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**THE ACTIVE INFLUENCE OF TAOISM ON GERMAN LITERATURE
AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

A Dissertation in German

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the influence of Taoism on modern German literature following its introduction to Germany during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this study, I define this influence as the “active influence”, a concept inspired by Zhang Chunjie’s notion of Transculturality. This perspective stands in contrast to the passive influence discussed in Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism.

The dissertation begins by examining the impact of Taoism on the evolving perception of China within German intellectual history. It then delves into the unique position of Taoism within the field of German Orientalist studies. Finally, the dissertation analyzes the works of Hermann Hesse, Alfred Döblin, Bertolt Brecht, and Willy Tonn, exploring their individual interpretations of Taoism, the diverse approaches they employ in their own literary creations, and the various themes they address. It argues that their engagement with Taoism remains untainted by colonialism, imperialism, or Sinophobic biases. Furthermore, the study reveals that Taoism offered potential solutions to the challenges faced by these writers, thus validating the notion of active Taoist influence.

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Introduction

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Taoism received the attention of a number of German sinologists, philosophers, and writers. These scholars began their studies of Taoism nearly concurrently. Despite the several-decade time gaps between some of them, this confluence of interest can be perceived as a singular juncture within the historical timeline of Germany's centuries-long exploration of China. This thesis aims to examine this unique phenomenon from a non-Saidian orientalist perspective and to argue that these writers who studied Taoist philosophical thought did not have a colonial hegemonic intention based on knowledge of the Orient. Instead, their objective was to unearth wisdom within Taoism to address their individual quandaries. This, in turn, highlights the "active influence" that Taoism exerted on German literature during this specific era.

The systematic understanding of Chinese society, politics, culture, and philosophy by Europeans began with the arrival of the early Jesuits in China give dates. They came to China with the purpose of promoting the Christian faith and the Gospel. Their journey in China was by no means as superficial as a summer vacation trip: many of them lived in China for years, studied Chinese language, and even held official positions in the imperial court. Some of them never returned to the European homeland for the rest of their lives and were buried in the capital of the empire after their deaths, such as Matteo Ricci. Based on such experiences, they could understand many aspects of Chinese society in greater depth than earlier merchants and explorers, such as Marco Polo, and pass their knowledge back to Europe in the form of letters or journals. Most of the knowledge about China in early Europe came from them. One of the initial instances of European exposure to Chinese philosophical ideas was through the lens of Confucianism. The scholarly discussion of the Confucian school by Sinologists and Orientalists

lasted for a long time in Europe and dominated almost all the discussions about Chinese philosophy. The situation of early Sinology was much the same in Germany, where the German Romantics never discovered Taoist thought.

It was not until the end of the 19th century that Taoist thought was introduced into Germany and became known to scholars. As a newly introduced Chinese philosophical school, Taoism has been widely discussed among German scholars at the turn of the century. The exploration of Taoism extended beyond mere translation of Taoist classics and comprehension of its essence. Certain writers went a step further by employing Taoist concepts to deliberate upon and address contemporary social and aesthetic challenges within Europe. Figures like Alfred Döblin and Hermann Hesse exemplify this practice, utilizing Taoist ideas to engage with the pertinent issues of their era. The playwright Bertolt Brecht drew on the core principles of Taoist thought and related stories in his works to illustrate Marxist theory and social issues. The Sinologist Willy Tonn used Taoism to discuss the problems of Jewish identity. Taoism was by no means merely at a stage of “being known” in fin de siècle Germany but had a positive and active impact on German literature and its related fields.

Edward Said has had a considerable influence in the construction of Orientalist discourse. Many scholars after him have cited his theories to a greater or lesser extent in their discussions of the relationship between Europe and the Orient in the colonial and contemporary periods, whether critically or approvingly. He outlines Orientalism as a discipline that studies the East, and that the knowledge within this discipline is created by Europeans based on their imagination. This knowledge about the Orient constitutes a power hegemony that Europeans use to take control of, manipulate, and exploit the Orient. However, Said explicitly excludes the studies and traditions of German orientalists from his theory. The utilization of Taoist thought by German

writers to address their challenges contradicts Said's Orientalism theory. Hence, this dissertation avoids exploring the influence of Taoism in Germany from a perspective aligned with Said's Orientalist framework.

The concept of transculturality proposed by Zhang Chunjie in *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism* provides this dissertation with inspiration for a new perspective on the study of Taoism in the Orientalist tradition.

Transculturality is a description of the German discourse in which various cultural interactions, mediations and transformations take place.¹ It emphasizes moments of cultural integration and transcends the fixed or imagined borders.² This concept better reflects Germany's general fascination with non-European cultures and the lack of a central German nation-state in the 18th and early 19th centuries.³ In the Saidian framework of Orientalism, non-European cultures are dominated and serve European colonialist interests. If the Orient had any influence on Europe, then it was passive and without agency. In her book Zhang deconstructs the binary in dealing with European and non-European cultures, while introducing the concept of transculturality with the aim of enhancing the visibility of non-European agency which is overlooked by the debate over the empire or Enlightenment and applying this agency to literary analysis.

Zhang's study confirms that there are at least two kinds of non-European cultural influences on Europe: the first is a voiceless and passive influence without agency, which is a derivative of Saidian Orientalism, colonialism, or Eurocentrism. The second type is in the cultural exchange in which European scholars, such as Sinologists, Indologists, linguists, etc.,

¹ Chunjie Zhang, *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 9.

² Zhang, *Transculturality*, 10.

³ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 10.

study various non-European aspects on the basis of facts and the reality. Distinguished from the first kind of passive influence in the absence of non-European voice, I define the second kind “active influence”. The study and discussion of Taoism in Germany at the turn of the century and the use of related ideas by writers of the same period in their literary works belong to the active influence of Taoism on German literature.

The first chapter of the thesis, with the title of “The image of China in German Intellectual History”, serves as the background knowledge. It outlines the development and change of the image of China in Germany from early missionaries’ era to the modernist period. Before the mass arrival of the Jesuits of the Catholic Church in China, European knowledge of China was mainly transmitted back to Europe by traders and travelers in the form of travelogues or letters. Their knowledge of China was not free from subjective bias, because they could not enter the hinterland of China as the Jesuits did, and thus gain a comprehensive and systematic understanding of China. The first real mediators between the two cultures were the Catholic missionaries, who were established in China since the 1580s.

Most of the information and materials for the Oriental scholars who studied China during this period came from the missionaries. These scholars were called armchair scholars because they had not actually visited the country they were studying or had knowledge of the language that would allow them to read the original Oriental texts. Their different interpretations of the materials brought back by the missionaries led to differences in the image of China. They can be divided into two sides, the Sinophiles and the Sinophobes. Leibniz, as one of the representatives of the Sinophiles, believes that that Chinese civilization and European civilization were equally advanced, but in different fields. Later with the advent of race theories and Eurocentrism, the Sinophobes represented by Hegel and Herder considered Chinese culture as inferior to the

European. Hegel claimed Chinese thought to be dry, comprehensible, and spiritless. Herder compares Chinese civilization to an embalmed mummy, painted with hieroglyphics and wrapped in silk; its inner circulation resembles the life of a sleeping winter animal.

Admittedly, the sinophobic vision dominated German intellectual history for quite a long time, but the situation changed in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies on Taoism. In this era of crisis and war, some scholars have once again turned their attention to China, where the Taoist idea of returning to nature and harmony and unity seems to offer a solution to some modern problems. Hesse pointed out that the wisdom that the European needed was in Laozi and translating it into European languages was the only spiritual task at the moment.⁴ Döblin said that *Tao Te Ching* should be bound small comfortably and it will be so bound; will be carried in the pockets of many Europeans of the following decades.”⁵

The trajectory of the acceptance of Chinese culture by German scholars is in constant flux. This flux can be summarized as from an attitude of Sinophilia to Sinophobia and back to Sinophilia. Or Sinophilia and Sinophobia are intertwined in constant change and movement. Therefore, the image of China in the German Orientalist tradition has by no means just been in a single state of fantasy, fiction, and debasement. The debate among these Orientalist scholars about how to perceive China as a civilization remains at the level of evaluating the Other. This is the most rudimentary stage of responding to the unknown Other.

