times I knew I was worthy of myself, that I was my true self. As soon as I was alone, I could pass over into this state. I therefore sought the peace and solitude of this "Other," personality No. 2.

The play and counterplay between personalities No. 1 and No. 2, which has run through my whole life, has nothing to do with a "split" or dissociation in the ordinary medical sense. On the contrary, it is played out in every individual. In my life No. 2 has been of prime importance, and I have always tried to make room for anything that wanted to come to me from within. He is a typical figure, but he is perceived only by the very few. Most people's conscious understanding is not sufficient to realize that he is also what they are. (Jung 1989a, 44-5)

This passage is relevant for several reasons. First of all, it describes and explains Jung's experience of, and difference, between personalities 1 and 2. It is clear that no. 1 represents the ego and its perspective, while no. 2 shows well-defined signs of a personality beyond no. 1, which has access to the self. At the same time, the quotation makes it viable to detect important pantheistic signs as Jung's early convictions, which, to say the least, may be viewed as a philosophical foundation discernible throughout his work. This narration also claims that from a young age Jung had perceptions regarding the ultimate union of God and man, and the subjective existence of a 'true self.' Both of these points speak to how his childhood experiences may have influenced his conception of the self, since the 'true self' entails a distinction from a 'common self' or ego, and simultaneously, posits itself as a not self-evident mystery that could, hypothetically speaking, be revealed. In simple terms, we find here a first clue in understanding why in Jungian theory the self and the unconscious are so close to each other. Moreover, the last part provides an indication for two different and distinctive tendencies in Jung. On one hand, it shows that, through his own experience, he learnt that there was no gain in pathologizing experiences of this sort, delivering a new way of approaching them at that time. On the other hand, it makes it possible to identify a universalist tendency as the analyst is arriving at general

conclusions out of his own experience by saying that a split between a principal and a secondary

personality "is played out in every individual." Finally, toward the end, the passage indicates

Jung's special appreciation of Personality no. 2 and the evasiveness of the self.

But the inspiration that Jung claims to have received in his first years is even bigger than what I

have so far explained. In further experiences, the psychiatrist affirms having had oneness and

absorption experiences: "There was no longer any inside or outside, no longer an 'I' and the

'others,' no. 1 and no. 2 were no more; caution and timidity were gone, and the earth and sky, the

universe and everything in it that creeps and flies, revolves, rises, or falls, had all become one"

(Jung 1989a, 77). In other parts, and probably as a consequence of this last sort of experiences,

Jung refers to states of what I have been calling 'equanimity,' linking them to an understanding

of the phenomenon of transience. "Whenever I thought that I was the stone," he says, "the

conflict ceased" (42). And then he continues: "The stone has no uncertainties…and is eternally

the same for thousands of years,' I would think, 'while I am only a passing phenomenon which

bursts into all kinds of emotions, like a flame that flares up quickly and then goes out" (42).

These extracts reveal that already from what Jung says to have lived as a child—unity,

absorption, perception of transience, and equanimity—there was a likeness to experiences

described by Eastern and Western mystic traditions. However, the idea of Jung being a mystic

will be problematized later on.

In Alchemy and Gnosticism

Studying 'Eastern yogas'—as Jung calls them—alchemy, and gnosticism, he discovered parallel

ideas that were useful in his interest of providing a foundation for analytical psychology. It was

alchemy and gnosticism, however, which made it feasible to root his development in the west's

own cultural heritage. Jung was convinced of the importance of keeping his psychology western, and having learnt about the desirable psychological consequences of yoga, he intended that analytical psychology became, following a Christian tradition, the 'yoga of the West.' In Gnostics like Valentinus and Basilides, Jung found some of the most significant symbolic expressions of the self (269). He regarded the Gnostics as "theologians who, [echoing the Christian doctrine, but] unlike the more orthodox ones, allowed themselves to be influenced in large measure by natural inner experience" (Jung 1978a, 269). The alchemists also shared this tactic, for they "ran counter to the Church in preferring to seek through knowledge rather than to find through faith" (Jung 1993, 35). In this sense, Jung saw alchemy as an underground movement, operating like the unconscious of a Christianity which governed on the surface. Contrary to Christianity, alchemy directly attempted to overcome the incongruence presented by the problem of the unity of opposites (23) and dualism. Further, through his discovery of alchemical theory, Jung realized that there were deep coincidences between it and the analytical psychology that he had been crafting (Jung 1989a, 205). To cite his own words in a conclusive statement, he ascertained that alchemical practice and symbolism were an interpretation of the "evolution of personality" and what he had named the "individuation process" (Jung 1993, 35).

It can be said, then, that one of the most significant theoretical insights that Jung received from alchemy and gnosticism was their symbolic richness in depicting his major concept of the self. The list is almost never-ending, but some of the most frequent gnostic and/or alchemical symbols that Jung believed portrayed the self, were: the panacea and *elixir vitae* (Jung 1993, 232); gold (Jung 1978a, 264) and derivate expressions like the philosophical gold, golden glass or malleable glass; the *prima materia* as an "ever-changing substance" (Jung 1993, 434); the serpent (Jung 1978a, 186), the king (198), the Anthropos (189), the Original Man (200), and Adam. Logos

(187), the Christ-figure (187), philosophical water (Jung 1993, 234) and "a concentric structure, often in the form of a squaring of the circle" (Jung 1989b, 544) were, in his opinion, also symbols for the self; as were the circle, the fish, sea-hawk, monad, cross, paradise (Jung 1978a, 189) and the anima mundi (Jung 1989b, 505). At last, Jung held alchemy's goal to be the self; and thus, "the rebirth of the (spiritual) light from the darkness of Physis: healing self-knowledge" (Jung 1989b, 90).

For the purpose of this section I will focus and elaborate on only three of the most relevant gnostic and alchemical symbols of the self: the *lapis philosophorum* or philosophers' stone, the vessel, and water. Reviewing these symbols will not only be useful in helping to develop an intuitive understanding of the Jungian self through the associations they arouse, but also, their meaning and characteristics can be taken as elucidations of the concept itself. Jung states it clearly that the *lapis* is "a parallel of the Christ figure…a symbolical prefiguration of psychic totality," (Jung 1989b, v-vi) and "a symbol of the self" (272). Like the analyst's proposition of the unconscious self, the *lapis* is an entity transcending human understanding (63). Moreover, like the self in his theory, the *lapis* was the idea to which Hermetic philosophy[24] gave "preeminence over all other concepts and symbols" (503). The *lapis* is a unity (Jung 1978a, 236), and its production, the final alchemical goal (Jung 1989b, 533). The consonance with the self is hence apparent; especially as Jung noted, that the alchemists in the fourteenth century already suspected the *lapis* to be "more than a chemical compound" (475).

The vessel has special relevance in the context of this project because, as a symbol, it also emerges in Daoism to represent the relationship between being and non-being. The emptiness of the container, Daoists say, is what gives *de* to its shape. In this line, Jung acknowledges the

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[24] Arabic philosophy of spiritual alchemy founded by Hermes Trismegistos (Encyclopædia Britannica 2020).

mysticism behind the idea of the vessel (Jung 1993, 238), which, as he notes, represents the same as the circle (Jung 1989b, 15). For the alchemists the vessel has a sacred character as well. In fact, Maria Prophetissa,[25] who is known as the first female alchemist, "says that the whole secret lies in knowing about the Hermetic vessel. 'Unum est vas' (the vessel is one) is emphasized again and again" (Jung 1993, 236). The vessel is like the "ageless Aeon…who contains everything in himself and is [himself] contained by nothing" (Jung 1978a, 191). The emptiness or non-being in the vessel is represented in alchemy with mercury and its power to dissolve and unite (Stein 2015, 23-4); thence, the alchemical maxim of "*Solve et coagula*' (dissolve and coagulate)" (Jung 1978a, 260). In this sense, mercury symbolizes the capacity of 'equalizing' and unifying chemicals compounds, as well as material and immaterial opposites. This explains the prominence of mercury in alchemical literature and theory, for, as Jung writes, "Herbert Silberer rightly called the *coniunctio* the 'central idea' of the alchemical procedure" (Jung 1989b, 457; italics added).

The idea of the unity of opposites in alchemy, leads us to the symbol of water (*aqua permanens*) and its interaction with fire (*ignis noster*). Jung (1993, 232) cites several alchemical authorities sustaining that regardless of the antagonistic character of water and fire, they create a pair of opposites in which they become one. Water, or the sea, like mercury or the vessel's non-being, serves as a location to celebrate the chymical marriage (Jung 1989b, 461). The sea, Jung explains, "mitigates and unites the opposites" (461). Yet, the philosophers' stone has this feature as well; at last, they are all symbols for the same thing. On repeated occasions (15; 371; Jung 1993, 232) *lapis* is described as hermaphrodite or androgynous, meaning that it contains and unites the

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[25] I wish to bring attention to the parallel between Maria Prophetissa's famous axiom and Chapter Forty-Two of the *Daodejing*. Her saying goes: "One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the one as the fourth" (Jung 1993, 23).

female and masculine, which conjoinedly work as a symbol for opposition. What unites female

and masculine in the alchemical context is that they "have one spirit [and] one soul" (Jung 1989b,

15). Summarizing this idea, Jung says: "In general, the alchemists strove for a total union of

opposites in symbolic form, and this they regarded as the indispensable condition for the healing

of all ills. Hence they sought to find ways and means to produce that substance in which all

opposites were united" (475). As it will become clear throughout the following sections in this

chapter, analytical psychology also considers the realization of the union of opposites (or the self)

as the ultimate psychological cure or—to stick to alchemical symbology—the *elixir vitae*.

Mercury as the substance in which all opposites are united is also 'the stone.' In this regard, Jung

elucidates that "the union of opposites in the stone is possible only when the adept has become

One himself. The unity of the stone is the equivalent of individuation, by which man is made one;

we would say that the stone is a projection of the unified self" (Jung 1978a, 170). This presents a

new hermeneutic framework for Jung's childhood experience described above, in which he

identifies himself with the stone. It could be argued that whenever Jung *was* the stone, he

identified himself with the self and, thus, inhabited the realm where opposites are united. Also, in

the line of drawing links between Jung's childhood experiences and alchemical symbolism for

the self, and having posited water as one of them, it is worth noting that at one time in his early

life, it "became fixed in [his] mind that [he] must live near a lake; without water, [he] thought,

nobody could live at all" (Jung 1989a, 7). This account, like the previous one, are indicators of

Jung's supposed innate attraction to the wholeness of the self. In the end, all of its symbols stand

for "a psychological concept of human wholeness" (Jung 1978a, 183). "Christ as the 'Word'

[Jung ascertains] is indeed the 'living water' and at the same time the symbol of the inner

'complete' man, the self" (Jung 1978a, 200). This will be the subject of the upcoming section, as I will discuss the self as the ordering and unifying principle of the psyche.

But before closing here, it is meaningful to clarify that Jung possessed a discrediting attitude towards material alchemy. He writes: alchemy's "inner decay had begun at least a century earlier, at the time of Jakob Böhme, when many alchemists deserted their alembics and melting-pots and devoted themselves entirely to (Hermetic) philosophy" (Jung 1993, 227). However, the nucleus of Jung's critique did not only posit this branch of alchemical practices as a consequence of psychological projection into matter (Jung 1989b, 544). He claims that alchemists treated symbols as if they were physical entities (544), and that this was the cause of their collective failure. Seconding Jung, Edinger explains that this failure was a consequence of their 'confusion,' as "they were looking for a 'philosophical' or spiritual content in a chemical procedure"[26] (267). It is possibly for this reason, then, that Jung daringly ascertains: "alchemy, certainly, cannot be defended against the charge of unconsciousness" (Jung 1989b, 327).

As the Ordering and Unifying Principle of the Psyche

For Jung, the self is a "psychic totality" (1989b, vi) designating "the whole range of psychic phenomena in man. It expresses the unity of the personality as a whole" (1976, 437), and is the unification of the conscious-unconscious psychological oppositions. Yet, since only its conscious portion is available (437), the self can only be partially understood and described. As a result of its unitary drive, the self organizes the entirety of the psychic contents. So, whereas "the ego is

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[26] But are not the opposites united? Is not matter spirit?

the center of the conscious personality [the self is the centre of the total personality; and whereas] the ego is the seat of *subjective* identity…the Self is the seat of *objective* identity" (Edinger, 3).

Nonetheless—and this is another of those points in which the Dao's similarity with Jung's conception of the self becomes unquestionable—the self, being the totality, "is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference" (Jung 1993, 41). Given this structure, the dynamic of the self suggested by Jung consists of a circumambulation (Jung 1989a, 196) or a "spiral-wise" (Jung 1993, 217) movement that progressively approaches its centre (217). Resonating with Dao's structure, in the self, the ego-consciousness, or animus, takes the place that *yang* (as manifestation) or being occupies in the Dao; while the shadow, or anima, comply with the latent function of *yin* or non-being (Jung 1989b, 107). The self, thus, plays an analogous role in analytical psychology to that of the Dao in Daoism (Zhu, 501). But this does not mean that the ontology of Jung's psychology is faithfully modelled in accordance with the Daoist. This issue will be introduced at the end of this chapter and addressed in more detail in the next.

