

**Ethics in the *Zhuangzi*: The State of the Field**  
(Tentative Outline)

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**Course Description**

Whether there is any kind of ethics in the *Zhuangzi*, let alone a plausible one, has long been in dispute. However, in the last a few decades, a significant number of studies of the Zhuangzian ethics has appeared not only in the form of journal articles and book chapters but also as monographs, especially in the English speaking world. While they have all tried to explore the potentials of Daoist ethics in the text, their approaches are very different. In this course, we will study most of these studies of the Zhuangzian ethics published in English, paying attention to both the accuracy of their interpretations of the original text of the *Zhuangzi* and the significance, or the lack thereof, of the Daoist ethics they have presented.

**A Special Note**

While not required, students taking this course, especially those whose term papers are of high promise will be invited to spend some extra time, after the semester is over, to revise, possibly for multiple times, their term papers in light of the comments made by the instructor of this course, with an eye toward the eventual publication. To each of those papers that are deemed publishable, the author of the book under discussion will be invited to write a response. Then a workshop will be held, at which each student will present his/her paper, to be responded to by the scholar whose interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* is discussed in the paper. These papers, together with responses by authors whose works are discussed, will be arranged for publication in an edited volume, by a decent publisher, tentatively under the title of this course.

So this course follows the same model of the graduate seminar this instructor held a couple of years ago, “Confucian Political Philosophy: The State of the Field.” Following a workshop held at CUHK, a book consisting of students’ papers and responses by discussed scholars is under contract with and will be published by Springer.

**Course Requirements:**

- (1) Each student should attend at each of the weekly sessions and actively participate at the classroom discussion, well prepared, with assigned readings read in advance. Frequent absence and tardiness are not tolerated (25%);
- (2) Each student should choose one book/set of papers from the list below to prepare a report to be presented at one of the weekly sessions. The report should be comprehensive, covering the main if not all aspects of the book/set of papers. In addition, at least one week before their presentation, the student should select a couple of chapters/papers (30-50 pages) of the book for other members of the seminars to read (25%);
- (3) Each student should write a critical essay as the term paper. The paper should engage one or two related aspects of the book/set of papers he/she presented in class in substantive details, the aspect(s) he/she thinks is (are) significant and yet are not adequately treated in

the book. The paper should start with a presentation of the view of the book on the issue(s) as charitably as possible; explain why he/she find the view problematic; develop his/her own alternative view; and finally defend such a view (50%).

*Final Paper Due Date: May 2, midnight, 2021* (Late submission within a week is accepted with a letter grade discount, i.e., an original A- will become B-; no submission is accepted after a week past the due date. Please submit both a hard copy and a soft copy, to ensure that your submission reaches me. If you choose to email your paper only, then you are responsible if it does not reach me for whatever reasons.)

### **Schedule of Classes**

One week each will be devoted to one interpreter of the Zhuangzian ethics in the list below (not necessarily in this order). Each week will start with a student's presentation, followed by open discussions among seminar members and concluded by the instructor's comments. Depending actual number of students in the seminar, the first a few weeks may be devoted to the text of the Zhuangzi itself.

### **Texts of the *Zhuangzi***

Chinese Text: 《莊子集釋》，郭慶藩撰、王孝魚點校。北京：中華書局。

English translation 1: *Zhuangzi: The Complete Writings*, trans. Brook Ziporyn. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2020

English translation 2: *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*. Trans. Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

The Chinese-English Bilingual Edition: *Zhuangzi*. Library of Chinese Classics. Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, and Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999.

### **Studies of Ethics in the *Zhuangzi* in the English (Choose One from the below to Present at Class)**

Chong, Kim-Chong. 2016. *Zhuangzi's Critique of the Confucians: Blinded by the Human*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Coutinho, Steve. 2004. *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2014. *An Introduction to Daoist Philosophies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fraser, Chris. 2006. "Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and the Paradoxical Nature of Education." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*: 529-542.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2008. "Psychological Emptiness in the *Zhuangzi*." *Asian Philosophy* 18: 123-147.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Skepticism and Value in the *Zhuangzi*." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 49: 439-457.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Emotion and Agency in *Zhuangzi*." *Asian Philosophy* 21: 97-121.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2012. "The Limitations of Ritual Propriety: Ritual and Language in *Xunzi* and *Zhuangzi*." *Sophia* 51: 257-282.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2013 "Xunzi and Zhuangzi: Two Approaches to Death in Classical Chinese Thought." *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 8: 410-427.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2014. "Wandering the Way: A Eudaimonistic Approach to the *Zhuangzi*." *Dao* 13: 541-565.

Hansen, Chad. 1982. "A Tao of Tao in Chuang-tzu."

\_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2003a. "Guru or Skeptic?: Relativistic Skepticism in the *Zhuangzi*." In *Hiding the World in the World: Uneven Discourses on the Zhuangzi*. SUNY Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. 2003b. "A Relatively Happy Fish"
- Huang, Yong. 2005. A Copper Rule versus the Golden Rule: A Daoist-Confucian Proposals for Global Ethics." *Philosophy East & West* 55. 3: 394-425.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010a. "The Ethics of Difference in the *Zhuangzi*." *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 78: 65-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010b. "Respecting Different Ways of Life: A Daoist Ethics of Virtue in the *Zhuangzi*." *Journal of Asian Studies* 69: 1049-1069.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2014. "Toward a Benign Moral Relativism: From Agent/Critics-Centered to the Patient-Centered," in *Moral Relativism and Chinese Philosophy: David Wong and His Critics*, edited by Yang Xiao and Yong Huang, State University of New York Press, 149-181.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015. "Respect for Difference: The Daoist Virtue." In *Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. Michael Slote and Lorraine Besser-Jones.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2018. "Patient Moral Relativism in the *Zhuangzi*." *Philosophia* 46: 877-894.
- Ivanhoe, Philip. 1993. "Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable Dao." *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 61: 639-654.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. "Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?" In Paul Kjellberg and P.J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Karen Carr. 2000. *The Sense of Anti-rationalism: The Religious Thought of Zhuangzi and Kierkegaard*. New York: Seven Bridges Press.
- Lee, Jung H. 2014. *The Ethical Foundations of Early Daoism: Zhuangzi's Unique Moral Vision*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mollgaard, Eske. 2007. *An Introduction to Daoist Thought: Action, Language, and Ethics in Zhuangzi*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moeller, Hans-Georg. 2009. *The Moral Fool*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Paul D'Ambrosio. 2017. *Genuine Pretending: On the Philosophy of the Zhuangzi*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wong, David. 2005. "Zhuangzi and the Obsession with Being Right." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 22.2: 91-107
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *Natural Morality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Identifying with Nature in Early Daoism." *Journal of Philosophy* 36.4: 568-584.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Complexity and Simplicity in Aristotle and Early Daoist Thought." In *How Should One Live: Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity*, eds by Dennis Schilling and Richard King.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2017. "Constructive Skepticism and Being a Mirror in the *Zhuangzi*." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 44: 53-70.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2020. "Hiding the World in the World: A Case for Cosmopolitanism Based in the *Zhuangzi*." In *Philosophies of Place: An Intercultural Conversation*, eds. Roger Ames and Peter Hershock. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.