Chapter 2, *Taoism in the Context of German Orientalism*, includes 3 sections. The first section identifies the perspectives from which German scholars' studies of Taoism should be approached by examining the German Orientalist tradition. This chapter provides a brief

⁴ Adrian Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 99.

⁵ Linke Poot, “Der Rechte Weg,” in *Der Deutsche Maskenball* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1921), 96–106, 96.

comparison of Saidian Orientalism with Suzanne Marchand's study of German Orientalism thus illustrating the diversity of Orientalism and the inapplicability of Saidian Orientalist theory in this thesis. In addition, through the introduction and analysis of Zhang Chunjie's theory of "Transculturaliy", the concept of "active influence" is defined.

The second section introduces the origin, development, and basic concepts and ideas of Taoist philosophy. This introduction includes the founder of Taoism, Laozi, and one of the most influential successors of his thought, Zhuangzi, and their masterpieces *Tao Te Ching* and *Zhuangzi*. The concepts of *Tao*, *Te*, *Wu Wei*, *Yin* and *Yang*, etc. are introduced in the context of Taoist dialectics and worldview.

The last section depicts the variation in understanding of Taoism among scholars at the turn of the century when it was first introduced into Germany. The earliest German versions of *Tao Te Ching* include Reinhold von Plaenckner's *Lao-Tse Tao-Te-King: Der Weg Zur Tugend* (1870), Victor von Strauss' *Lao-Tse's Tao Te King* (1870) and Friedrich Wilhelm Noak's *Taotekking von Laotsee* (1888). When the Taoist classics were first translated into German, scholars were mostly concerned with the relevance to Christianity. Franz Hartmann's *Theosophie in China: Betrachtungen über das Tao Teh King* and Julius Grill's *Lao-tszes Buch vom höchsten Wesen und vom höchsten Gut (Tao-tě-king)* are both examples of interpreting *Tao Te Ching* in terms of Christian teachings. Their translations of Taoist works based on foreign versions, rather than the original Chinese, combined with their lack of understanding of the Chinese cultural context, resulted in inaccuracies in their translations and the addition of Christian religious values to *Tao Te Ching*.

Richard Wilhelm, in his 1910-1911 attempt to retranslate of the *Tao Te Ching*, was aware of the limitations of the previous versions. He pointed out that the new translation should stand

in the natural context, meaning that Taoist thought must be interpreted based on the realities of Chinese society and culture, rather than the traditional mindset of European culture. His years of experience as a missionary and sinologist living in China and his study of Chinese philosophy allow him to translate from a Chinese cultural perspective that is closer to the wisdom conveyed by Laozi's original text. Thus, Wilhelm's version has become the most important source of information for German scholars and writers, including Bertolt Brecht, Carl Gustav Jung, and Hermann Hesse, in their studies of Taoism.

Each chapter, beginning with the third, analyzes specific German writers' study, perception, and use of Taoism in their theoretical and literary practice. The study of different writers responds to the different perceptions of Taoism among modern German writers. These differences are not only differences in the understanding of Taoism, but they also cover the perception of Taoism from different perspectives, such as religious Taoism versus philosophical Taoism, differences in the feasibility of Taoism as a possible solution to a problem, differences in the way Taoist elements are specifically presented in their works, or the different issues that are dealt with through Taoism. Each chapter demonstrates the uniqueness of the authors' perceptions of Taoism, which in turn, when viewed as a whole, exemplifies the diversity of Taoism's active influence on modern German literature.

The third chapter examines Hermann Hesse's reception of Taoism and his use of Taoist ideas in his literary works. Hesse studied a variety of Oriental wisdom, including Chinese and Indian. Among these, Taoism was not just a subject of study for Hesse, but became an integral part of his faith as he came to realize and appreciate Taoism. Although Hesse had never been to China and did not speak Chinese, his extensive reading of Chinese books gave him considerable insight into Chinese poetry and philosophy. Studying of Chinese philosophy was an important

part of Hesse's life and literary creativity. He said that "[a]n diesen Chinesenbüchern ich seit anderthalb Jahrzehnten meine immer zunehmende Freude, eines von ihnen liegt meistens neben meinem Bett" [I have been enjoying these Chinese books for a century and a half, and one of them is usually lying next to my bed].⁶ Hesse is a sincere supporter of the philosophical ideas of Taoism. He objected to Hegel's negative critique of Taoism. In his correspondence with various friends Hesse repeatedly mentions his endorsement of Taoist thought.

In his literary works, Hesse discussed about the problem of "war and peace" after World War I and expressed his views on German De-nationalism after World War II using Taoist dialectics. In *Innen und Außen* [Inside and Outside] he reproduced in literature the personal psychological problems arising from the seemingly antagonistic contradiction between Western science and Eastern spirituality, as proposed by C. G. Jung. Jung's solution to this crisis is influenced by Taoist thought, i.e., detachment from the external, and Hesse also gave the same solution in his story. It seems that for Hesse this solution is effective for all the problems he encountered, because it remains consistent in his different works. In his autobiographical novel *Klingsors Letzter Sommer* [Klingsor's Last Summer], the focus of the discussion turns to aesthetics and the melancholy experienced by European society at the time. Not only Taoist thought, but also ancient Chinese historical figures and poetry became the source material for Hesse's novel. Together, they offer possible solutions to the crisis that Hesse and even Europe were facing.

Hesse's understanding of Taoism can thus be summarized as the way towards the inside. This way towards the inside became Hesse's approach to solving many types of problems he faced. The way can be found in his works in terms of handling personal psychological crises,

⁶ Adrian Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China*, 52.

when encountering the turmoil of the times commenting on political issues, and when dealing with the relationship between art and realities. The study of Hesse demonstrates the active influence that Taoism has on the individual writer as a whole.

The fourth chapter examines the use of Taoist traditions and thoughts by two writers, Alfred Döblin and Bertolt Brecht, in discussing German social issues, by using China as a foil. Although they were both concerned with the social problems faced by German people at the time, there were significant differences in the focus of their respective writings, the integration of Chinese elements in their works, and the use of Taoist ideas.

The work in which Döblin primarily and extensively made use of Chinese elements as well as Taoist traditions is his *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* [The Three Leaps of Wang Lun], published in 1916. Döblin called his novel “Ein Chinesischer Roman” [A Chinese Novel]. The novel is based on the real historical events of 1774, when Wang Lun, the leader of the Shandong rebellion group, led the people to rebel against the cruel rule of the Court of Manchu. In this work, Döblin applies his extensive knowledge of Chinese culture, language, customs, etc., to the writing. The substantial use of realistic details builds a convincing background of Chinese society, as if the stories in the novel were real historical events, and also creating an illusion as if the author’s focus was never on German society or German workers themselves. However, Döblin once said “ob ich von China, Indien und Grönland sprach, ich habe immer von Berlin gesprochen” [whether I was talking about China, India and Greenland, I was always talking about Berlin].⁷ It is noteworthy that Döblin does not focus on philosophical Taoism as other writers do but religious Taoism. There are two main reasons for his practice. Firstly the tradition

⁷ Alfred Döblin, *Schriften zu Leben und Werk* (Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter-Verlag 1986), 183.

of religious Taoism disseminated in Chinese society mainly amongst the underclasses of society. Through the tradition of religious Taoism, Döblin's portrayal of the Chinese underclass is in fact his mapping of the situation of German workers at the time. Secondly, Döblin is pessimistic about the spiritual renewal of German society. Through the novel Döblin expresses his lack of hope that society will be revolutionized from the bottom up through a new ideology or belief. By describing the superstitious traditions of religious Taoism, Döblin is able to show how potentially viable theories can be misconstrued in social practice. *Wu Wei*, literally inaction, non-resistant or doing nothing, advocated and practiced by the Wang-lun and his followers in the novel is Döblin's exploration of the possible methods and outcomes of struggle for the German workers' movements in times of adversity.