But before continuing it is important to present the theoretical distinction and relationship between archetypes and symbols in Jung's model. As mentioned earlier, in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* the author defines archetype as "a possibility of representation," adding that, in itself, it "is empty and purely formal" (Jung 1989a, 393). In contrast to this, "a symbol is never entirely abstract, but always in some way 'incarnated" (Jacobi 2013, 76), and can be expressed as the "essence *and* image of psychic energy" (75; italics in the original). Consistently, for Jung, archetypes are universal, unaccesible to the ego-consciousness (Westley and Folke 2018, 4) and unexperienceable. Yet, they manifest themselves inderectly, through the generation of particular images, symbols (Tympas 2014, 90-1), complexes, and symptoms (Jacobi, 75). Jacobi summarizes this point saying that "the archetype as such is concentrated

psychic energy [and] the symbol provides the mode of manifestation by which the archetype becomes discernible" (75).

Thus, symbols are the necessary intermediary between archetypes and egoic consciousness. In fact, symbols are well equipped to carry out that function, as they are determined by the specific archetype or 'possibility of representation' that gives them their particular character and, at the egoic level, their personal or subjective meaning. Illustrating the connection between symbols and archetypes, and indicating how the latter emerge in the conscious psyche, Jacobi cites the "the archetype of the conflict between light and darkness," which frequently becomes symbolized in the form of "the hero's fight with the dragon" (76). Although Jung mentions that "archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors" (in Jacobi, 31), it can be conveyed through diverse mechanisms establishing a communication between the unconscious and the conscious mind, like dreams or active imagination.[27] In any case, it is in the encounter with symbols, such as the fight of the hero and the dragon, that archetypal content is presented, or suggested to the individual, providing an opportunity for transformation and sublimation (Jung 1975, 308 in Westley and Folke, 5). In this manner, symbols promote the progression of individuation and a process of *self-organization* (Westley and Folke, 4). The power of a symbol depends on the emotional charge that it has to a specific individual, how deep its link is to the

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[27] "Active imagination, says Jung, consists in a switching off of conscious awareness, at least to a relative extent so as to make room in our conscious minds for new impressions and ideas. This makes possible the arising of new contents from the unconscious to the conscious level of the mind" (Coward 1985, 37).
Sharp (1991) provides a more detailed definition when he writes that, in analytical psychology, active imagination is "a method of assimilating unconscious contents (dreams, fantasies, etc.) through some form of self-expression. The object of active imagination [he says] is to give a voice to sides of the personality (particularly the anima/animus and the shadow) that are normally not heard, thereby establishing a line of communication between consciousness and the unconscious. Even when the end products—drawing, painting, writing, sculpture, dance, music, etc.—are not interpreted, something goes on between creator and creation that contributes to a transformation of consciousness" (3).
According to Hartman (1995) Jung developed this technique in 1913.

collective unconscious, and the length of the relation or interaction with that symbol (4). Hence, it is understandable that the symbols of the self are the most powerful.

One of the primordial symbols of Jung's self that was not mentioned in the preceding section, as it is not necessarily linked to alchemy or gnosticism, is the mandala. Coward (1985) defines it as a "circle [implying] a circular movement focused on the center" (18), and is one of the self's symbols that most directly depicts its balancing, ordering and unifying qualities. Like this, the mandala represents the "wholeness of the personality" (Jung 1989a, 196). Jung's experience with mandalas was determining for analytical psychology and his understanding of the psyche. In his own words, he admits: "When I began drawing the mandalas…I saw that everything, all the paths I had been following, all the steps I had taken, were leading back to…the mid-point. [The mandala] is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation" (196). It is in its functioning as a "principle and archetype of orientation and meaning" "directed toward [the targeted] center," that the self holds its "healing function" (198-9), and thus, "signifies the human or divine self, the totality or vision of God" (Jung 1978a, 241). The self is the definitive archetype that gives order and structure to the psyche and its diverse contents. But in what context is the self an archetype?

As Archetype

As an archetype, the self encompasses not just the ego, but other two archetypes as well: the shadow and the syzygy (anima and animus) (Jung 1989b, 108). Together, these four archetypes comprise the most important archetypes in Jung's theory, who also arranged them hierarchically, giving prominence to the self over the rest. The second more inclusive archetype is that of the syzygy (anima and animus), followed by the shadow, and finally the ego (Jung 1978a, 31). This

structure is represented on *Figure 1*. It is fundamental to clarify, as Edinger does, that "every

archetypal image carries at least a partial aspect of the Self [because] in the unconscious there is

no separation of different things. Everything merges with everything else" (38). This means that

individuals in the initial phases of their individuation processes are not able to perceive these

layers or archetypes separately. As individuation begins, the first archetype that individuals

encounter will be the shadow; then the anima or animus, and finally the self (38). It should also

be mentioned that the logic of this theoretical structure, progressively advances from the personal

conscious, to the personal, and collective unconscious. I have already discussed the ego's

relationship with the self; in this section, I will concentrate on the middle archetypes.[28]
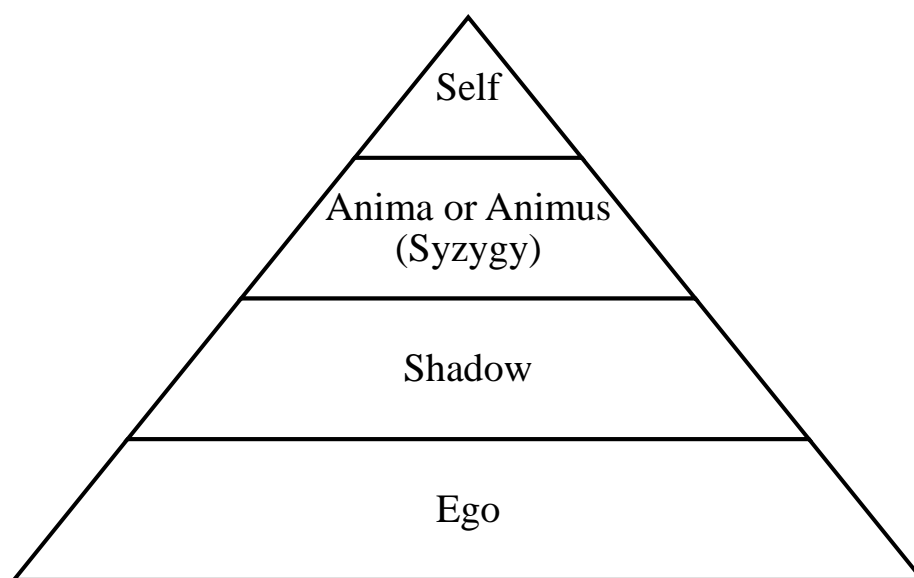

Figure 1

The first landmark of the analytical process is the encounter, dealing, and integration of the

personal shadow. No realization of the self or becoming "whole" will occur if this step is

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[28] The intricacies of how these archetypes relate to one another is more complex than I would be able to explain here.

overlooked. According to what Jung (1993) says, this necessary facing of the shadow on the way to the self is the cause of the anxiety produced by the idea of moving towards wholeness (186). But in surmounting this anxiety, the only remedy is looking into the darkness of our shadow. Like Jung (1978a) says, "to become conscious of [the shadow] involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real" (1978a, 8). To use his own definition: the shadow encompasses "the inferior part of the personality; [it is the] sum of all personal and collective psychic elements which, because of their incompatibility with the chosen conscious attitude, are denied expression in life and therefore coalesce into a relatively autonomous 'splinter personality' with contrary tendencies in the unconscious" (Jung 1989a, 398-9). As such, the shadow is "the compensatory function of the unconscious" (Welwood 1977, 13) and "a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality" (Jung 1978a, 8). In dreams, the shadow always appears as a figure "of the same sex as the dreamer" (Jung 1989a, 399).

Common dark aspects that the shadow encircles, include, but are not limited to, moral repressions, negations and projections, like inferiorities, obsessions, compulsions and emotions. However, the shadow is also home of functional tendencies and good qualities "such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights [and] creative impulses" (Jung 1978a, 266). The process of becoming cognisant of the shadow is a "coming to terms" of the ego's personality "with its own background" (Jung 1989b, 497). For hermetic philosophers, this is the "union of spirit and soul in the *unio mentalis*," which they take as "the first stage of the coniunctio" (497; italics in the original). In their doctrine, this process received the name of "meditation" (497). But whether hermetics or analytical practitioners, the meaning of the *unio mentalis* is "knowledge of oneself" (499); or knowledge of one's own previously hidden shadow, to be more specific.

Whomever incorporates the dark side of their personality, can, in theory, say to have conquered the first stage of individuation.

Facing the shadow involves looking into negative or evil aspects of the own personality. But as individuals advance in their analysis, they start to discover and relate to a collective idea of evil; and the dilemmas that initially seemed personal, are glimpsed in the anima and animus (Jung 1978a, 10). Hence, the order: first shadow, then syzygy. It is through the process of "analysis of the shadow" (266) that the syzygy is disclosed. But an important clarification is that if "the shadow can be realized only through a relation to a partner," the bringing into consciousness of the anima and animus demands "a relation to a partner of the opposite sex" (22). In Jung's view, merely a contrasexual relationship comprehends the potential to reveal the projections that the syzygy navigates (22).

As presented in *Part II, Aion* (1978a)*,* the essential mechanism of the syzygy is projection. This is, because the syzygy is defined by the "projection-making factor" (11) constituting the image of the father (animus) or mother (anima). This image, however, is confounded by the individual with the 'real' or 'objective' parent. The illusion instituted by the syzygy, thus, "can only be dissolved when [in the case of the anima] the son sees that in the realm of his psyche there is an imago not only of the mother but of the daughter, the sister, the beloved, the heavenly Goddess, and the chthonic Baubo" (12-3). In other words, to break out of the illusion imposed by the syzygy image, either the anima or animus is to arise into consciousness. The animus and anima were conceived in antiquity—Jung notes—as powerful "Gods," whose "power grows in proportion to the degree that they remain unconscious" (21). Nevertheless, the main religious and spiritual symbols are usually reserved as expressions for the self.

"The Christ-symbol," writes Jung, "is of the greatest importance for psychology in so far as it is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self, apart from the figure of the Buddha" (1993, 19). Both characters represent a divine totality and a worshiped man that has left sin behind (Jung 1978a, 37). But the concept of the self, as Jung uses it, does not refer to Christ or Buddha. Instead, the self embraces all symbols that are comparable to them (Jung 1993, 18). In this movement, Jung is performing a secularization of religious figures to turn them into psychological symbols of the ultimate and divine. Moreover, this is useful in the attempt of producing a universalist psychology, because like the experience of the self "can convince one person of the truth of Christ, another of the truth of the Buddha, to the exclusion of all other evidence" (Jung 1993, 20), subjects are, in the end, who define the specific image that goes in the place of the self. So, in this sense, the archetype of the self functions as an instrument to make teleological multiplicity[29] objective. As Jung explains: "It is altogether inconceivable that there could be any definite figure capable of expressing archetypal indefiniteness" (18). The self is "a term on the one hand definite enough to convey the essence of human wholeness and on the other hand indefinite enough to express the indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness" (18). With the divine indefiniteness of the self, we arrive at its manifestation as *imago Dei*.

As imago Dei

Probably the first thing that should be mentioned about the *imago Dei* or the God-image, is that in Jung's usage, it differs from the meaning found in the Genesis of "man created in the image of God," as well as from the idea of an exclusive fundamental God. Prior to discussing this concept, I would like to treat Jung's personal relationship with God and God's place in his psychology. In

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[29] By teleological multiplicity I mean the plasticity of Jung's self to represent divinity as the ego's drawing force.

regard to the first of these issues, it is important to say that although Jung thought of himself as a Christian and many of his religious notions were that of—or at least influenced by—Christianity, his religious views constantly challenged the orthodoxy of the church. According to Edinger, a few days before his passing, Jung was asked in an interview about his idea of God. His response was: "To this day God is the name by which I designate all things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans and intentions and change the course of my life for better or worse" (Jung in Edinger, 101). From this conceptualization, the reader can infer that for Jung, God would be an immediate experience (Jung 1989a, xi). In fact, he confesses having undergone an invincible attraction towards him, and having found that all of his thoughts orbited around him (xi). In his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* Jung confesses that it would have been a blasphemy to resist this attraction (xi), as it would be to seriously consider an analogy between God and his ego (57). But does this imply that there is a likeness of God and the self?

