

Name: Bai Ziqiang (白自强)

Title of paper: *Xing* (性) as the Gift and Task of *De* (德): *Zhuangzi's* Integral Understanding of Human Nature as Coming from and Returning to *Dao* (道)

Abstract: Treatise on the *Zhuangzi's* understanding of human nature is hardly available in English literature. In contrast, there are not few discussions in Chinese literature attempting to unlock it, yet due to a restricted understanding of *xing* (性) in *Zhuangzi*, many discussions fail to treat what is really meant by human nature in *Zhuangzi* but appear to be carried away into the Confucian conventional debate on the moral goodness or badness of human nature. In fact, it not adequate to approach *Zhuangzi's* conception of human nature in terms of moral goodness or badness, for *Zhuangzi* does not really define human nature by referring to the moral relations among human beings. This does not mean, however, that *Zhuangzi's* understanding of human nature is not morally significant. Rather, it is morally significant in a broader and deeper sense. This becomes evident once *Zhuangzi's* understanding of human nature be approached integrally. In this paper, with the intention to pin down what is really meant by human nature according to *Zhuangzi*, I propose an integral interpretation of *xing* in terms of the dynamism of *de* against the cosmological or metaphysical structure organized around *Dao*. To proceed, I will first examine *Zhuangzi's* general conception of human nature by examining the entailments of the word *xing* found in the text, and then give a fuller picture of *Zhuangzi's* understanding of human nature by explicating *xing* as the gift and task of *de*, a dynamism that comes from and also returns to *Dao*.

Keywords: *Zhuangzi*, human nature, *xing*, *de*, *dao*.