Döblin's *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* had a direct influence on Brecht's plays, so much so that Brecht used some episodes of the Wang-lun story in his play *Mann ist Mann* [Man Equals Man]. Despite this fact, Brecht's use of Chinese elements and Taoist ideas in his plays is fundamentally different than Döblin. At first glance, his play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [The Good Person of Szechwan] appears to be a parable about or set in China. Unlike Döblin's extensive use of knowledge about the reality of China for story construction, there is little direct reference to China found in Brecht's play beyond a few names of places and people. That is to say, Brecht almost deliberately obscured "Chineseness" in his works, and even in most cases, when Brecht uses Taoist ideas, or Chinese poetry in his works, it is difficult for the reader to discover their relevance to China, since he did not use the terms like "Tao" or "Wu Wei". In his engagement with Chinese elements, Brecht displayed inconsistency in his approach. This is evident in his utilization of Chinese poetry and philosophical concepts-sometimes with his own adaptation, and at other times using the elements directly without any changes. By studying his

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan and *Me-Ti*, the uniqueness of Brecht's handling of "Chineseness" and the role played by Taoism in this process are examined in relation to his theory of Epic Theater.

The final chapter investigates, through a study of Willy Tonn, how Taoism has had an active influence in Tonn's theory and practice on the construction of a new Jewish identity and cultural recognition. Willy Tonn is a German-Jewish Sinologist and writer who exiled during the Nazi era and lived 10 years in Shanghai. Despite his legacy of archival material on Jewish and Chinese culture and religion, little research has been conducted to date on Tonn. Having studied Chinese language, culture, and philosophy before coming to China, Tonn has used his knowledge to build bridges between Chinese culture and foreigners residing in China during his 10 years in China. He served as a lecturer in the Asian Seminar he founded, teaching Chinese customs and philosophical ideas to foreign students, thus enabling them to better integrate into local life.

Taoism is an important part of Tonn's study of Chinese philosophy. His interest in Taoism is closely tied to his perception of Jewish identity, or rather, the construction of a new Jewish identity perception. Through his research on the history of Jews in China, Tonn has brought forward the earliest arrival of Jews in China to the time when Laozi lived. He analyzed Laozi's articulation of the concept of *Tao* and combined it with his speculation about the historical circumstances of the arrival of the Jews in China at the time of Laozi. He proposed a conjecture that *Tao* advocated by Laozi and the God of Judaism are essentially the same concept. He suggested that Laozi likely heard the concept of JHWH from the Jews and developed it into the later *Tao*. Based on the homogeneity of *Tao* and JHWH, Tonn developed a theory of a new Jewish identity as well as a cultural identity centered on the identification with Chinese culture.

Tao not only plays an important role in Tonn's theory but is also frequently utilized in his literary works. Short stories published in local newspapers consist of the majority of his literary work. Some of these stories are direct translations from Chinese fables, some are adapted, and some are his originals. Most of these stories have the same motif, that is, the protagonists go through life's suffering and get through it with their own faith or the help of good people. Such a theme is more or less a reflection of the persecution of Jews by Nazi Germany during World War II. The concept of *Tao* appears either directly or indirectly in these stories, and it primarily signifies the faith that helps the protagonists get through their difficulties. This section examines this argument in the context of Tonn's short stories *Story of The Crazy Wu Wine-Bibber and Expert at Carving* and *The Lucky Fisherman*.

Chapter 1 The image of China in German Intellectual History

The way different countries understand and represent foreign cultures has never remained static. For more than four hundred years since the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in China, who shared a wealth of information with Europe, the European perception of China has continuously evolved. This chapter lays the groundwork by examining how the image of China among German scholars has developed and changed over time since the Jesuits arrived in China. The analysis begins at this juncture, as prior to the Jesuits' presence in China, European society mainly relied on occasional merchants and travelers for knowledge about China. They were mostly concentrated in the southeastern coastal areas of China and were unable to reach the hinterland to acquire a comprehensive understanding of Chinese society and its culture. At the same time, they rarely had subjective desire or motivation to learn about China. After all, for merchants, profit takes precedence. However, the Jesuits and missionaries occupied a distinct position. Functioning as official envoys, they secured entry into the Chinese mainland, albeit with challenges, aiming to gain insights into the lives of the people and various facets of Chinese culture—primarily with the intent of propagating their faith. Another pivotal rationale for the introduction of Jesuits was that, during that era, the reports of Jesuits and missionaries served as the primary source of information for European Orientalists studying China, not only in Germany but throughout the continent. The exploration of this phenomenon concludes around the time of Hegel, when the initially positive views of sinophilia transitioned into a more sinophobic stance, dominating intellectual discussions about China.

In this chapter, I argue that the perception of the image of China in the German intellectual history is not a static one. It undergoes a transformation from Sinophilia to Sinophobia. And Sinophobia is not the final state of China's image in Germany. Therefore, when

studying how Taoism influenced modern German literature, there should not be a preconceived attitude of Sinophobia or Sinophilia, but rather, Taoism should be studied in its historical context as well as against the scholars' personal backgrounds.

At the beginning of the encounter between European Christian and Chinese civilization, due to their great geographical, historical, religious and political differences, they were mutually unintelligible and alienated from each other. On the one hand, from a Chinese perspective, influenced by Confucianism, the Chinese see the outermost savages as a transitional form between humans and animals or humans and spirits.⁸ There has been a long history of naming non-Chinese peoples as 蛮, 夷, 戎, and 狄 (*Man, Yi, Rong* and *Di*, which are different derogatory characters historically used to describe “uncivilized” groups of people). This is the origin of terms like “foreign devils”, which, by the way, are still used today in China for foreigners.⁹ Chinese wisdom about the one's own inner spiritual world, on the other hand, is treated by Europeans with “native ignorance”, “mistrust” and “prejudice”, to the extent that the field of Eastern wisdom is called “occult thought”.¹⁰

The first real mediators between the two cultures were the Catholic missionaries, first of all the Jesuits, established already in the 1580s.¹¹ In return for the financial support they received from numerous princes and nobles, in order to inform their local readers about the framework conditions of the mission, to publicize the sending of new missionaries, and finally to satisfy the

⁸ Walter Demel, *Als Fremde in China: Das Reich der Mitte im Spiegel frühneuzeitlicher europäischer Reiseberichte* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992). 7.

⁹ Demel, *Als Fremde in China*, 7

¹⁰ Richard Wilhelm, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life: And Part of the Chinese Meditation Text “The Book of Consciousness and Life,”* trans. Cary F. Baynes (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962), vii.

¹¹ Demel, *Als Fremde in China*. 287.

growing European interest in Chinese science, these missionaries wrote far more comprehensive and authentic reports on China than had previously been provided by either the sporadic arrival of European merchants or travelers in China or by the isolated Chinese arrivals in early Europe.¹² The missionaries were able to write authentic reports because they lived in China for a long time and studied Chinese language and schools of thought, especially Confucianism. They had to communicate with local Chinese officials and people who had never been to Europe before engaging in missionary activities.

The first Jesuits to arrive in China recognized the importance of learning Chinese for their missionary work. After visiting Guangzhou in 1555, Nunes Barreto considered China as a difficult mission and observed “the indifference of the Chinese toward their own religions and disregard for their own clergy” and “saw only two strategies: an embassy to persuade Chinese authorities of their peaceful and holy intentions, and hence to gain a residence permit; and evangelizing to the people in their own language.”¹³ The importance of Barreto’s strategy is obvious and necessary. But he was not able to see a more important necessity, that is to learn traditional Chinese schools of thought. His strategy was realized later by Matteo Ricci, who came after him. Ricci arrived in China in 1582 in order to assist the missionary activities of Michele Ruggieri who were in China since 1578.¹⁴ During the years of Ruggieri and Ricci’s missionary work in Zhaoqing, China, they were assimilated into early Chinese religious expression: no matter how much they emphasized the distinctive truths of Christianity, the

¹² Demel, *Als Fremde in China*. 287.

¹³ R. Po-chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci, 1552-1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). 59.

¹⁴ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 28, 29, 50.

Jesuits - their personalities, doctrines, and liturgy - were viewed by the Chinese from a Buddhist perspective.¹⁵

In the history of Chinese religion, Buddhism is the foreign religion that has lasted the longest and had the greatest sphere of influence. Although Christianity, or more accurately Nestorianism, flourished for a time during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), it gradually ceased to exist in China after the mid-ninth century. By the sixteenth century, when the Jesuits came to China, the gap of several hundred years therein had rendered people completely ignorant of Christianity. Thus, when confronted with missionaries, it is not surprising that they were given the identity of Buddhist monks, since Buddhism is, after all, the only foreign religion that people could best understand at the time. In order to successfully carry out their missionary activities, during the early years when the Jesuits lived in China dressed like Buddhist monks: bald heads, shaved beards, Buddhist robes, introducing themselves as monks from India.¹⁶

Although Ruggieri appeared very comfortable in this role, and this identification with Buddhism was largely imposed on him by the Chinese, Ricci never sat in well in this role.¹⁷ Ricci began to study the Confucian classics. He attempted to find similarities with Christian teachings and to interpret them in the perspective of Confucianism. Ricci then dressed up like a Chinese scholar and put the Catholic doctrine in the gown of Confucianism.¹⁸ Although the subjective purpose of the missionaries who studied Chinese language and thought was to preach, objectively they were able to develop a deeper and more accurate insight into Chinese society

¹⁵ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 93.