Indeed, some opinions and passages support this case. For example, we already know that the mandala or circle is a symbol for the self; and Jung also suggests that "the circle is a well-known symbol for God" (Jung 1978a, 195). Similarly—knowing about the intimate relationship between the self and the unconscious—there is another indicator to associate God and self when Jung acknowledges the difficulty to determine if God and the unconscious are different entities (Jung 1989a, 395). Edinger aids, too, in the establishment of the likeness between God and self as he contends that "the Self, the central source of life energy, the fountain of our being…is most simply described as God" (4). Moreover, the divinization of human figures like Christ and Buddha in their respective traditions, becomes a reason to liken the conceptions of God and self, because Jung (1989b) stresses that in Christianity and Buddhism, these human figures have—like

the self in relation to the total personality—a *central* place. In agreement to what the analyst

writes, the idea of the closeness between God and self is particularly clear considering the

parallel processes of both religions in which "God became very man" (553). Irrespective of these

potential evidences, however, Jung repetitiously affirms that God and the self are *not* the same.

In *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* Jung's last great work, he forcefully defends himself and conradicts

the "short-sighted critics" who frequently censured him for putting "the self in place of God"

(Jung 1989b, 208). Jung distinguishes between God and self, as he emphasizes that psychology is

not in a position to sustain either the equivalence between them, or the existence of God (Jung

1978a, 198). But Jung's critics' "confusion" is not in vain, for, in distinguishing God and self, the

author frequently goes back to commonalities like their "identical numinous factor which is a

condition of reality" (Jung 1989b, 546). Their distinction, explains Jung, is not practical but

conceptual (546). In this line, Ventimiglia (2009) clarifies that while in Jung's eyes God "is a

theological imputation," the self is a "psychological construct" (7) and has the *potential* to be

psychologically and directly experienced (Jung in Ventimiglia, 7). "Whenever the self

manifests," he remarks, "you have the feeling of the holy presence" (Jung in Ventimiglia, 7). Yet,

in this *feeling,* the boundaries between God and self turn blurry once again and even become

"irrelevant" (7).

These incongruities and contradictions make it apparent that the distinction that Jung proposed

between God and self is merely strategic. Obviously, because of his scientific endeavour, he was

disabled to posit God as the central archetype and his ultimate theoretical category. So, he came

up with *a concept* that would not be practically but *conceptually* different from that of God. In

other words, not being able to speak of God due to his scientific and non-metaphysical

aspirations, Jung renamed the phenomenon of God as the self. Further, in the attempt to

differentiate God and self on the basis of making the former external and the latter internal (Ventimiglia, 7), another inconsistency is revealed. Because, as we know, theoretically, Jung relies in the union of opposites; and if he remained faithful to that dynamic, external and internal—and consequently God and self—would end up united and fused. Just as it occurs in his own description of Christ, who "as a man, corresponds to the ego, and, as God, to the self" (Jung 1978a, 110). "He is at once both ego and self, part and whole" (110).

In any case, to keep some coherence with his beliefs, Jung required a directly observable notion denoting the numinous nature of God. And to this end, the *imago Dei* became, in analytical psychology, the "inner empirical deity [that] is identical with" the self (Edinger, 3). Out of all of the possible definitions for the Jungian self, it seems that this is the most encompassing and determining. Beyerle and Beyerle (2018) write: "The *imago Dei* is the self" (81), and as *imago Dei*, the self turns into an image (Stein, 20); a subjectively meaningful symbol representing God. Correspondingly, Jung affirms that the self is "an image…in which we are contained" (1972, 240). But the *imago Dei* is not just an image; it "is an image of an image" (Jung 1978a, 37), for it is an echo of the soul, which is, at the same time, an echo of God (37). In this order of ideas, Jung held Christ as "the true image of God" (37-8).

The psychiatrist seems to have borrowed the analytical notion of the *imago Dei* from alchemy, as he declares that this tradition regarded the self as an occult substance in the body "identical with the image of God" (Jung 1989b, 499). However, tracing back the roots of this take on the *imago Dei,* Jung (1989a) references the Church Fathers who deemed it as an impression on the human soul (394). In Jung's scheme, such impression was (implicitly) understood to have been imprinted by God (Jung 1993, 14). He observes that religions' emphasis is on the imprinter; but

what his psychology proposes is to refocus on the imprint (i.e. the psychological "type"[30]) and its pragmatism, to analyse and understand it "as the symbol of an unknown and incomprehensible content" (17). Through this imprint, the soul and God are connected (11), and,—following Edinger—the ego is assisted, commanded and directed in its encounter with the self (70). This is, at least, one of their most important purposes of the "images with a religious content" (Jaffé in Jung 1989a, x) that are effortlessly produced by the psyche.

Still, if these images are not internal and subjectively meaningful, but are found somewhere in the outside, the 'healing' effects deriving from experiencing the self, and the encounter itself, will not take place, because in this case, the numinous archetype "is identical with externalized ideas" and does not arise from the unconscious (Jung 1993, 11). Hence, Jung's psychological criticism about various religions' emphasis on their respective holy outward figures. Specifically, dualistic, monotheistic religions like Christianity, Jung says, reinforce the idea that "everything is to be found outside—in image and in word, in Church and Bible—but never inside" (12). It is the "lack of [Christianity's] psychological culture" (12) and the fact that respecting the church the individual finds himself in a condition of *participation mystique*[31] (Edinger, 65), what encouraged the persistence of heathenish approaches to the mystical experience. What is psychologically substantial is the experience of the "divine image as the innermost possession of their own souls" (12). This appraisal underlining the internal over the external could resemble Laozi's and Zhuangzi's 'emphasis' on non-being. As I read it, it is not that Jung or the Daoists are advocating for a change of sides, but they are concerned with bringing attention to the neglected polarity, for only in this way is reinstating a balance possible. An additional point in

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[30] Here, the word is being used according to the Greek derivation of τύπος as "blow" or "imprint" (Jung 1993, 14).

[31] Term used by Jung to denote "a state of collective identification [and absence of] individual relation to the Self" (Edinger 1992, 65).

Jung's criticism of Christianity's outward concentration is that while the image of Christ—that is the Christian version of the *imago Dei*—is meant to be "an all-embracing totality," it fails in such an attempt because it excludes (or represses) the shadow side (or its Luciferian opposite) resulting in a one-sided or crippled symbol of "totality" (Jung 1978a, 41). Thus, Christianity's *imago Dei* disappoints as a symbol of universality: first, because of its non-psychological origin and, second, as a result of its repressive and exclusive nature. But the fact that the *imago Dei* is imminently subjective poses the following problem: If the specificity of the self as *imago Dei* is private, and such specificity pertains to the personal unconscious, does this mean that in its most satisfying expression, the empiric, analytical self does not belong in the collective unconscious? It seems not, since for Jung, the collective and individual unconscious are not strictly divided, inasmuch as the personal unconscious is produced by the intrusion of the collective unconscious into the personal psyche (Jung 1989b, 107-8).

Either way, Jung (1993) suggests that the analytical therapeutic approach for adults in what respects the *imago Dei* is "to convey the archetype of the God-image, or its emanations and effects, to the conscious mind" (12-3). Tympas (2013) understands this process as a passing from the "intra-psychic spiritual dimension" of the God-image to the "extra-psychic level," in which it is possible to realize a likeness with God through familiarization with Godly wisdom (205). The final intention of bringing the *imago Dei* to the conscious surface is operating a "reconciliation of opposites within the God-image itself" (Coward 1985, 20). According to Coward, this was Jung's paramount religious experience (20). As a matter of fact, Jung (1978a) explains that "unity and totality stand at the highest point on the scale of objective values because their symbols can no longer be distinguished from the *imago Dei*. [And in this sense] all statements about the God-

image apply also to the empirical symbols of totality" (Jung 1978a, 31; italics in the original). At last, the self is God, and "God…the union of opposites" (Jung in Coward 1985, 130).

As Union of Opposites

The last device, through which I attempt to elucidate Jung's concept of the self, is the union of opposites. In Ventimiglia we read: "Jung taught us that the Self is a coincidence of opposites and the human ego must grow in order to hold this impossible ambiguity" (14). In the same direction, Edinger explains that "the Self is experienced and symbolized as a union of opposites" (275), and Jung himself ratifies that "the self is a union of opposites *par excellence*" (1993, 19; italics in the original); therefore "bright and dark and yet neither" (Jung 1989b, 108). The psychiatrist explains that deprived of an experience of the opposites, there is no moving towards the *imago Dei,* and consequently, no fulfilment of unity or completeness (Jung 1993, 20). According to Stein, "Jung derived his use of the term '*coincidentia oppositorum*' from Nicholas of Cusa," (24) the fifteenth century German Neo-platonic philosopher and Christian mystic (of Cusa 1988; Miller 2017). Cusa's dialectical mysticism, and his rendering of the union of opposites as God (Jung 1978a, 225) was so vital for Jung that he could not conceive of reality without antinomy (267).

The self, he said, is "male and female, old man and child, powerful and helpless, large and small" yet without contradiction (Jung 1978a, 225). Nonetheless, the self is not only an expression for any possible set of opposites in the form thesis–antithesis. Its dialectical nature means that it has also an ability to synthesize the two polar elements (Jung 1993, 19). They "are melted into a unity purified of all opposition and therefore incorruptible" (37). So, like Dao, Jung's self goes beyond being and non-being, (or the conscious and unconscious) to constitute a totality that is encompassing of both.

Consistently, in psychic life, the self is an inclusive entity capable of accommodating any components, regardless of how contradictory or antithetical they may seem (Edinger, 40). But whenever these contrary psychic elements arise into consciousness, either in dreams or active imagination, they produce a "violent collision between [the] two opposite points of view" (Jung 1989b, 123-4). Thus, "the self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them" (Jung 1993, 186); and psychologically, the issue acquires a phenomenological character that can be symbolically represented by polarities "like fire and water, height and depth, life and death" (Jung 1989b, 6). As the dynamic of active imagination suggests (see footnote 27), when this unity symbols emerge while using that technique, or in dreams, fantasies, art therapy, etc., they do not even require analysis to carry on their integrative function. Their sole emergence may suffice to bring into consciousness the unconscious, conflicting aspect or polarity and bring the ego closer to the self. Hence, with the arising of these symbols, the psychic structure changes insofar as its conscious portion grows.

In this manner, it is a reality that "the way to the self begins with conflict" (Jung 1993, 186). The ascending of contradictions into consciousness often takes the form of a moral dichotomy between good and evil. But regardless of the specific form of the paradox, the psychic effort should focus on extenuating the tension by making "enemies friends" (Jung 1989b, 124). Exemplifying this with the mentioned dichotomy, in approaching the self and learning from its perspective, the ego may be capable of realizing that "good and evil are…closer than identical twins" (Jung 1993, 21), that "there is no good that cannot produce evil and no evil that cannot produce good" (31), and finally, that "if we call everything that God does or allows 'good,' then evil is good too, and 'good' becomes meaningless" (Jung 1978a, 267). That said, it becomes

evident that "the antinomial character of the self…is itself both conflict and unity" (Jung 1993, 21).

Jung's logic behind this way of understanding the relationship between opposites like good and evil is also inspired in the Heraclitean concept of *enantiodromia* (Jung 1972, 60). This notion denotes the "regulative function of opposites" (60) or "that all extreme one-sided positions eventually turn into their opposite" (Ventimiglia, 16). This is an ubiquitous principle, for it applies to many different levels of reality. In fact, it seems to be an ontological law of the universe we inhabit. It is not only philosophically and psychologically applicable, but also physically, biologically and chemically, for instance. Earlier, I explained that, in alchemy, mercury carries out the symbolic function of the union of opposites. Mercury melts, blends and turns into matter and spirit, the bodily and the psychic (Jung 1989b, 503). In this order of ideas, Jung reminds Elizabeth Grosz's (2017) relatively recent reading of the Stoics as he sustains that

> psyche cannot be totally different from matter, for how otherwise could it move matter? And matter cannot be alien to psyche, for how else could matter produce psyche? Psyche and matter exist in one and the same world, and each partakes of the other, otherwise any reciprocal action would be impossible. [32] (Jung 1978a, 261)

Regarding this subject, Jung (2017) concludes: "The distinction between mind and body is an artificial dichotomy, a discrimination which is unquestionably based far more on the peculiarity of intellectual understanding than on the nature of things" (85). Furthermore, for the alchemists, the *coniunctio oppositorum* had a close relationship with their view on the *unio mystica*, as both are expressions of unity and wholeness (Coward 1985, 20). Nicholas of Cusa also grasps this relationship as he "explains that this absolute nothingness beyond comprehension is the *absoluta coincidentia oppositorum*" (in Stein, 24). In this sense, the self is not only the goal and

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[32] As noted in a previous footnote, this contradicts Jung's criticism of alchemists in their dealing with symbols.

"completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality" (Jung 1972, 214), but the inaguration of something new as well (192), like a rebirth. This—what the alchemists knew as the *chymical wedding* (Jung 1993, 37)—was for Jung "the really great opus—the marriage of ego and self, masculine and feminine principles, spirit and matter, good and evil in a new consciousness" (Ventimiglia, 11). And since this union, is what Jung conceived to be the principle for psychological 'healing,' it also became what he expected. Indeed, whereas advancing towards the self is desireable and "normal," Coward sustains that in Jung's eyes, "to remain overbalanced and caught up in a conflict between the opposites is pathological" (1996, 485).

But reaching the self will not occur effortlessly or from one day to another (Jung 1972, 214). The process to get there is "a *longissima via*" and a snakelike path (Jung 1993, 6). Ventimiglia writes, that as Jung realized the tortuousness of this way, he committed to the development of a method that promoted the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious mind, and through which an integration of the archetypes takes place (11). That method is what we now know as analytical psychology's individuation process; and borrowing from Western, occultist (Hartman 1995, 12) traditions[33] of self-knowledge, reflexivity and exploration, the specific technique that he proposed is active imagination. Along the process of individuation, the therapist's ideal attitude, according to Jung, is this:

> I must leave my patient to decide in accordance with his assumptions, his spiritual maturity, his education, origins, and temperament, so far as this is possible without serious conflicts. As a doctor it is my task to help the patient to cope with life. I cannot presume to pass judgment on his final decisions, because I know from experience that all coercion—be it suggestion, insinuation, or any other method of persuasion—ultimately proves to be nothing but an obstacle to the highest and most decisive experience of all, which is to be alone with his own self, or whatever else one chooses to call the objectivity of the psyche. The patient must be alone if he is to find out what it is that supports him when he can no longer support himself. Only this experience can give him an indestructible foundation. (Jung 1993, 27-8)

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[33] Merkur traces "the roots of active imagination…from Gnosticism through early Islam and medieval Judaism and then into the Latin West, where it made its way into spiritual alchemy and into Jung's thinking" (Hartman, 17).

To experience the self as our own indestructible support and foundation, we are required to go beyond the conscious mind, which, in principle, divides. "To be aware of things" it necessitates separating "the opposites, and it does this *contra naturam*" (Jung 1993, 25). In a dialectical fashion, Jung continues: "In nature the opposites seek one another—*les extrêmes se touchent*—and so it is in the unconscious, and particularly in the archetype of unity, the self. Here, as in the deity, the opposites cancel out" (25). Contradictorily, only *in* the self, the integration of ego and self is viable, and they are seen as "different experiential levels of the same archetypal psychic process" (Edinger, 156). Evidently, the union of ego and self is expressed inasmuch as "the ego is the seat of consciousness, and if consciousness creates the world, the ego is doing God's creative work in its effort to realize itself through the way of individuation" (156). I believe this is what shaped Jung's view of the human being as "a reconciler of the opposites" (Jung in Coward 1996, 479), for whom "the supreme treasure [is] the immortal self" (Jung 1993, 163).

In the first chapter we learnt that "the aim of the [D]aoist sage is to live in harmony with the [D]ao and thereby avoid falling into one extreme or the other…but striking a balance between the two" (Jung in Coward 1996, 479). Fundamental for this project is the fact that it was in the Daoist book, *The Secret of the Golden Flower,* that Jung confirmed his idea of a balanced 'self' that is accomplished through finding an equilibrium between the opposites (Coward 1996, 484). From this meditation guide, Jung (1978a) quotes: "When the light is made to move in a circle, all the energies of heaven and earth, of the light and the dark, are crystallized"[34] (264). After discovering this text, he assiduously studied other works in the Daoist tradition, and with the *I Ching,* he confirmed that the harmonizing of *yin* and *yang* in Dao was another way of describing the end goal of analytical psychology; which would be, in its terms, the balancing of psychic opposites

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[34] Note the employment of alchemical terminology and Jung's acknowledgement of this text as an alchemical treatise.

through the experience of the self" (Jung in Coward 1996, 479). Nonetheless, I ponder if such balancing reifies the old 'positive' ideology and notion of the self, because contrary to the Daoist maxim of *wu-wei*—which we know, is closely linked to the principle of the non-self—"re-establishing" a balance is to act. If analytical psychology was closer to Daoist philosophy and (non)ontology, it would not advocate for *action* in the path towards individuation. Moreover, because the balance of *yin* and *yang* is permanent, given and spontaneous (*ziran*), to suggest its re-establishment is to deny its unconditionality. However, Jung's concern about our asymmetric psychic energies and minds is not unfounded, because it does seem that the unconditionality of this balance typically remains unconscious for us. But before plunging into the Daoist critique of the Jungian self, let us review a few essential intersections between Eastern philosophies and Jung's thought.

Analysis: Jung, 'Eastern Yogas' and Daoism

To the contemporary reader, it is striking that an 'integrative' theorist like Jung insists on a definitive, theoretical distiction between the Eastern and the Western "man." Similar to what I hold to be psychology's gravest concern, Jung was very clear in that the practice of yoga was not appropriate for the Western man as this "would only serve to strengthen his will and consciousness and so further intensify the split with the unconscious" (Coward 1985, 22). Yoga's greatest danger, in Jung's eyes, is the absolute dissolution of the ego-consciousness, for this would possibly translate in an identity loss and psychopathology (Ho, 130). This is the root of Jung's—and in general psychologists'—unease with the idea of selflessness or the non-self (130). Eastern yogas, as Jung understood them, contained the great danger of intensifying or even causing neurosis (Coward 1985, 18). So, what he borrowed from them, was merely the "general

approach…so that the split, the imbalance between the opposites may be brought into harmony"
(18). But, as we already know, he believed it was important for the West to develop its own
methods to reach equivalent results to those of yoga, and active imagination was the technique
that he proposed as an apt form of 'Western yoga.' Notwithstanding, from time to time, Jung
revealed his reservations toward his own project in this regard, like when he explains that
"psychoanalysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise—surely a distinctly Western
development—are only a beginner's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East"
(2017, 249-50).

One of the points that is relevant to pose in the light of the present critique, is the influx that
yogic and Hinduist philosophies might have had in Jung's denomination of his major archetype
as the self. In those contexts, the 'True Self' is a highly important concept denoting the reality of
human be-ing beyond the illusory aspect of who we take ourselves to be. The notion of
individuation seems to have a lot in common with the idea of a 'True Self,' and hence, this
concept with Jung's formulation of the self as the maximum *telos* and significance of human
existence. Discussing this subject, Coward (1985) elucidates the union of opposites (in this case
between the individual soul/spirit and the ultimate reality) by employing Hinduistic terminology:
"At the moment of highest insight, the true inner self, that *Atman,* is seen to be identical with the
life essence of all the external universe (*Brahman*)" (Coward 1985, 53).

Beyond this affinity, Daoism remains the Eastern philosophy that had a major impact on Jung's
crafting of the self. In fact, Jung explains that "the self…is the midpoint of the opposites [and] is
equivalent to the [D]ao" (in Coward 1996, 485). But this and the "trustworthy guide to the
experience of the [union of opposites] as the spiritual center" (489), were not the only Daoist
ideas that that made their way into analytical psychology. Jung also borrowed a big portion of the

dynamic of the Dao and replicated it in the self's as seen in the assertion "that when one of [its] opposites reaches its greatest strength the other will begin to reassert itself" (Coward 1985, 17).

Jung points to the non-self in his idea that a "healing process…The centre or goal…signifies salvation in the proper sense of the word" (Jung 1993, 29). In the first chapter, we saw that the centre of a Daoist structure is empty and depicts the role of non-self that the Daoist sage plays at the centre of society. Consequently, the last quotation is interpretable in such way that salvation and the healing process are found in the central emptiness of the non-self. Also relevant here is Jung's awareness of *wu-wei* via Meister Eckhart: "The art of letting things happen, action through non-action, letting go of oneself…became for [Jung] the key that opens the door to the way" (Jung 1978b, 18)[35] and "the development of the self" (Coward 1996, 486). Still, this Jungian problem of "letting go of oneself" as a means of "development of the self" is central to the ideological co-opting of "spirituality" by neoliberalism.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the Jungian concept of the self in its most relevant expressions, including some of Jung's childhood experiences that had a profound influence on his theory and conception of the notion. It also studied the self's gnostic and alchemical symbology, its manifestations as the ordering and unifying principle of the psyche, archetype, *imago Dei*, and union of opposites. In summary, in Jung's theory, the self is the key component of a cohesive system. The 'realization' of the self occurs through individuation, which, following Beyerle and Beyerle, is defined as the process of producing a "dynamic balance between [ego and self through]

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[35] In the original text, Jung (1978b) writes: "The art of letting things happen, action through non-action, letting go of oneself as taught by Meister Eckhart, became for me the key that opens the door to the way" (18).

conscious integration [of] symbols" (81), and an awakening of the ego to the self in which "the individual [realizes] his or her divine identity" (81). Further, the chapter brought attention to the fact that, although Jung poses "the Self…[a]s an *a priori* existent out of which the ego evolves" (1973, 221), they are—just like *you* and *wu* in Daoism—interdependent; but complicating his argument, Jung goes on to sustain that, unlike other polarities, they do not turn into each other. The section on alchemy and gnosticism, delivered a list of various of the most common and relevant symbols of the self, and expanded on the *lapis philosophorum*, the vessel and water, to conclude that their meaning abides as expressions of the union of opposites, which these traditions held as the *elixir vitae* or cure for all ills. In analytical psychology too, the union of opposites came to represent the ultimate psychological medicine; particularly as an integration of the conscious and unconscious. Yet, since only the conscious aspect of the self is available (Jung 1976, 437), it can solely be *partially* understood and described.

The self is the highest of the primordial Jungian archetypes, which, in order of comprehensiveness, also include the ego, shadow and syzygy. Following Edinger, it was proposed that the *imago Dei* is the "inner empirical deity [that] is identical with" the self (3), and the most encompassing and determining definition of this concept. However, the *imago Dei,* like the examined alchemical and gnostic symbols, is primordially significant as a union of opposites; the self "is most simply described as [the God-image or] God" (Edinger, 4), and "God [as] the union of opposites" (Jung in Coward 1985, 130). In this sense, it was spoken of the psychological experience of the individual's encounter with the self as comparable to the direct experience of God (Edinger, 104). In the union of opposites—and taking inspiration from the Daoists—Jung encountered depth psychology's great opus: the marriage of ego and self (Ventimiglia, 11). Nevertheless, as I will show next, the Daoist sage successfully accomplishes the union of

opposites, while the essentialism of ego and self impede Jung from the culmination of his psychological goal.

Jung attempts to fit Daoism, different streams of 'Eastern thought,' and elements of gnosticism and alchemy into his own analytical psychology, and criticizes them because they do not really fit. He may not have been interested in actually founding his theory on Daoism or any other philosophy, as much as he was in borrowing from them to support his private views. Clarke (2002) notes that it has been "questioned whether a project such as Jung's simply appropriates Daoist ideas for its own foreign purposes and thereby radically distorts them" (127). In this order of ideas, Jung opted to remain "true to his own 'reality of the psyche" (Coward 1985, 189); even sensing that in so doing, at least some of the philosophies from which he derived, and especially the Eastern (xii), would have their own angle to criticize his theory.

Thus, it may be said that there is a considerable degree of correspondence between the Jungian self and the Dao. However, Jung is inconsistent in his adaptation of the Dao. To follow Clarke, equating self and Dao is a blunt mistake. Whereas the Jungian self is an ontic reality (Whitney 2017, 6), and an unconscious God (7) that is essential, unknowable and fundamentally distinct from the ego-consciousness, thereby composing a dualistic metaphysic, Dao "is" an adualistic, insubstantial, all-encompassing unity. Perhaps, analytical psychology would have been theoretically sounder if it had relinquished its scientific aspirations and committed to an established metaphysical stance, as opposed to improvising and negating its own, while denying psychology's possibility of making metaphysical statements.

Chapter Three: A Daoist Critique of the Jungian Self

The Jungian self is informed, reflects and resembles Dao. Yet, Jung does not believe in the likelihood of fully realizing the self, for this would imply something impossible: making conscious the totality of the unconscious. Simultaneously, Jung's standpoint negates the prospect of enlightenment (Schipke 2018, 10) as the complete dissolution of the subject or ego-consciousness, and thus, the possibility of realizing the Daoist non-self. However, as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* propose, a proximity to the non-self or *diminishing* of the self through the development of Dao's non-characteristics, is what will bring us closer to Dao and the dynamic of life that it is, as opposed to *expanding* the ego and approaching the self through the egoic assimilation of unconscious contents.