¹⁶ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 135.

¹⁷ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 135.

¹⁸ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 158

and culture. Indirectly, by reading their reports back to Europe, European scholars who had not personally visited China were also able to form a more realistic image of the country.

In addition to learning the Chinese language and traditional thought, another reason that cannot be overlooked is the interaction with and support of illiterate officials and social elites who are willing to learn about foreign cultures. The Jesuits, who arrived in China at the same time as Matteo Ricci, had been seeking permission to live in the Chinese hinterland. They visited the mainland briefly but were repatriated to Macau in 1583. Wang Pan (王泮), then Prefect of Zhaoqing in Guangdong, granted Ricci permission to go to the mainland so that he could preach there.¹⁹ While in Zhaoqing, Wang suggested that the world map prepared by Ricci be published in Chinese, funded its printing, and distributed copies to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues.²⁰ He had a close personal relationship with Ricci. He not only supported him in introducing European Christian civilization to the Chinese, but later had his second son baptized.²¹ The interaction with the Chinese gentry gave the missionaries the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge of the political system and the social mechanisms of this ancient country. The example of Matteo Ricci here is by no means accidental or exceptional. Richard Wilhelm, who will be introduced later, was also well versed in the Chinese language, Confucianism, and Taoist thought, and was closely interacting with Chinese officials of his time. In short, the image of China in Europe at that time was directly determined by the Europeans in China. And as Jesuits with an in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of China, the reports they sent back to Europe occupied the most important place, both in the religious debates about China and in the projects of Oriental scholars studying China.

¹⁹ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 79.

²⁰ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 87.

²¹ R. Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 88.

The early Oriental scholars were often referred to as armchair scholars, as they hadn't physically visited the countries they studied and lacked the language proficiency necessary to read the original Oriental texts. Their primary sources of information were texts from missionaries, often in Latin or their own native languages. While early European scholars studying China did utilize Jesuits' sources to varying degrees, they offered distinct interpretations of these materials. Among the scholars who positively interpreted Chinese civilization from the 17th to the 18th centuries was the French philosopher Voltaire, who was a remarkable China lover and praised China's amazing millennial continuity of politics and culture. Another example, the economist François Quesnay, in his *Le Despotisme de la Chine* [The Despotism of China], described the political system and social situation in China. He praised China highly and chose the Middle Kingdom as a model state for his theory of *ordre naturel* [natural order].²² Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who lived a few decades before Voltaire and Quesnay but was almost a contemporary, can be taken as a representative of those German scholars who shared a sinophilic view at the time. In 1697 Leibniz published his book on Chinese studies *Novissima Sinica: Das Neueste von China* [Novissima Sinica: The latest from China]. In the book he makes a comparative analysis of China and Europe in terms of science and technology, state governance, ethics and morality, and political practices. The book includes not only his analysis of Chinese civilization, but also the reports of the Jesuits on China and Leibniz's correspondence with them. In the preface to the Chinese edition of the book, Dr. Hartmut Rudolph, former director of the Leibniz-Edition Potsdam, pointed out that the purpose of Leibniz's book was not a competition between peoples for priority, let alone a war for domination over other peoples; Leibniz had in mind complementarity and exchange between

²² Demel, *Als Fremde in China*. 45.

peoples, the use of one light to illuminate another.²³ Leibniz described China as “the wisest nation in the East” with “a reputation for excellence.”²⁴ He saw in the sources he studied the respective advantages and disadvantages of Chinese and European civilizations. Europe is superior to China “in der Gründlichkeit gedanklicher Überlegungen und in den theoretischen Disziplinen” [in the thoroughness of intellectual reflection and in the theoretical disciplines].²⁵ However, “auf dem Gebiet der praktischen Philosophie” [in the area of practical philosophy] and “in den Lehren der Ethik und Politik, die auf das Leben und die täglichen Gewohnheiten der Menschen selbst ausgerichtet sind” [in the teaching of ethics and politics that are oriented to the life and daily habits of the people themselves] the Chinese have advantages.²⁶ To Leibniz, the important task of the missionaries in China was to vigorously promote the exchange of ideas between two worlds separated by the great distance, that is, the exchange of ideas and the work of mutual inspiration.²⁷ But if missionaries were only sent to introduce European civilization and propagate the Christian teachings to the Chinese, then this one-way activity could not be called an exchange. He felt that the Europe in which he lived was facing an unprecedented moral decline and that it seemed necessary to invite Chinese missionaries to Europe to teach people how to apply and practice natural theology.²⁸ Leibniz was not narrowly nationalistic nor fanatically religious. His study of China allowed him to see the merits of both civilizations and to

²³ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Zhongguo Jin Shi: Wei Le Zhao Liang Wo Men Zhe Ge Shi Dai De Li Shi*, trans. Qianli Mei and Baoyun Yang (Zhengzhou: Da xiang chu ban she, 2005). 002.

²⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz et al., *Novissima Sinica (1697); Mit Ergänzenden Dokumenten = Das Neueste Von China* (München: Iudicium, 2011). 31.

²⁵ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, 9.

²⁶ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, 11.

²⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Rita Widmaier, *Leibniz Korrespondiert Mit China: Der Briefwechsel Mit Den Jesuitenmissionaren (1689-1714)* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1990), 11.

²⁸ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, 19.

assert that when the two peoples joined together, the rest of the world would be brought to a more rational life.²⁹ He looked at the larger picture of humanity and hoped to find a way to advance human civilization as a whole, or as Donald F. Lach said “in an effort to corroborate with facts his theory of universal culture”.³⁰ Although his description of China in *Novissima Sinica* was a somewhat idealistic generalization, it was by no means an unfounded figment of the imagination. From his correspondence with the missionaries, it is clear that Leibniz sought answers to questions that were not clear from the sources he studied. These questions covered many aspects, not only the economic and cultural issues he analyzes in *Novissima Sinica*, but also many minor issues about the daily life of Chinese people. For example, in his letter to Claudio Filippo Grimaldi, Italian missionary who arrived in China in 1669 and returned to Rome in 1686, Leibniz included a list that contains 30 questions.³¹ In the list, questions like “Über das Holz, das so hart wie Eisen ist, gradlinig und geeignet für Trompeten” [About the wood, which is as hard as iron, straight and suitable for trumpets] and “Über Färbemittel, die dem Verbleichen widerstehen” [About dyes that resist fading] indicate his genuine interest in learning about the actual situation in China, by trying to get to know the country he has never been to from aspects of trivial things.³² From the limited material he had access to on China, he attempted to understand China in a relatively objective and realistic manner. Leibniz is a representative of the German sinophiles in the 17th to 18th century. But the sinophilia attitude among German scholars was never uniform and unchanging. Particularly with the rise of race theory and

²⁹ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, 9.

³⁰ Donald F. Lach, “Leibniz and China,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6, no. 4 (October 1945): 436-55, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2707344>, 454.

³¹ Claudia von Collani, “Claudio Filippo Grimaldi S.J. Zur Ankunft Des Päpstlichen Legaten Charles-Thomas Maillard De Tournon in China,” *Monumenta Serica* 42 (1994): 329-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02549948.1994.11731259>, 331.

³² Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, 85.

Eurocentrism, voices of sinophobia gradually gained prominence. Concurrently, sinophilic perspectives like that of Leibniz started to wane in prominence.