Though Jung has been acknowledged by many as a mystic (e.g. Coward 1985, 127-8; Stein, 18), and even if some of his accounts could support this view (see Jung 1989a, 77), his incredulity to the full realization of the self or enlightenment suggests differently. Jordens explains this claim in yogic terms when he writes that "Jung was badly prepared to understand and appreciate the final stage of yogic *samadhi* and the doctrine supporting it" (in Coward 1985, 164), and that "the *purusa,* the final goal of yogic *samadhi,* remains beyond his reach" (165). Similarly, Whitney (2017) elucidates that "looking at Jung through the lens of Classical Yoga it appears that [he] remained in [an] orientation…unable to extricate himself from the multiplicity of images and forms, and unable to rest in the silent stillness which underpins them" (22). Further, the fact that Jung's oeuvre is partly culminated with his auto-biography, conveys a message about his implicit understanding of his own individuality and self, as well as the temporality that goes through those notions. The 'auto' in his biography speaks for a collection of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* that are united with *him* and have his self-conception as their centre, exhibiting an important

degree of self-centeredness. Moreover, the tone that Jung repeatedly uses in the first chapters of that book: "such was my first encounter with the fine arts" (Jung 1989a, 16); "I did not mind school; it was easy for me, since I was always ahead of the others" (17), combined with the delicate articulation between some of the experiences he shares and his theory, construe "a particular image of the man and his work" (Bidwell, 14) that try to deliver a sense of amazement and grandeur exalting Jung's person. Conversely, the Daoist sage has absolutely no interest in speaking or writing about himself to the point that we are even uncertain of the authorship of the two main Daoist texts. Would not it be misleading to have a Daoist sage writing a whole book about himself? From this, and his view on the unknowability of the self, one could argue that Jung did not have a (completely transformative) mystical experience (Bidwell, 16; Whitney 2017, 22) and was, therefore, not a mystic.

A reflection that adds to this, is Jung's tricky choice of calling *individuation* the goal of the analytical procedure. Contrary to mystical traditions, which support a metaphysical unity and non-differentiation, Jung went the other way and established the consolidation of the distinct individual and its separateness (Jung 1989a, 395) as the analytical aim. Calling into question the status of Jung's mysticism, is relevant to the points that will be discussed in this chapter, for his inability to conceive the non-self or the ultimate spiritual state determined at once: his emphasis and one-sidedness on being, and his ontological stance. Hence, even though Jung harshly criticized one-sided perspectives and exalted the Daoists for "never [failing] to acknowledge the paradoxicality and polarity of all life" (1978b, 11), his system never overcame its one-sidedness at the ontological level. Thus, for analytical therapy starts (ego-consciousness) and finishes (self) with being. Jung (1972) mentions that the self is "a construct that serves to express an unknowable *essence* which we cannot grasp as such, since by definition it transcends our powers

of comprehension" (238; italics added). The question is, thus, why choosing such a reifying term like the self to indicate something elusive and unknowable? Does not this seem more clearly depicted by the negativity of the non-self? Furthermore, as the word *essence* in his quotation suggests, *the self*, for Jung, always remained in the realm of being. I could not agree more with him in claiming that we "must first of all [get rid of the] barbarous onesidedness" (1978b, 85). But this should be applied, fundamentally, at the ontological level. One-sidedness may be overcome in all other levels, but if how we think about and approach this one is still untouched, one-sidedness will remain at the root of our societies, understandings of existence, and hence, our own subjectivities and self-conceptions.

Since this chapter will attempt to present an ontological critique of Jung's psychology through the Daoist concept of the non-self, and the set of notions around it, it will be essential to start by presenting the ontological stances—or lack thereof—in both theories. Subsequently, there will be a review on the perspective that understands the self as the seat of all problems and suffering, preparing the discussion to consider the dialectics of the self, examined under three primordial tensions; namely, those between ego and self, the conscious and the unconscious and the self and non-self. The chapter will close contemplating the emptiness and non-existence of the self, essentially through the device of *sheng*—the Daoist term that engages in the impermanence of all phenomena. With this in mind, the planned evolution of the chapter is to move from the assertion that without self there are no problems to the elucidation of the emptiness of the self and, hence, arrive at the conclusion that if the self is fundamentally empty, then there is no self and, consequently, no objective problems or reasons to suffer.

Contextualization

Ontology: Jungian and Daoist

Before diving into criticizing Jung's ontological self through the Daoist non-self, let us pin down both ontological perspectives. Ontology, can be broadly defined as the "doctrine of…being and relations of all reality" (Tympas 2013, 195). While ontology is concerned with 'what is,' (Stanley, 70) epistemology studies how we know 'what is.' So, what is Daoism's, or better, Laozi's and Zhuangzi's ontological reality? Fried (2012) explains that when it comes to ontology "the position of Zhuangzi is…very close to [that of] Laozi" (430). Both authors, he continues, "ultimately present similar philosophical problems regarding the ontology of dao" (421).

As we are about to see, not even ontology escapes the paradoxical rationality of the Daoists. "The *Daodejing* is a text which announces, for the first time in its tradition, a concept which it also simultaneously brackets" (Fried, 426; italics added). In fact, as a signifier, the term Dao is radically empty and nothing imaginable permits connecting anything to its signified (427). Consequently, although being and non-being might be regarded as components of Dao, Dao itself "cannot be thought of as being, nor can it be thought of as nonbeing" (Zhuangzi in Fried, 432), and we are totally unable to determine if Dao *is* or *is not* (433). In reality, Laozi and Zhuangzi defend epistemological impossibility, the only alternative being that knowledge of Dao is possible via non-knowledge. Zhuangzi, as I have cited before, writes: "Between this being and nonbeing, I don't really know which is being and which is non-being" (in Watson 2013, 13); and a few paragraphs ahead expands that point by asking: "What way do I have of knowing that if I say I know something I don't really know it? Or what way do I have of knowing that if I say I don't know something I don't really in fact know it?" (in Watson 2013, 14-5). Thus, it is even impossible to say wether Dao "has an ontological status" (Fried, 425) or not, and, as Fried notes,

this intersects with the inadequacy and limits of language (432), which are frequently underscored by the Daoists.

Being this the Daoist non-stance on ontology, it is perplexing to me, how Jung simply jumped to term his analogous concept to the Dao in such a reminiscent way of being. Jung's resistance, and negation even, of metaphysics within his theory is by now familiar to us. But, as Whitney (2017) argues, "Jung' s metaphysics are actually hidden" (24). She ascertains that concepts like the collective unconscious, the ego, and the unconscious are undeniably metaphysical in nature (17, 22, 24). "For Jung the unconscious is more than the unknown psychical, it is ontically real" (22), and "is directly related to how he views the Creator, creation, and our being" (24), she says. In my opinion, however, this is most true about Jung's concept of the self, which, like *an ungraspable, but approachable entity*, is both, metaphysically and ontically real. Although ultimately 'unknowable' like the Dao, the self, for Jung, is something existent. So, here, he departs from Laozi and Zhuangzi, who, in line with Patañjali[36], would sustain that absolutely "all contents [and that particularly includes the self] must be removed from the horizon of awareness for ontic reality to be known" (25).

The concept of ontological security, nevertheless, seems to be relevant in Jung's ontological scheme, especially concerning the status of the ego. Giddens (1993) defines ontological security as the "confidence' that certain systems, such as physical order and social norms, provide to individuals as well as to the feelings from and towards others, which generate self-identity in 'continuity' with the individuals' environments" (in Tympas 2013, 200). In this way, ontological security offers "continuity and trust in the external world, grounded in the feeling of security in

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[36] Complier of the Yoga Sutras, the founding text of Yoga and one of the most influential of Hindu philosophy. Patañjali "is thought to have lived around the second to fifth century of the current era" (Whitney 2017, 18).

the social order" (Giddens in Tympas 2013, 200-1). Perhaps this is something that could be considered as an advantage of Jung's ontology, for the idea of a continuous and stable identity has become essential to understand our relatedness and place in the world. It is likely that without ontological security or an appropriate mystical frame to organize our experience, we would be leaning towards the psychotic side. Yet, although the notion of a Jungian egoic identity might be useful toward a sense of ontological security, it is diverting of the hypothetical goal of individuation and 'ontic reality' as conceived by the Daoists. As long as Jung conforms with a view linking ontology and being, his posture will remain irreconcilable with the Daoists'. And, of course, this is not something peripheral to them, for the realization of the ontological indeterminacy that resembles Dao is the first and last of the Daoist sage's defining features.

On this note, it is important to add that while it is impossible to affirm that Dao is or is not, because it is both and neither, one thing remains certain: that the epistemological approach to Dao is necessarily through non-being or the non-self. So is it, since Dao, like "Non-Existence"— not as potentiality, but according to Zhuangzi's appreciation of the second level of *wu*— "is neither there nor not-there" (Fried, 432). Criticizing Jung's theory, Welwood explains that "awakening is not additive, in the sense of unconscious contents breaking through into consciousness, but if anything, *subtractive*, in that it *removes* fixations with any particular contents" (19; italics added). It is in this context that, as it has been mentioned, "the realisation of negativity is crucial to reveal ultimate Reality" (Abe, 191) and escape the illusion of being and its solidity. As Laozi spells out: "Not-being, we may contemplate [Dao's metaphorical] essence. Being, we just see its appearance" (Tse, 11).

No Self, No Problem

For the Daoists, "in terms of Ultimate Reality there is no self" (Beshara 2016, 85). From the perspective that I have been approaching the issue, a tentative conclusion would be that having dissolved the self, or sense of "I" (*wo*) there would be no (subjective) difficulties. For problems or suffering to be meaningful, or even effective, they necessitate the platform of being and the self. Without them, worries have nowhere to act. This is how many traditions have referred to the liberation or dissolution of the ego/self as the decisive step towards liberation. In a Daoist perspective, the abandonment of the own person is the requirement for perfect equanimity, which is the only comprehensive antidote for suffering. Zhuangzi implies this idea as he states: "To suffer no harm whether or not you succeed—only the man who has virtue can do that" (in Watson, 26).

Jung was also concerned with suffering. He writes that "when Freud coined the phrase that the ego was 'the true seat of anxiety,' he was giving voice to a very true and profound intuition" (Jung 1978b, 71). And in fact, Jung describes his own task as "the treatment of psychic suffering" (209). Expanding on the analytical conception of suffering and its relation to the ego, Edinger explains: "Each one of us at night returns to that original wholeness out of which we were born. And this is healing. It is as though the wounding influence is not active. This indicates that consciousness itself is the wound-producer" (25). Hence, there is no doubt that Jungian psychology is aware that the ego's absence can be healing. Of course, as analytical theorists, they say this about the ego and not the self; concepts which, in their view, require ontological distinction. But, as Ho notes, Western ideas of the self tend to conceive the self as something personal, individual and ownable (127-8). And this is exactly the case of analytical theory, which not only regards the *imago Dei* as a subjective entity, but exclusively makes 'the self' meaningful

as it relates to 'the ego.' Thus, when Jung speaks of the disappearance of egohood as individuation's utopic goal (Jung 1978b, 154), he is ignoring the fact that, taken seriously, that would also mean the disappearance of the self, because the self exists purely in relation to the ego. Also, relying on the dialectical thinking that he praised, we reach the same conclusion; for, as opposites, ego and self are, at last, interdependent and united. I will develop on this right in the next section. But now, I shall continue saying that, as far as I am aware, Jung did not often use the term of equanimity. Nonetheless, like Laozi and Zhuangzi, he, as well, had an understanding linking the letting go of one's own will and "ego" with (psychological) healing. As evidence for this, we have him citing an account of one of his patients:

> Recently I received a letter from a former patient which describes the necessary transformation in simple but trenchant words. She writes: Out of evil [or the negative pole], much good has come to me. By keeping quiet, repressing nothing, remaining attentive, and by accepting reality—taking things as they are, and not as I wanted them to be—by doing all this, unusual knowledge has come to me, and unusual powers as well… now I intend to play the game of life, being receptive to whatever comes to me, good and bad, sun and shadow forever alternating, and, in this way, also accepting my own nature with its positive and negative sides. Thus everything becomes more alive to me. What a fool I was! How I tried to force everything to go according to the way I thought it ought to! (Jung 1978b, 49-50)

First, this quotation reveals that 'equanimity' was indeed valued by Jung. Second, that analytical therapy might be uplifting of individuals' spiritual processes. Third, that though this passage could be telling of a progression towards the self or Dao, Jung's patient is still evaluating this experience from a self and ego-centred perspective—how it benefits her personally—and does not necessarily demonstrate that the Jungian method is more evocative of negative self-cultivation than what it reifies the self. Finally, the account presents a new opportunity to question if what this patient might be approaching does not seem more like a 'non-self' than a 'self.'

In line with these points, it is striking that in Jung's early career—more specifically in the booklet he called *Seven Sermons to the Dead*—Jung theorized about the pleroma, a metaphysical gnostic

concept that is equated with Dao inasmuch as it is a "nothingness or fullness" and "nothingness is the same as fullness" (379). "Therein" the pleroma, he writes, "both thinking and being cease" (379). Yet, not even in exploring these concepts, he was able to grasp Daoist non-ontology, for he maintained that, as creatura, "we are from the pleroma infinitely removed; not spiritually or temporally, but essentially" (379). Further, our "being, is distinctiveness. Therefore not after difference, as ye think it, must ye strive; but after *your own being*" (Jung 1989a, 381-2). Like this, the pleroma remains impenetrable for the individual (Stein, 25). Naturally, it cannot be expected to take the individual to the place where everything dissolves and save herself from dissolution. Thus, because for Jung the pleroma always prevails as foreign to creatura and the "coming to terms with the unconscious is never-ending; a full mediation never takes place and suffering must remain part of the human condition" (Whitney 2017, 25). Following this line of thought, we can determine that Jung is unable to definitively treat suffering—exactly what an (impossible) ideologically neutral psychology should be cable of doing—and the solution he came up with turned out insufficient.

Jung intuitively knew that Eastern practices and philosophies were more equipped to effectively deal with the problem of suffering. He considered that *The Secret of the Golden Flower,* could "teach the pupil how to free…herself from inner or outer bondage" (Coward 1996, 488), and that "through meditation…the [D]ao begins to take leadership" (Coward 1996, 487). It is a shame that Jung insisted in fitting within the scientific standards and empiricism of his time; and also, in his demand of developing *our own* Western ways, when there were already available and thought-through systems.

For several of the major philosophical schools of the East it is unquestionable that "the more solidly we grasp our identity, the more solid our problems become" (Kornfield n.d., 6). The "state

of want" Moeller (2007) explains, "is the cause of war, social disorder, and strife" (110). Or, as Zhuangzi puts it, "all the troubles of human life arise from an obsessive sense of 'I'" (in P. Li, 206). In the following quotation, Schipke refers solely to ego-centeredness, but since for me it is indistinguishable from self-centredness, I would say that one way or the other, they are "the default human state…whereby one has an incorrect notion of who or what one is, because of ignorance" (12). It is possible, nonetheless, to realign our perception and (in the fashion of non-action) not-produce an "epistemic shift" whereby we come to see the world and ourselves as they truly are (12). When we take things and ourselves for what they appear, instead of what they are (not), "we are [un]able to be at rest" (Whitney 2015, 53). Having reached this point, I find worthwhile to echo Whitney's question: "If we are able to perceive the world both dualistically and nondualistically, through which lens does it feel most comfortable in our lived experience…? Where can we find rest, harmony, joy and peace?" (57-8). My phenomenological experience concurs with what I think would be the Lao-Zhuang stance: If the Jungian self has any relation to the "I," and therefore dualisms persists, there is no way to eradicate suffering (Welwood, 6) or to attain "knowledge of ontic reality" (Whitney 2015, 47). "Appropriation is what…creates the subject/object dichotomy" (Whitney 2017, 20), and such dichotomy is the root of human suffering. Hence the importance of uniting opposites, and, above all, ontological opposites.

Dialectics of the Self

Dialectics have claimed their very own terrain throughout the history of philosophy. While in the East, Daoism might be one of its most committed exponents, in the West, figures like Heraclitus, Hegel and Nicholas of Cusa have, as well, decidedly challenged linear and one-sided rationality. Through the analysis of perceptible oppositions, Laozi, Zhuangzi and Heraclitus, arrived at

similar conclusions regarding the dynamic of the universe, such as the transience of all phenomena and equivalence of ontological opposites. Perhaps one of the most important Daoist documents arguing in this direction is Zhuangzi's *Discussion on Making All Things Equal*, in which—among others—the ability of seeing all things and opposites as equal is linked to selflessness and the apprehension of the process of change (*sheng*).

As we have seen, Jung himself "prescribes Heraclitus' *enantiodromia* in *Two Essays* [*of Analytical Psychology*] and the Dao in the *Commentary* [*on the Secret of the Golden Flower*, as notions that] denote a regulative functioning of the opposites integrated in one whole [and evoke the] ideal state of existence" (Zhu, 501; italics added). Simultaneously, the concepts of *enantiodromia* and Dao, imply that, in time, everything turns into its opposite (Ventimiglia, 16). In spite of this, Jung's system prevailed unexpectedly dualistic, revealing his theory's incapacity to reconcile concepts that act as ontological opposites, let alone equate them. On this note, Welwood maintains that "nondualistic experience is simply not understandable by a theory of the unconscious based on dualistic assumptions" (4) and that "the inherent assumptions of the conceptual model of the psyche that [Jung] was working with never allowed him to completely overcome its dualistic limitations" (3). Jung's dualism is clearly reinscribed in the ego-self relationship, the conscious/unconscious divide (Whitney 2017, 22) and their subject/object interplay (Whitney 2015, 55). Dualistic understandings of the world, as Beshara (2016) indicates, can even have serious ethic-material repercussions, since for harming 'other' there must be a subsisting idea of *my* existence as a separate self (73). Thus, in order to have been coherent with the "spiritual" aspirations of individuation—which, of course, would include a spontaneous (*ziran*) ethical behaviour—and his own dialectical propositions, Jung would have had to support his theory *at least* on a monist metaphysic. As Zhuangzi teaches: "Those who divide fail to

divide; those who discriminate fail to discriminate…The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among them…So I say, those who discriminate fail to see" (in Watson, 13-4).

Ego and Self

Dualism does not run low within analytical theory. However, the "irreconcilable" sets of opposites that it posits can be brought together through an analysis of the contradictions implied in the insistence to maintain those dualisms or through systems and rationalities that Jung admired. Regarding the ego and the self, it is possible to begin catching sight of their interdependence when Jung states that "the ego needs of the self and vice versa" (Jung in Coward 1985, 164). According to Welwood, it was Jung's determination of working with the concept of the unconscious what obliged him hypothesizing a counteracting ego (6). The interdependency between ego and self is pushed further when Jung speaks of "egocentrism of consciousness [as] a reflection...of the 'self'-centrism of the unconscious" (Jung 1989b, 463). Here, it is clear that both concepts coincide in their self-centredness. And being one the reflection of the other, where does one begin and the other end? Or, if the unconscious is self-unconscious, how does self-centrism operate without an ego? As I see it, the fact that the self "requires a reflecting human consciousness to discover its own nature" (Whitney 2017, 22) means that the self's self-centredness derives in, and *is*, egocentrism at its best. Thus, that the analytical self is self-centred and relies on ego-consciousness, suggests that in Jungian psychology there is no ego- nor self-transcendence, and the self becomes "reified as a stagnant thing, an entity above" (Asher, 10). Being stagnant, it is incapable of fully turning into the ego, and then on into the self, contradicting the reality of the process of change—with which the Daoists fully comply—and that the opposites turn into each other, like the spinning symbol of *yin* and *yang* depicts.

Edinger, the analytical psychologist and theorist, confesses that the opposition "between ego and Self…contradicts [the] definition of Self [and that] considering ego and Self as two separate entities is merely a necessary rational device" (6). Undoubtedly, this relates to the ineffability of the Dao. That the self is a contradicting concept, and that its distinction from the ego—like with God—is purely conceptual, is fundamental to understand that, past rationality, the ego is the self and the self, the ego. Consciously, we think we are the ego; consciously *and* unconsciously 'we are' the self (Beshara 2016, 84). But in reality, and like Dao, conscious or unconscious, both or neither, we are not divided: *we are one.*

The Conscious and the Unconscious

As Shamdasani (2003) remarks, Michel Henry defended the claim that the arising of the unconscious in Western thought was "simultaneous…with and as the exact consequence of the concept of consciousness" (in Whitney, 2017, 24). Hence, the author establishes an interdependence, like the one of ego and self, between the conscious and unconscious. This dichotomy can be read more directly in the light of the discussed interaction between being and non-being in Daoism. Echoing that relationship, and taking the unconscious as a non-being with potential, Laozi would argue that mental objects are generated from consciousness and consciousness is generated from the unconscious (see Laozi in Moeller 2007, 97). We are familiar with Jung's prescription of the integration of emerging 'objects' or contents from the unconscious into consciousness. While the suggested approach in analytical psychology implies a critical 'analysis,' presupposing an act of dividing and tearing apart, Daoists, like Laozi and Zhuangzi, in line with Buddhist meditation practices, would recommend a detached observation that, by not reacting and, thus, resembling non-action, unites the observer in contemplation with

the observed object while it lasts. Though a specific content from the unconscious differs from the unconscious itself, with the Daoist method "the seer becomes the seeing and the seeing becomes the seen" (Hora 1962, 87 in Welwood, 19). In that 'seeing,' subject and object, the conscious and the unconscious coalesce.

So, instead of having an advancement towards the unconscious, characterised by a subject/object distinction, *the meditator or Daoist sage realizes Jung's unrealizable union of opposites*, fusing and transcending 'consciousness' and 'the unconscious content' by noting the emerging object's instability and constant change. Maintaining the undivided state between consciousness and the arising element—or elements—from the unconscious, "phenomenal consciousness comes to rest" (Patañjali in Whitney 2015, 49) and the ego attains momentary unity with the self. Like Laozi's non-being, which is not simply the absence of being, the unconscious, is not merely the absence of, or an authentic opposition to consciousness. Fundamentally, it is a veil of ignorance that does not permit living in non-duality (Whitney 2015, 53). Thus, the unconscious is as ethereal as ignorance and its undermining necessary to perceive its fundamental unity with consciousness. The invisible (or the unconscious) exists only insofar as it becomes somehow visible or is contrasted or enabled to engage with consciousness. Furthermore, by inserting time into the equation, we would see how the unconscious is always advancing towards consciousness and consciousness towards the unconscious. The same idea in Daoist language, would read: the highest knowledge is non-knowledge; and that, we know, is only achievable by the non-self.

Self and Non-self

I will begin bringing together the 'duality' of self and non-self by repeating Zhuangzi's question: "How do we know that this 'I' that we talk about has any 'I' to it?" (in Watson, 51). Leaving

aside the latent epistemological problem, the question that Zhuangzi poses is: Where is the being

of being? Or where is the 'I' of the 'I'? What the philosopher ponders can be used—employing

the postmodern lexicon—to denaturalize the truth regime holding us as subjects in general

(socially) and in specific (individually). Such denaturalization is anticipated since, as it has been

said, the dissolution of the self is the ultimate spiritual step; what gives way to Jung's union of

opposites, and the Daoist non-knowledge regarding (the own) 'existence.' In short, it is what

permits the attainment of objectivity, as without self, there is no subject position to perceive,

understand or judge. Like this, the Daoist sage comes closer to Dao's objective and universal

perspective, and not only in regard to himself but also concerning 'outer' reality. Beyerle and

Beyerle express this idea with analytical overtones, claiming that in the imaginary realization of

"the Self, the initiate becomes one with spirit. Not only does the initiate experience Self as spirit,

but Self as universe. In this way the initiate experiences the spirit hidden (though openly) within

matter, that is, the cognition of wholeness" (86). Similarly, for Zhuangzi the 'I' of the 'I' is in its

opposite: the non-'I' or the non-self. And that is because he, and Laozi as well, would stand firm

arguing against the 'itness' of the 'I' or the self. Because things are originated in its contrary, like

being in non-being, for them, there is no such thing like an 'essence' of self. On this note,

Beshara (2016) affirms: "The Self is Made Only of Non-Self Elements" (82), and Ho confirms:

"The price of realizing true selfhood is the total loss of individual identity" (126).

This idea was familiar to Jung, among others, through Gerhard Dorn, one of his alchemy sources.

The name he gives to the transcendental principle that denotes a state of freedom from the

opposites is *substantia coelestis*, and, as we could guess, is evocative of the Jungian concept of

the self and Dao (499). However, as it should be expected by what has been argued so far, even if

Jung conceived the union of opposites as "the original state of the cosmos," he simultaneously

held it as "the divine unconsciousness of the world" (463). Hence, because Dorn's *substantia coelestis* is "the Western equivalent of the fundamental principle of classical Chinese philosophy, namely the union of *yang* and *yin* in *[d]ao*" (Jung 1989b, 464), we can infer that in Jung's eyes, Dao, too was unconscious. Nevertheless, Jung did have clear that in the self or the *substantia coelestis,* "the opposites cancel out" (Jung 1993, 25), leaving us with what could be the original Daoist non-being, out of which everything springs.