The establishment of race theory in Germany and its later popularity in colonial affairs are closely linked to the writings of Immanuel Kant. In fact, long before Kant, there were already studies of anthropology and discussions of human races in Europe. But their influence in Germany was far less than that of Kant. The debate on how to distinguish and define different races of people began as early as the 16th century in Europe. Scholars at the time had different ideas about how to define the Chinese than what was later described by Georges Buffon, Kant or Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. In 1515 Andrea Corsali, an Italian explorer who was in the Portuguese service, described Chinese as “of our kind”, and a few years later the German imperial *Geheimschreiber* [secret writer] Transsylvanus, based on Corsalis’ observation concluded that the Chinese are a white-skin people with high-standard communities, just like German people.³³ Matteo Ricci in his diary shared a similar view of Chinese, he said that “the Chinese people are almost white, though some of them in the southern provinces are quite dark because of their proximity to the torrid zone”.³⁴ While compliments regarded Chinese as similar as those white European, critics had the opinion that Chinese were ugly because of their flat faces and noses. Before the mid-seventeenth century, despite both positive and negative comments on the Chinese people and culture, no one seemed to consider that Chinese, as a whole people, were yellow.³⁵ However, Buffon, in his 1749 essay “Of the Varieties in the Human Species”, no longer sees the Chinese as white or of the same ethnicity as the Europeans. He

³³ Walter Demel, “Wie Die Chinesen Gelb Wurden,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 255, no. 1 (January 1992): pp. 625-66, <https://doi.org/10.1524/hzhz.1992.255.jg.625,625>.

³⁴ Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journal of Matteo Ricci, 1583-1610*, trans. Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Radom House, 1953), 77.

³⁵ Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 627-628.

classifies Chinese and Japanese as one race, saying they are more yellow or more brown because of the geography and climate in which they live.³⁶ Buffon's practice of categorizing different races of people by different colors is an attempt to distinguish their differences from the white race of Europeans. Demel argues that Buffon's practice of associating people with non-white colors is to associate these people with cultural backwardness.³⁷ Although Buffon no longer considers Chinese people as being as white as Europeans, he has not yet explicitly introduced the concept of "yellow race". Influenced by Buffon's theory, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant was the first person who "nun wirklich eine 'gelbe Rasse' im Rahmen einer Rassentheorie entdeckte" [now actually discovered a 'yellow race' under the frame of race theory].³⁸ Kant wrote in the essay *On the Different Human Races* in 1777 that there are four races among all human beings: "1) die Rasse der Weißen, 2) die Negerrasse, 3) die hunnische (mungalische oder kalmuckische) Rasse, 4) die hinduische oder hindistanische Rasse" [1. The white race; 2. The Negro race; 3. The Hun race (mongol or Kalmuk); 4. the Hindu or Hindustani race].³⁹ Although he divides humans into four distinct races, he provides a strong monogenesis perspective in his article, namely that the different traits of the four varieties of human races require a linear root genus, "Alle Abartungen aber bedürfen doch einer Stammgattung" [All varieties, however, require a parent genus].⁴⁰ The reason for the variation in human races from the lineal root genus

³⁶ Barr's Buffon and Georges Buffon, "Of the Varieties in the Human Species," in *Buffon's Natural History Containing a Theory of the Earth: A General History of Man* (London: T. Gillett, 1807), 190-352, 211.

³⁷ Demel, *Wie Die Chinesen Gelb Wurden*, 647.

³⁸ Demel, *Wie Die Chinesen Gelb Wurden*, 648.

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, "VON DEN VERSCHIEDENEN RASSEN DER MENSCHEN," in *Immanuel Kant Werke VI; Schriften Zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik Und Padagogik*, accessed January 24, 2022, http://www.ciando.com/img/books/extract/3534741994_lp.pdf, 14.

⁴⁰ Kant, *VON DEN VERSCHIEDENEN RASSEN DER MENSCHEN*, 27.

is that the lineal root genus contains the common human *Keime* [seeds] and *natürliche Anlagen* [natural dispositions], that “sich nur gelegentlich in langen Zeitläuften auf verschiedene Weise entwickelt haben” [have only occasionally developed in various ways over long periods of time].⁴¹ The environment and climate played a decisive role in the development of *Keime*. Kant’s climate determinism is similar to that of Buffon’s. Different skin colors were caused by the same factors. He further summarized four races by skin colors: the first race is noble blond (northern Europe), due to humid cold climate; the second is copper red (America) because of dry cold; the third is black (Senegambia) from humid heat; and the fourth is olive-yellow (Indians) as a result of dry heat; above the four color based races is the lineal root genus with white or brownish color.⁴² Kant does not specify where the Chinese should belong in his theory of race, but it is clear that they do not belong to the first group of races into which the Northern European race is classified.

In his essay, Kant uses what appears to be a modern “scientific” method to classify human races in terms of color, and to give reasons for the differences. Differences in the achievements of civilizations are not part of his theory. Since his time and to this day, race seems to be inseparable from skin color. Joseph Arthur de Gobineau in his *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* [Essay on the inequality of human races], published in 1853-55, focuses on distinctions of superiority and inferiority on top of color differences. He did not talk about races until the second half of his *Essai*. For the first half, he defined civilization and its mortal disease and argued what were commonly deemed as the necessary symptoms that would lead to the fall of civilization and shorten the life of a nation, such as fanaticism, luxury, corruption of morals,

⁴¹ Kant, *VON DEN VERSCHIEDENEN RASSEN DER MENSCHEN*, 18.

⁴² Kant, *VON DEN VERSCHIEDENEN RASSEN DER MENSCHEN*, 28.

irreligion, and the relative merits of governments, were not the key reasons that would cause such problems. They are superficial causes of the destruction of civilization. Its fundamental cause is the degradation of its people. The reason for the degradation of a people is “the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins”.⁴³ In other words, it is the integration of different races that makes the original people not “pure” anymore, it is “contaminated”. Due to Gobineau’s view of the natural inequality of human races, the integration of different races inevitably leads to contamination and degradation. Gobineau claimed that the three secondary races—black, yellow, and white—was derived from the original race of Adam. Distinct traits of the three races were caused by different geographical conditions. The environmental determinism and monogenesis perspective here are not very different from Kant’s theory of race. But unlike Kant, Gobineau is more straightforward and blunter in presenting the idea of white supremacy and the inferiority of other races. Defining the characteristics of the white peoples he writes that they have a feeling for utility, a perseverance that takes account of obstacles, a greater physical power, an extraordinary instinct for order, a remarkable, and even extreme, love of liberty.⁴⁴ In comparison to the white race, the yellow race as he described it is physically lethargic and tending to obesity, emotionally apathetic, generally mediocre, unable to dream or theorize, lacking in imagination, and practical in the narrowest sense of the word.⁴⁵ It can be seen that in his *Essai* Gobineau’s main concern was to discuss the development and decline of the world’s major civilizations, but his argumentative process undoubtedly advanced the development of race theory and contributed to the later racism and

⁴³ Joseph Arthur Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 25.

⁴⁴ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 205.

⁴⁵ Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, 204.

European supremacy. In the political propaganda of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, one can find words similar to Gobineau about the degeneration of the race, or about the preservation of the purity of the blood to ensure the survival of the so-called Aryans.

Gobineau's race theory also had a profound impact on the subsequent image of the Chinese in Germany. Since interbreeding leads to racial degeneration, Gobineau warns that the European should be aware of human migration. He was afraid that "Chinese armies under Russian (and perhaps German) command would overrun Europe and destroy white civilization".⁴⁶ Such fear of a Chinese invasion came to be known as the "Yellow Peril". The most influential promoter of the "Yellow Peril" in Germany was the German Emperor Wilhelm II, whom has long been conventionally credited with coining the German phrase *die gelbe Gefahr*.⁴⁷ The drawing *Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter* [Peoples of Europe, protect your most sacred possessions], drafted by Wilhelm II and completed by a German painter Hermann Knackfuß, was presented to Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1895. In the center of the picture is the archangel Michael, representing Christian civilization, standing with his sword in his hand and the female warriors, symbolizing the allied forces of the Christian nations, behind him. Michael points with one hand to the Buddha in the distance, representing Japan, and to the dragon at his side, representing China. Together with them, Michael protects the Christian nations from the invasion of the yellow peoples represented by Japan and China. This painting alone is not the only evidence that Wilhelm II was the promoter of the "Yellow Peril". In the letter from the Kaiser to the Tsar in 1902 Wilhelm II raised this issue, by calming that it is

⁴⁶ Gregory Blue, "Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the 'Yellow Peril' and the Critique of Modernity," *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 93-139, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/20078751>, 114.