It is vital, however, to make explicit the distinction between the Jungian and Lao-Zhuang conception of the self, because evidently, they are not the same. While the Daoist self resembles being and relates to individuality and 'egoic' existence, for Jung the self is a metaphysical concept—yet demonstrable through its empirical (symbolical) emanations—that pretends to be analogous to Dao. So, whereas the self in the Dao takes the part of *yang* and therefore composes only 'half' of the figure, *for Jung the self is the encompassing totality*. Nonetheless, as I have considered a couple sections above, the contrasting relationship that the ego sustains with the self in Jung's model is intimate enough to posit the interdependency between the two entities, and allow the ego to blend with, and take over the self—or conversely, it does not really matter— reducing both concepts to 'being.' For Jung, the most profound layer of the unconscious will always be unconscious, and, in this light, Zhuangzi's first level of non-being would be read as mere potentiality towards being (or emergence in consciousness) while the second level *is simply not*. So, my present point is that in spite of the conceptual discrepancies for these authors in relation to their usage of the notion of self, in both cases, the concept is prone to be opposed to something else, conducing to its interdependency, and ultimate equivalence with that something. This occurs insofar as the Jungian and Daoist notions of self are parts of something that conforms

a larger unity[37] and synthesizes them with their opponents. But with Dao, as we revised, its mystique goes beyond a simple problem of unutterability and, after all, it is one of ontological indeterminacy. Thus, as long as Jung's concept of the self remains something unknowable but contrastable and determinate, it will belong *within* the realm of objects, contents and transience, and hence, will be subject to Dao's dynamic, inclined to being incorporated by its opposite or opposites—as the ego is not the self's exclusive counterpart. The non-self can, as well, and perhaps more symmetrically, contrast with the self. From this, we gather that the same concept or entity can belong to different pairs of oppositions.

The goal of individuation as the realization of the self would likely be understood by Laozi as a "great completion" that "resembles vacancy and in its use it is not worn out" (109). Yet, it is because the Daoist sage "has no self-interest…that he can bring his self-interest to completion" (Laozi in Moeller 2007). Thus, I wonder, if the self is the driving force of the subject of a Jungian analysis, and consequently, the process is full with self-interest, at least as long as the attainment of individuation is a personal achievement, how is she expected to complete, or even get closer to individuation? Daoistst philosophy, we know, advises "to gain by loss" (Moeller 2007, 101); so getting closer to Jung's self would only be possible through the diminshment of self-interest and negative self-cultivation.

So far, I have tried to argue that the self comes from the non-self. But the other face of the dialectic process is also true, for the non-self has its origin in the self as well (reference to Lao Tzu in Henricks, 77). As Whitney (2015) indicates, "it may be that we have to know what we are not in order to know what we are" (52). Or in Jung's (1978a) words: "if a man does not know

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[37] This is true of the Jungian self when that concept is analysed externally, from a different, truly dialectical system, and is made evident insofar as a supposed totality like the self would be unrivalled to the ego or anything else. The obvious, larger unity to which the analytical self would pertain is the ego-self complex.

what a thing is, it is at least an increase in knowledge if he knows what it is not" (269). It is

because of this that the human non-self is only realizable 'after' a 'previous' existence as a self.

Evidently, analytical theory grasps this in the sense that the individuation process promotes a

solidification of the "ego" before starting to work towards its fusing with the self. Hence, the

mutual interdependency of self and non-self turns them into one single way (Zhuangzi in Watson,

196). Like Seidel, Strickmann and T. Ames put it, "Nothing and something…are two aspects of

the constant Dao," and, as dynamic aspects that seek always after, turn always into, and *are,* thus,

their contraries, they lack reality of their own. Therefore, when opposites like self and non-self

are seen in the context of the larger whole to which they pertain—e.g. the Dao—they become

mere insubstantial *aspects* of that (indeterminate) whole and their differences grow irrelevant. As

mentioned in the section dealing with the Daoist sage, it is the emptiness of determinate opposites

(objects or conceptualizations) that he contemplates, and the understanding from such

contemplation what initiates his ability of equanimity or accepting "whatever happens in life

without being attached to any value judgement" (P. Li, 214). So, it is because of his more

objective perspective that takes being as non-being, self as non-self, and vice versa, that he has no

inclinations or preferences for one or the other whatsoever. These are also the dynamics behind

the sage's and Zhuangzi's craft of *Making all Things Equal*. According to Zhuangzi, the sage:

> Recognizes a "this" but a "this" that is also "that," a "that" that is also "this." His "that" has both right and wrong in it; his "this," too, has both a right and a wrong. So, in fact, does he still have a "this" and a "that"? Or does he, in fact, no longer have a "this" and a "that"? A state in which "this" and "that" no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. (in Watson 2013, 10)

Thus, since after all, "this" is "that" and "that" is "this," "*things even out"* (P. Li, 214; italics in

the original), and none is unadulterated or even 'is.' The hinge of the way is, precisely, the

referred state of equanimity, which simultaneously is a more profound and trustworthy way of

seeing, considering Dao's relativity and indeterminacy. As Jung suggested, the circle is an

appropriate symbol to represent the unity of opposites, and thus, the cyclic nature of the universe, as its dynamics occur and reproduce, spiralling at different levels, over and over. This is to say, that once the Daoist sage finds himself in perfect equanimity and unity with Dao's indeterminate perspective, that is not equal to nothingness or indifference, which has been misunderstood and criticized. In that state, and in coherence with it, the Daoist sage (not) knows that the indeterminacy that he sees as closer to *truth*, exists in its indeterminacy and that—because of its dynamism—"what doesn't exist exists" (Zhuangzi in Watson, 9). It is not simply that because something is indeterminate it does not exist. In fact, a Daoist may say that the only thing that really "exists" is the indeterminate Dao. To claim "that what doesn't exist exists" is, in Zhuangzi's view, one of the highest claims a sage can make, and not a claim every sage can understand (9).

Interestingly, there is a link between the Daoist sage's understanding of the universe and his ontological perception with the choices he makes, the way he behaves, and lives. This ontoethical link is illustrated in that being selfless and acknowledging the indeterminacy of things, his "self" (this), and others (that), he is able to "think of others as 'I'" (Ho, 131). In that sense, the absence of the obstacle that the partial sense of self (*wo*) is, guarantees a spontaneous (*ziran*) acting (120); and hence, non-action. Yet, it is also fair to make explicit the relationship between the Daoist sage's ontological perception and his nihilistic, epistemological posture, which is summed up in the tenet of non-knowledge. As Moeller (2006a) notes, against the humanist stream, Daoist philosophers "were not so much concerned with profound thoughts and deep *meanings*—they were rather experts in how to avoid these philosophical pitfalls" (Moeller 2006a, viii; italics added). The avoidance of those matters is precisely a consequence of their philosophical stance, for they know that, at last, nothing true can be said, thought or known. In relation to the self and

non-self, Laozi and Zhuangzi would agree with Thích Nhất Hạnh's[38] view, that the formulation of 'to be or not to be' is irrelevant, since being and non-being are solely human conceptualizations that are to be transcended to 'understand' and fuse with ultimate reality (in Beshara 2016, 86) or Dao.

In this manner, we can speak of the non-self and "the self [in the Jungian sense too] as something irrational" (Jung 1972, 240). But because they also are mere human conceptualizations arising from a dualistic perspective, when understood as polar aspects that are constituted by their opposite, the ego, the conscious and the unconscious can also be regarded as irrational. Concerning the latter, Zhu maintains that "the unconscious [like] the primordial spirit and the original face and the like are all psychic states that are non-cognizant, non-discriminative, and irrational" (506). Since Daoism sees reality as composed by reconcilable opposites, and thus, in the eyes of trans-rationality, as Feng Youlan states, "Daoist mysticism is the 'suicide' *of rationality* [and] the necessary final rational step of rationality itself" (in Moeller 2006, 22; italics in the original).

In conclusion, from a Daoist sight, the self and the non-self are (eventually) each other and conform an undifferentiated unity. In remaining balanced with each other, they are able to relate to such unity. Conversely, if one of the aspects or polarities grows disproportionately from the other, there is no balance between them and the possibility to connect with the unity to which they pertain, lost. Historically, from Ancient China, to Ancient Greece, to the European modern society which gave rise to psychology and psychoanalysis, and our present globalized, neoliberal society, the balance between the conscious and the unconscious, being and non-being, self and non-self, has been out of order, and the preference for the *yang* part of the equation, a norm. But

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[38] Vietnamese monk expert in Buddhist psychology.

historically, too, societies have witnessed the presence of wise, enlightened humans, that have realized the union and balance of opposites 'within.' Laozi and Zhuangzi, as well as Jung, coincide and are critical about the one-sidedness (and therefore narrowmindedness) of societies. The three of them advised the re-union of the opposites (Jung with his focus on making conscious the unconscious, Laozi and Zhuangzi implying the realization of the non-self) with the intention of guiding towards the 're-establishing' of the relationship with the larger unity, and universe as totality that includes us with our ultimate opposites. As long as we remain out of balance by focusing almost exclusively on consciousness or the self, our self-Dao axes[39] will be broken, and us, immersed in a psychotic state; not in the sense of being psychologically divided, but separate from the original dynamic of the universe and its truth.

In spite of the affinities that one might find between Jung and the Daoists, I have repeated that—although not evident at first sight—Jung's discomfort with paradoxical reality refrains him from posing a coherent solution to the problem of one-sidedness. For him, the non-self is a concept akin to the unconscious and to fully realize either is practically impossible because total dissolution, in the non-self or the unconscious, implies the absence of a subject who—according to him—must be capable of identifying such dissolution as an 'object' different from herself. Hence, when "looking at Jung through the lens of nonduality, wholeness appears beyond reach" (Whitney 2015, 47). In contrast with this, possibly the most important 'psychological' consequence of Daoism is psychological decentring and selflessness (Ho, 121). In this scenario, the dissolution and synthesis of the subject/object duality, and the final dissolution of the

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[39] I am aware that by using here the term 'Dao' I am relinquishing one of the most valuable strengths of Jung's self, which is the avoidance of affiliation to any specific religion, philosophy or spiritual system. Ideally, the term would be completely secular, not having such connotations. I opted for using this term, however, because *in this context*, it is the one that most simply and concretely expresses the ultimate, indeterminate, dynamic reality, which is simultaneously first cause of everything *and* everything; the great totality that all embraces without making distinctions.

distinction between self and Dao, is indeed a possibility. However, and even though it is a

difficult (and paradoxical) endeavour, the dissolved self and non-duality is, in the end, the

original, unalterable state of affairs. So, if in the context of the present project, there is any way

of consistently interpreting Jung's inability to conceive the cognoscibility of the unconscious or

emptiness, it is because realizing the non-self is to realize the already realized; because to

dissolve the self is to dissolve the never formed. It is in this sense that the dissolution of the self

can never work or be achieved. "It can never work because there is no self to get rid of!"

(Kornfield, 7).

No Self to Get Rid Of

Kornfield remarks:

> We are a changing process, not a fixed being. There never was a self—only our identification makes us
> think so. So while purification, kindness, and attention can certainly improve our habits, no amount of
> self-denial or self-torture can rid us of a self, for it was never there (7).

Although Kornfield is arguing from a Buddhist perspective, the principle of change also emerges

in Daoism with the same power to undermine ontology and the being of the self. As discussed in

the first chapter, the Daoist notion of *sheng* denotes the process of constant transformation in

which all forms and entities are engaged. When things are seen and understood as dynamic, it is

easier to grasp their insubstantiality and question their 'being.' Hence, this will be the present

section's main device to show that the processes of reification of the self works with, or around,

an empty and fluctuant phenomenon. Paradoxically, it is "the stilling of the fluctuations of the

mind [what] is imperative in order to" (Whitney 2017, 23) extinguish the *sense* of "I" (*wo*) and

perceive the fundamental absence of a self, thereby demonstrating that from a Daoist standpoint,

identity is, at last, not ontically possible. This concurrently justifies the relevance of non-action in

Daoism; which could also be defined as the stilling of the unsteady and the contemplation of what 'appears' beyond change.

That "opposites suggest…absolute polarities" (Asher, 16-7) is only true if their motion is not contemplated. And let us remember that perhaps the most practical reading of Dao, for the Daoist sage, is to take it as the "reproductive process of change" in which it simultaneously participates (Moeller 2007, 122). In great part, it is Dao's 'ontology of process' (Moeller 2006b, 125) and its continuous evolving, emptying of emptiness (Abe, 188), what gives it its indeterminacy, its primordial non-characteristic. In point of fact, Jung (1978a) acknowledges that "the self is not just a static quantity or constant form, but is also a dynamic process [and] an active force" (260). Regardless if we take the self here to be Jung's analogous concept to Dao or a synonym for 'I,' "ignorance means the inability to see that [there is no self, or that it] is empty or 'made only of non-self elements" (Hạnh 1998, 126 in Beshara 2016, 72). Since the self, as everything else, is unstable, volatile, and thus, substanceless, linking skilfulness to Zhuangzi's idea of the ultimate spiritual state, Yearley (1996) confirms that "skilful people…see and move with changes, always adapting to them, never asserting themselves against them" (172). This is so vital for the Daoist sage, because, now expressed in analytical language, and contradicting Jung's original view, "the divine Self is [actually] not a stagnant fixed entity, but rather a continuous becoming that is always adapting and adjusting to the ongoing creativity in the world" (Asher, 13).