⁴⁷ Blue, *Gobineau on China*, 121.

worrisome that the concern of “Yellow Peril” was coming into reality since 20 to 30 million Chinese soldiers were trained by the Japanese; later in 1908 in a statement of him, the Kaiser said “I prophesied in 1908 that in the event of an attack on Europe by the Yellow Peril, the Slavs will not only fail to offer opposition but will take sides against Europe.”⁴⁸ In view of the German emperor’s discrimination against the yellow race and the fear that both he and Gobineau had that non-European civilization might degenerate the European, Blue thus argues that there is a strong suggestion that “the Kaiser had a well-developed tendency to speak and perhaps to think in terms of a grand racial conflict, à la Gobineau, between ‘white’ and ‘yellow’ peoples.”⁴⁹

From Buffon to Kant to later Gobineau, with the establishment and refinement of race theory, Chinese civilization was no longer considered to be as great as Europe as described to Leibniz and some Jesuits, and Chinese and Europeans were distinguished from Europeans by their color. The sinophilic voice in Germany was also gradually replaced by the dominant sinophobic view. The image of China was perceived as backward and dangerous. The change in the perception of China is not only done from an ethnographic point of view. Johann Gottfried Herder, a contemporary of Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a little later, depicted China as backward and stagnant, from the perspective of Chinese culture and philosophical thought.

Herder’s *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (*Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*), published in four parts between 1784 and 1791, is his discussion of the philosophy of history. In this book he addressed his views on the development of mankind. Herder advocates those different civilizations to be viewed in their specific historical and

⁴⁸ Blue, *Gobineau on China*, 126.

⁴⁹ Blue, *Gobineau on China*, 126.

geographical contexts. The whole of human history and civilization should be seen as an organic whole, and the distinct national civilizations are different stages of this whole. He used the metaphor of age of an individual to delineate the different stages in the development of human civilization: childhood, boyhood, manhood and old age. Compared to European civilization, which is at a higher stage of development, Chinese civilization is at a lower stage of boyhood “sie ist dies Volk, wie so manche andere Nation des Erdkreises, mitten in seiner Erziehung, gleichsam im Knabenalter, stehengeblieben” [this is the people, like many other nations of the world, still in its education, as in the stage of boyhood].⁵⁰ In the chapter describing China, Herder at first seems to praise the long history of China, its vast land, agriculture, construction, etc. His description of the Chinese people also seems positive: “Sanftmut und Biagsamkeit, gefällige Höflichkeit und anständige Gebärden” [Gentleness and pliability, pleasing politeness and decent gestures] are all the characteristics of Chinese.⁵¹ After analyzing the religious and political systems in China, Herder concludes “könnte man sich, wenn jeder dieser Umstände bewährt und jeder Grundsatz in lebendiger Ausübung wäre, eine vollkommeneren Staatsverfassung denken? Das ganze Reich wäre ein Haus tugendhafter, wohlerzogener, fleißiger, sittsamer, glücklicher Kinder und Brüder.” [if every one of these circumstances were proved, and every principle in living exercise, could a more perfect constitution of state be conceived? The whole empire would be a house of virtuous, well-disposed, diligent, demure, happy children and brothers.]⁵² Such descriptions are deceptive, because these positive descriptions are valid only based on his assumption that “jede Nation hat ihren *Mittelpunkt* der Glückseligkeit in *sich*, wie jede Kugel

⁵⁰ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen Zur Philosophie Der Geschichte Der Menschheit: Dritter Theil* (Riga and Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1790), 25.

⁵¹ Herder, *Ideen*, 8.

⁵² Herder, *Ideen*, 9.

ihren Schwerpunkt!“ [every nation has its center of happiness in itself, like every sphere has its center of gravity!].⁵³ This claim from his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* in 1774 [*Yet Another Philosophy of History toward the Education of Humankind*] is later widely cited as the epitome of what is now called cultural relativism.⁵⁴ From the point of view of cultural relativism, if Chinese civilization is not to be compared with others, then the results of its development should make itself satisfied and happy, both for the rulers and for the people who live there. However, Herder’s exploration into the progression of entire human civilizations compels him to draw comparisons among them. This inclination became inevitable the moment he employed the metaphor of linear individual growth to illustrate the distinct stages in the development of civilizations. Consequently, Herder employs a similar approach in his subsequent analysis of China. He conducts a more intricate comparison between China and Europe, delving into various aspects like etiquette, education, medicine, and philosophy. Through this analysis, he portrays Chinese civilization as stagnant and child-like, indicative of a lower-level development when contrasted with the advancements of European civilization:

Kann man sich wundern, daß eine Nation dieser Art *nach europäischem Maßstabe* in Wissenschaften wenig erfunden, ja, daß sie Jahrtausende hindurch sich auf derselben Stelle erhalten habe?... Astronomie und Musik, Poesie und Kriegskunst, Malerei und Architektur sind bei ihnen, wie sie vor Jahrhunderten waren, Kinder ihrer ewigen Gesetze und *unabänderlich-kindischen Einrichtung*. Das Reich ist eine balsamierte Mumie, mit Hieroglyphen bemalt und mit Seide umwunden; ihr innerer Kreislauf ist wie das Leben der schlafenden Wintertiere.⁵⁵

Can one be surprised that a nation of this kind, *according to European standards*, has invented little in the sciences, indeed that it has remained in the same place for centuries?... Astronomy and music, poetry and the art of war, painting and architecture

⁵³ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Theoretische Schriften, Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit, Erster Abschnitt* - Zeno.org, accessed January 30, 2022, <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Herder,+Johann+Gottfried/Theoretische+Schriften/Auch+eine+Philosophie+der+Geschichte+zur+Bildung+der+Menschheit/Erster+Abschnitt>.

⁵⁴ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 119-120.

⁵⁵ Herder, *Ideen*, 20. My emphasis.

are with them as they were centuries ago, children of their eternal laws and unalterably childlike institution. The empire is an embalmed mummy, painted with hieroglyphics and entwined with silk; its inner cycle is like the life of sleeping winter animals.

One of the most extensively debated subjects pertaining to China, dating back to the era of missionaries, is Confucianism. In China, the early missionaries utilized Confucianism not only to elucidate Christianity but also to facilitate their missionary endeavors. Moreover, Confucianism's role was a focal point of religious debates in Europe related to China in Europe. These discussions revolved around whether missionaries should be permitted to disseminate the Gospel through the cloak of Confucianism, including contemplations about whether Chinese converts should retain their ancestral worship rituals. Leibniz also analyzed Confucianism and Christianity, with the central argument being that Confucianism contains a deep and accurate understanding of moral truth as understood through human reason or *Li* and that Chinese philosophy is closer to Christian theology than ancient Greek philosophy.⁵⁶ Herder's view of Confucianism was fundamentally different: Confucianism is a shackle that hinders the development of nations and civilizations, and can no longer be compared to Christianity, "der Name Konfuzius ist mir ein großer Name, ob ich die Fesseln gleich nicht verkenne, die auch er trug und die er mit bestem Willen dem abergläubigen Pöbel und der gesamten sinesischen Staatseinrichtung durch seine politische Moral auf ewige Zeiten aufdrang."⁵⁷ [the name Confucius is a great name to me, although I do not fail to recognize the shackles which he also wore and which he imposed with the best of wills on the superstitious rabble and on the entire Chinese state institution through his political morality for eternity.]⁵⁷ From this description, it becomes evident that Herder embodies the characteristics of a typical sinophobe. His metaphor of

⁵⁶ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 143.

⁵⁷ Herder, *Ideen*, 24.

childhood describes China as a stagnant and inferior civilization. Sonia Sikka argues that the repetition of this metaphor for non-Western cultures demonstrates “intellectual imperialism”, which foreshadows Hegel’s “assumption of a position from which the character of foreign nations can be mastered in thought and assigned an inferior place within the scheme of history”.⁵⁸

In his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Lectures on the Philosophy of History*) Hegel commented on China in two parts, one on Chinese society in general and the other exclusively on Chinese philosophy. His analysis and conclusions are similar to Herder’s, mainly that China is inferior and stagnant compared to Europe in terms of science, culture, religion, philosophy and political system. Before analyzing the state and the development of specific civilizations, he begins with a philosophical definition of the concept of development. All things in the world are in constant change, and the *Geist* within plays a decisive role in the process of change, for in nature things always appear and perish in cycles. In this process no new things emerge, “nur in den Veränderungen, die auf dem geistigen Boden vorgehen, kommt Neues hervor.” [only in the changes that take place on the spiritual ground does something new come forth.]⁵⁹ The prerequisite for the concept of development is what Hegel calls as *innere Bestimmung*, inner determination, and “diese formelle Bestimmung ist wesentlich der Geist” [this formal determination is essentially the spirit].⁶⁰ The essence of change and development of things is fundamentally to overcome the inner *Geist* and thus move forward. If this process is completely dependent on external factors, it must be stagnant. This notion of development is

⁵⁸ Sonya Sikka, *Herder on Humanity and Cultural Difference: Enlightened Relativism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 115.

⁵⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Werke 12* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 74.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Werke 12*, 75.

directly reflected in Hegel's view and evaluation of other civilizations. He believes that China has no history, or more precisely no history like that of Europe. Both China and India were excluded from world history. China developed from a very early time into what Europeans now know it to be. The underlying reason for this is "der Gegensatz von objektivem Sein und subjektiver Daranbewegung noch fehlt, so ist jede Veränderlichkeit ausgeschlossen, und das Statarische, das ewig wiedererscheint, ersetzt das, was wir das Geschichtliche nennen würden." [the opposition of objective being and subjective movement towards it is still missing, then any changeability is excluded, and the static, which eternally reappears, replaces what we would call the historical.]⁶¹ On an individual level, Hegel considered that the Chinese had no individual freedom and could not think independently, and that their way of behavior was externally limited by the rigid and unchanging Confucian ethics and morality that had been in place for thousands of years. At the national level, the reason for the stagnation of society is despotism. With the emperor as the supreme ruler of the system, the country's operation depends entirely on the personal will of the emperor. These external manifestations of stagnation are ultimately due to *Geistlosigkeit*.

Regarding Chinese philosophy, Hegel analyzes it more comprehensively than Herder did. He discusses not only Confucianism, but also Taoism (*I Ching* and Laozi's teaching), two indigenous schools of thought. Although Buddhism has a significant influence in China, after all, it is an alien teaching from India, which Hegel does not include in his discussion. He first denies that these schools are philosophies in comparison with European philosophies, and that they should be viewed more from a religious point of view.⁶² The thoughts of the Orientals,

⁶¹ Hegel, *Werke* 12, 147.

⁶² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Werke* 18 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 138.

represented by China and India, is “Trockenes, Verständiges, Geistloses” [dry, understandable, spiritless]; they do not know logic, only have “trockenenen Verstand” and “ein bloßes Aufzählen von Bestimmungen” [dry understanding, a mere enumeration of provisions].⁶³ Hegel believes that the thought of Confucius enjoyed a great reputation in the time of Leibniz, but only as *Moralphilosophie*, it is not worth mentioning compared to European thought. He wrote “diese finden wir allenthalben, in jedem Volke, und besser; es ist nichts Ausgezeichnetes.” [we find this (Confucian morality) everywhere, in every nation, and better; it is no at all distinguished.]⁶⁴ Hegel’s view of *I Ching* and Taoism continues his view of the development of Chinese civilization as constrained by external conditions. These teaching are “nur nach äußerlicher Ordnung und ohne etwas Sinniges zu enthalten” [only after external order and without containing anything meaningful].⁶⁵ A completely opposite attitude to Leibniz’s can be seen in Hegel’s assessment of China. Leibniz believes that Chinese and European civilizations are equally developed and worthy of learning from each other. Hegel, on the other hand, clearly expresses that Europe should avoid learning any aspect of China because it could not bring any positive impact on the development of Europe. “[W]ir uns nicht weitläufiger damit beschäftigen” [we do not deal with it (oriental philosophy)], “die uns in unserer Entwicklung hemmen würde” [that (Chinese history) would hinder us in our development], “so daß sich die Europäer im Verkehr mit ihnen gewaltig in acht zu nehmen haben” [so that the Europeans have to be very careful in their dealings with them], expressions such as these are not uncommon throughout his discussion.⁶⁶

⁶³ Hegel, *Werke* 18, 141

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Werke* 18, 142.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Werke* 18, 145.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Werke* 18, 138. *Werke* 12, 150, 165.

Claiming that “Sinesen immer nur Sinesen bleiben, wie Deutsche Deutsche sind” [Chinese always remain only Chinese, as Germans are Germans], if Herder was simply and only trying to distinguish Chinese civilization from the European by classifying it as an inferior one (after all, he criticized colonialism in *Ideen*), Hegel then takes the sinophobic sentiment to a more “practical” level by claiming that “es ist das notwendige Schicksal der asiatischen Reiche, den Europäern unterworfen zu sein, und China wird auch einmal diesem Schicksale sich fügen müssen” [it is the necessary fate of the Asian empires to be subjugated to the Europeans, and China will also have to submit to this fate one day].⁶⁷ Such a viewpoint easily brings to mind Said’s famous assertion about 19th century Orientalism that there was a hegemonic European conception of the East that constantly reaffirmed Europe’s superiority and advancement over the East.⁶⁸ European Orientalists organized, edited and disseminated knowledge about the Orient according to their own imagination, will, stereotypes, etc. This knowledge confirmed and served the colonial authority. Similarly, Zhang argued that intellectual Sinophobia was seen as a necessary justification and ideology for the rise of European colonial hegemony in the second half of the 18th century.⁶⁹

A discernible trend that emerges, starting from the time of the Jesuits, when a substantial amount of information about China was sent back to Europe, is the shift from sinophilia to sinophobia, with the latter gradually assuming a dominant position. The change in the attitude of German scholars toward China during this period was consistent with, and not isolated from, scholars in other European countries. Many scholars have expressed their views during this transformation process, and in this section only the some of the most representative or influential

⁶⁷ Herder, *Ideen*, 25. Hegel, *Werke* 12, 179.

⁶⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1979), 7.

⁶⁹ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 141.

figures of each stage are analyzed. The main purpose of this chapter is not to provide a genealogy of sinophilic or sinophobic scholars. Rather, it is to point out that the German image of China was a dynamic process of change. Since it is a dynamic process of change it means that although the sinophobic image dominated academic discourse since Herder and Hegel, and for quite some time after them, this perception was not settled and ceased to evolve. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among German Taoist scholars and related groups of writers, the sinophobic attitude shifted back to a sinophilic one. Both sinophobia and sinophilia cannot be understood without considering the social, political, and cultural background in which they emerged. Because the study of Taoism by German scholars has emerged from a context completely different from that of earlier European sinophilia and subsequent sinophobia, its study thus cannot be compared to the views of Leibniz, nor can it be applied to the Eurocentric concepts of Herder or Hegel.

Chapter 2 Taoism in the Context of German Orientalism

What is Orientalism? There is no definition of what it is that satisfies everyone. Its scope and definition vary according to the time periods scholars study and the subjects who practice Orientalism. For example, Srinivas Aravamudan who studied the Oriental narrative fictions written during the Enlightenment era, defined this field of study as “Enlightenment Orientalism”.⁷⁰ It is fundamentally different from the Orientalism with the focus of German Old Testament scholars studied by Suzanne Marchand. Regardless of the purposes, it seems that all Western imaginations of the Orient—learning practices, discussions over Oriental matters, classification and dissemination of knowledge, etc.—can be broadly subsumed under the domain of Orientalism. The study of Taoism by German scholars is also a practice of Orientalism. Given the vast scope and long-time span of the field of Orientalism, it is necessary to ask: under what kind of perspective and in what tradition of Orientalism should the study of Taoism in this period should be understood? This question has crucial implications for the understanding of specific writers and works in subsequent chapters.

In the first part of this chapter, I argue that the Saidian theory of Orientalism does not apply to German scholars’ studies of Taoism. The German Orientalist tradition of focusing on religion, as proposed by Marchand, is also inapplicable. Zhang Chunjie’s approach, which breaks down colonial versus colonized approaches to a certain extent, provides the inspiration for the key concept of this thesis, namely, the “active influence”. I provide a definition of the term of “active influence”, which in turn sets the approach to the study of Taoism’s influence in modern German literature.

⁷⁰ Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 4.

In the second part of this chapter, I provide an introduction to key philosophical concepts of Taoism. At the same time, I examine several early German translations of *Tao Te Ching* and analyze the changing understanding of Taoist thought among German sinologists. Some of these translations suffered from a problematic understanding of Taoist philosophy from a Christian perspective until Richard Wilhelm's re-translations of the classics corrected these problems. Wilhelm's translations become an important source for subsequent writers studying Taoism.