Jung often seems to forget about the characteristic dynamic of the self, and his divine archetype becomes reified and localized hierarchically and "spatially above us" (17), eternally separated, always exercising its unconscious power upon us. Accordingly, it has the potential of underestimating and undermining the present and "temporal presence of the divine, tempting us toward abstract generalizations as opposed to openness to our concrete experiencing" (Asher,

17). So, being aware of the connection between the apprehension of transience and the development of equanimity, it stands out that Jung's concept of spirituality did not even involve the possibility of a direct, 'empirical' experience of the self, by stressing on "shifting our gaze to observe [the] conditions of becoming, in a succession of present moments which are always changing" (Stanley, 76).

Redundant as it may sound, it is equally important to affirm that if there is no self there is also no non-self. Our minds are constantly looking for something to hold on to, and it is not uncommon that people along their way towards the 'non-self,' relate to it as if it were the solid, stagnant entity above that the humanist self is, just with a different name. As a category, the non-self is helpful inasmuch as it denotes its indeterminacy. The non-self is not a thing, is not an experience, is not a goal. As soon as something is touched, there is someone touching. As soon as something is experienced, there is the subject of experience. As soon as there is an accomplished goal, there is someone to congratulate. If we think we are the ego, or we think we are the self, or the non-self, something else or nothing, in the end, we are what we are. And what we are is, like all phenomena, subject to transience and the process of change. Above the self and below the non-self, "one always remains a human being in phenomenal existence" (12). Schipke says that the final goal of the spiritual process "is not an ontological collapse into undifferentiated states of unconsciousness, as Jung maintained, but a state of enhanced clarity where egoic functioning remains intact" (Schipke, 12). As I understand the Daoist view, it is indeed a collapse into the indeterminate; but, in line with what Schipke sustains, an indeterminateness that is all-embracing, and consequently, includes the ego, the self and the determinate in its abstract and concrete forms. Also, in accord with what he writes, she, who realizes total undifferentiation, and therefore, selflessness as divine objectivity, has reached ultimate clarity and enlightenment—not

unconsciousness!—without abandoning her personality or egoic existence, but rather, seeing it as part of the dynamic, insubstantial undifferentiation that she has recognized she is. In perfect indeterminateness, too, concepts like wisdom and ignorance have no place. Thereof, the sage's capacity to see "no difference between an enlightened man and an ignorant one" (Politella 1965, 125), good and bad, death and life, and not to judge, or have preferences between them. So, again, as Graham concludes: "extinction of self does not matter since at bottom I am everything and have neither beginning nor end" (in Li, 218). Furthermore, thanks to the dynamic nature of the universe, "from the very beginning, not a single thing is" (Hui-Neng 1964, in Welwood, 21).

And if nothing *is* and extinction of self does not matter, then, what does? Daoist nihilism is well expressed by Fried when he clarifies that "the notion of how one could ultimately decide that the Lao-Zhuang dao is supposed to be ontic, or non-ontic, is not as important a philosophical point as the fact that the answer was murky, and that the murkiness did not matter" (421). Non-knowledge—not an ego full of the self-knowledge derived from formerly unconscious elements—and the suspension of "faith in [our] own ability to judge [in general, and to judge] the issue" (430) of being versus non-being is what, above all, prevails. But if the self and the non-self are both empty signifiers, mere "projections of meaning" (435), is then, the non-self as the defining feature of the Daoist sage even (something) approachable? If Dao is a way that cannot be followed, if there is nothing that can be done to get closer to Dao, that means "there is no method which assures one of being able to get at the truth" (429). And again, reading these points, it is understandable that Jung felt the self to be out of reach. But, as we reviewed, being committed to a dialectic approach and seeing the final union of (ontological) opposites as the realization of the Daoist sage, paradoxes are unavoidable along the process, along the way (Dao). Only that who finds "meaning" in meaningless non-action and for whom non-knowledge is not

discouraging, is fit to make (no) progress in the path of no path. Like the proper Daoist sage that he is, Zhuangzi "brackets his own ability to draw conclusions" (429). Instead, like Laozi, they work out this philosophy (435) in the practice of non-action and contemplating emptiness. In that way, 'they achieve' the empiricism that Jung so long sought. As Fried resolves, possibly the best that we can do, is to embrace "a sort of phenomenological approach to the conceptual world [of Daoism], accepting [our] own relatedness and indebtedness to [Dao] without feeling any need to determine what it is" (Fried, 435). Once non-knowledge is perfected, "nothing remains to be known ontically through the dualizing mind. The mind comes to rest in the silent stillness underpinning the images and forms" (Whitney 2017, 25).

Wanderer there is no way,
The way is made on the way.

Antonio Machado

(trans. from Paterson 1999, 56 in De Ros 2015, 6)

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to show how Lao-Zhuang thought, in general, and their concept of non-self, in specific, is useful in deconstructing the Jungian ontological stance and notion of the self. Nevertheless, in so doing, at least two benefits of Jung's construct were discussed. On one hand, there is the sense of ontological security that the self is capable of delivering. As examined, ontological security is fundamental to rely on the external world and establish a psychic consistency that allows to function in the external world. Without this consistency, or an appropriate mystical frame to understand and organize our experience, I said, we would be at risk of suffering a psychosis in the clinical sense. On the other hand, Jung's self introduces a valuable question, as his system points at the human difficulty of witnessing emptiness, existing in a condition of selflessness, or, what in his eyes is the same, the existence of consciousness after the dissolution of the ego. As Coward (1985, 142) and Zhu remark, Jung is veracious when seeing the hypothesis of a non-egoic, transcendental consciousness as problematic. Jung's approach introduces the problem of extension of consciousness versus clarity of detail, thereby suggesting the nebulosity of the 'higher' states of consciousness of 'Eastern philosophies' (Jung in Zhu, 506). This nebulosity, I gather, he linked to the unconscious; and overall, his perspective on these states was likely one of his arguments to attribute the character of 'unconsciousness' to his divine self. Even though I believe it is still worth to continue reflecting on this issue, this critique seems to have more validity in reference to Hinduism, yoga theory, and other philosophies describing the ultimate spiritual state in terms of consciousness. But Daoism, with its ontic undifferentiation eludes this problem. Far from proposing consciousness as the ultimate substance of the universe, Laozi and Zhuangzi suggest an indeterminateness that is neither clear nor nebulous; conscious nor unconscious. That 'substance,' 'state,' or final condition of understanding is what it is; it is

reality, and reality too complex to be expressed with human categories. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Daoism is non-humanist.

Taking up what I mentioned examining Chapter Thirty-Eight of the *Daodejing*, 'humanity' is only necessary where there is no virtue; and virtue, only necessary when one has departed from the Way (*Dao*). Extending the Daoist's critique of Confucianism to humanist ideology, and situating the analytical project within it, I conclude that Jungian theory represents, at least in what regards the ultimate spiritual realization, a barrier, in place of a sincere encouragement. Further, because for Jung the realization of definitive union is unachievable, his theory relies on dualism, making it impossible to take as 'spiritual' from a mystical perspective. The "spiritual-as-psychological" (Tympas 2013, 197) is a deceitful invention of modernity—and feasibly, Jung—that has contributed to twisting the message of the mystic, spiritual systems—like Daoism—producing a hegemony of the spiritual process as a matter of self-knowledge and self-development, contradicting the nuclear teaching of those traditions. To psychologize spirituality is to cut off spirituality of its deeper potentialities and actual 'teleology.'

So, while Jung sought to bring together psychology and religion or spirituality, this investigation has made apparent the inadequacy of (analytical) psychology to deal with the fundamental spiritual questions. In this sense, to confound psychology and spirituality can be tremendously harmful to a spiritual process. And by saying this, I by no means attempt to question psychology's usefulness in other respects. Psychological processes can indeed be deeply meaningful and 'positively' transformative for the historic subjects that we currently are. I can thankfully say this, because I have personally enjoyed the relief engendered in a psychological process. Yet, psychology is not really concerned with the 'soul,' but with modern subjects, and sometimes—due to its limitations—their *limited* 'well-being.' In this order of ideas, psychology

should be recognized as the science (or pseudoscience) that studies modern subjects (or their conducts) and, at times, seeks their 'relief;' but is incapable of providing the *elixir vitae* or definite cure for suffering. This, as long as psychologies concerned with the human in a 'deep' sense, permanently reify the self, and with it, the seat of all human suffering. Although Jung said to be concerned with "the treatment of psychic suffering" (1978b, 209), being immersed in a psychological discourse and practice of this sort, he was unable to actually treat it. So long as our understanding of the world is dualistic and the subject/object or self/other dichotomy persists, humans are bound to suffer.

> What then might be some alternative approaches to the concept of the Self? What values might more usefully inform…our ongoing relational interactions with others in a variety of settings? Is there a more constructive approach available to us and, if so, what are some of the main outlines of its emphasis? (Asher, 10)

Contrary to Jung's idea of a stagnant, abstract, existent and always superior self, *sheng* and process ontology are essential to tackle suffering with more success. As reviewed, non-action is a practice that can proof helpful in apprehending the truth of transience, since by not-acting and remaining still, we can see how everything is in constant motion and transformation. And because Dao is not only empty and abstract, but in everything, and concrete as well, we can see it mutate as objects and forms do. Moreover, through non-action, we can realize non-knowledge. Being aware of Jung's trouble to imagine attaining complete knowledge of the unconscious portion of the self—"Nobody understands what the Self is, because the Self is just what you are not" (Jung in Coward 1985, 120)—non-knowledge as advised by Laozi and Zhuangzi remains an explorable alternative towards a comprehensive knowledge of Jung's primordial archetype. Because of my particular perspective, however, I would encourage an approach to non-knowledge in a non-psychological context, where the non-self remains a valid possibility. In time, non-knowledge will manifest as a transrationality capable of reconciling (ontological)

opposites and transcending dualities. The ego, the conscious and the unconscious, the self and non-self, will all be mere words, empty signifiers, inappropriate to describe the phenomenological non-self, the unity with Dao.

When Jung's ego co-opts the self, it reduces the latter to the former's narrow (one-sided) worldview and values. What Jung meant by the self, I believe, was actually its opposite: the non-self. But that was ontologically untenable for him, as he felt he had to comply with many of the modern hegemonic schemes (e.g. scientific, empiricist). And there were others, like the ideological, with which, unknowingly, he had an even deeper commitment. Proposing the self, and not the non-self, was—and still is—politically useful. Because whereas the non-self is abstract and abstruse, the self is easily interpellated and governable, valuable and tremendously profitable. Without the self, to produce producers, consumers and self-produced individuals, would be a much more challenging endeavour.

Contrariwise, *if* Dao exists as described by the Daoists, that is: indeterminate, ungraspable, unknowable, and unusable (or only knowable via non-knowledge and usable via non-action), it is likely out of reach of the human and the human interests, challenging the limits of politics and government as we know them. Moeller's (2007) reading of the *Daodejing* as a meta-political text, which expresses "a political vision of social order and a cosmology of the Dao" (xvi), makes imaginable a non-humanist (meta) politics; a social order that is not different from the cosmic. *If* Dao is a phenomenal reality, it would not be co-optable itself, it would slip from the power of cognition and the perils of making it governable. Not being true, nor false, Dao's signified could hardly work as a government device, and would hardly allow to subjugate humans in the name of any dogma, ideology or discourse. Yet, this would require going beyond the traditional model of Daoist politics, in which society is structured with the sage-ruler as the (empty) centre and the

commoners as his (full) periphery. Such structure would still be institutionalizable, politic and humane. A Daoist, meta-political order—and this is mere utopic speculation—would begin with a collective expression of the non-self, in which 'order' is instinctive, intuitive, intra, and trans-subjectively based on an unwavering unity or dissolution in Dao. This is Dao's and the Daoist non-self's political potential.

"The nonexistence of nonexistence" (Zhuangzi in Fried, 432), the home of Daoist sages, is a space free of everything, including (the neoliberalist) "freedom" and 'themselves.' They know they cannot be whoever they are told they are. They also know they cannot be whoever they might think they are. Nonetheless, for ever residing in paradox and undifferentiation, Daoist sages are "intraworldly" mystics. They have found "a reorientation of perspective that allows [them] to see and act within the world" (Yearley, 160). Because they are one with Dao, they are able to flow (*ziran*) in the world.

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