2.1 The German Orientalism Tradition

Edward Said defines Orientalism as a mode of discourse that constructs a power hegemony. At the same time it is also a style of thinking that distinguishes between the Orient and the Occident.⁷¹ Orientalism constrained the European understanding of the Orient because it was full of stereotypes, imagination and lack of reality. Europeans produced knowledge about the Orient according to their own will and interests, and in the process the Orient did not have the right to speak for itself. Orientalists did not limit their work to this fanciful and prejudiced understanding, they had to make the Orient perform, the power of the Orient had to be absorbed into European values, civilization, interests and goals.⁷² Thus Orientalism, as described by Said, is a process of alienation of the East. This created a dichotomy between the Occident and the Orient, with Europe in an active dominant and the Orient in a passive subjugated position, completely without agency. Another important argument beyond this is that the knowledge created by related fields of Orientalism, such as philology, lexicography, history, biology, etc., confirmed the authority of colonial institutions and aided colonial activities. Said discusses extensively the Anglo-French, as well as American after the World War II, practices of

⁷¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

⁷² Said, *Orientalism*, 238.

Orientalism, but he intentionally excludes German Orientalism from this discourse due to its own peculiarities. He writes that “the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual.”⁷³ Although he saw distinctions in German Orientalism, without fully discussing its traditions and history, he quickly concluded that German Orientalism was essentially no different in its potency from that of Britain and France: “Yet what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture.”⁷⁴ The reason why authority is important and is emphasized in italics in Said’s original text is that authority is the basis for establishing power hegemony. It was on this basis that Europe could manipulate and colonize the Orient. Therefore, Said implied that German Orientalism was also the forerunner and assistant of colonialism. His account of Orientalism in the period of British and French colonial expansion is undoubtedly accurate. However, the studies on the Orient in Europe have a long-lasting history and includes a vast number of academic fields. Although Said notes that his intention is not to “attempt an encyclopedic narrative history of Orientalism,”⁷⁵ the fact that he names the European discourse of the Orient in a specific period of time based almost solely on Anglo-French endeavors as “Orientalism”, has forced critics or scholars of Orientalism in other periods or countries to add specific qualifiers to the term “Orientalism”, such as German Orientalism, Enlightenment Orientalism, and so on. This seems to make the term Orientalism the proper name to only refer to the kind of Orientalism discussed by Said.

⁷³ Said, *Orientalism*, 19.

⁷⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 19.

⁷⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 16.

Scholars of German Orientalism have pointed out the limitations and inapplicability of Said's theory in respect to his (non)treatment of German discourses. In her book *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, Nina Berman demonstrates five stages of European Orientalism: the first stage is the medieval period during which the East possessed a realistic character for the German cultural sphere and its image depended on the respective domestic political context and actual political and economic events of the time; the second stage is in the 14th and 15th centuries when a fundamental shift in the balance of power between Europe and the Middle East happened, with the fear and panic generated by the ongoing expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the demonization of the Turks and Islam; the third stage is the 18th century that has witnessed a series of military conflicts that led to the slow disempowerment of the Ottoman Empire and, at the same time, a new self-confidence of the European powers against it; the fourth stage was the emergence of Eurocentrism in the 19th century which legitimized European domination over the rest of the world through explicit efforts to interpret language, culture, or world history; and the last one is the continuation of racist theories and colonialism and imperialism from World War II to the present.⁷⁶ Berman's delineation of the historical stages of European Orientalism shows that Said's Orientalism applies at most to the fourth stage she proposed.

Susanne Marchand, through a detailed study of German Oriental scholars, also presents a view diametrically opposed to Said's. In her view, German Orientalism is no longer a discourse that constitutes hegemony or a product of empire or colonialism, but a long-standing academic tradition. This scholarly tradition of studying the Orient is inseparable from German biblical

⁷⁶ Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, (Stuttgart: M und P. Verl. für Wiss. und Forschung, 1996), 24-25, 28-29, 31-32.

studies. Marchand argues that the culture and politics of German Orientalism is less determined by modern issues—such as how to communicate with or exert power over the natives—than by traditional, almost primitive Christian questions, eg, what parts of the Old Testament are true and relevant to Christians? How much did the ancient Israelites contribute to the Egyptians, Persians and Assyrians? Where was the Garden of Eden and what language was spoken there? Were the Jews the only people who received divine revelation?⁷⁷ By studying German Orientalists she concludes that German Orientalism should be defined as a serious and continuous study of Asian cultures, “something older, richer, and stranger, something enduringly shaped by the longing to hear God’s Word, to understand the meaning of his revelation, and to propagate (Christian) truths as one understood them.”⁷⁸ It is interesting that in her articulation she believes that she was “forced” to come to this conclusion that German Orientalism was not a product of empire.⁷⁹ This seems to say that she is not trying to exonerate German Orientalist scholars, but that this is the pure fact and that there is indeed little evidence pointing to the imperialist intentions of German Orientalists. It is not difficult to separate the German scholars who collected textual facts of Oriental folk poetry, ancient religion, primitive languages, etc., and used this knowledge in the study of the Old Testament from the shadow of colonialism or imperialism. After all, they had not yet lived through the era of German imperialism. But even in the later times of colonial expansion, with the emergence of racism and Eurocentrism, Marchand’s study shows that German Orientalists were still more concerned with issues related to Christianity. For instance, Paul Deussen’s desire to use Schopenhauer and Indian philosophy first and foremost to clean up

⁷⁷ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2009), XXIV.

⁷⁸ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 1.

⁷⁹ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 1.

Christianity rather than to denigrate Jews.⁸⁰ Moreover, the knowledge produced by Orientalism cannot be considered as automatically facilitating or serving colonial authority without discrimination. Some Orientalist scholars in the Empire even consciously refused to serve its colonial intentions with their scholarly activities. For example, Otto Franke, a sinologist and Germany's only full-time professor of East Asian languages, believed that sinologists did not want to become mere tools of state officials or businessmen and was convinced that Germany needed a new, more relevant humanism that is created and implemented by scholars rather than politicians.⁸¹ Marchand points out that Orientalism during the Empire contributed to some extent to the expansion of German colonial power, but it is important to note that "the service orientalists provided in the context of the exploitative actions and cultural representations going on around them — *the Reich surely would have colonized without them*".⁸²

Although Said's definition of Orientalism is fundamentally different from the German Orientalist tradition as demonstrated by Marchand, his approach to Orient and Occident as absolute opposites can certainly be applied to the study of a particular genre of literature during a particular period. In her book *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany 1770-1870*, although Susanne Zantop points out the shortcomings of Said's Orientalist theory, such as that he did not explore what Homi Bhabha calls "unconscious positivity", in her study of German colonialist fiction, she takes a similar approach in treating German and non-European cultures.⁸³ She begins by examining how German scholars constructed their understanding of non-European civilizations through travel literature before colonial fantasies

⁸⁰ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 309.

⁸¹ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 345.

⁸² Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 348. My emphasis.

⁸³ Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany 1770-1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 4.

appeared in fiction. She refers to travelogues as “intellectual colonialism” and argues that they “became a vehicle for assessing the cultural distance between ‘them’ and ‘us’”.⁸⁴ This is followed by an examination of how theories of gender, race, etc. in 18th century Germany defined the Eurocentric national identity of Germans and how this identity threatened or allured the other. The travelogues and theories that preceded the colonial fiction are like the European knowledge of the Orient described by Said, and in her case they serve the colonial fantasy of the fiction. Besides this, when it comes to the analysis of specific literary works, Zantop, like Said, places Germany and non-European countries in framework where the two parties are completely opposed to each other, or as Zhang names it “the colonizer-versus-colonized model”,⁸⁵ i.e. the Germans are active, controlling and powerful, and the non-Europeans are possessed, dominated and voiceless. For example, she discusses the German marriage novel romance in which European conquerors are the male protagonists and Native Americans are the female. This genre of literature constructs a controlled three-step process of colonial take over: non-European female is firstly as bride which implies the familiarization of the other; then as wife, as a process of taking possession of the other; and lastly as “land”, to depopulated and dehumanized the other, and the other thus becomes an empty space to be filled and cultivated.⁸⁶ From her study we see a dominated other as part of the Western self-recognition.

The reason for identifying the distinction between German Orientalism and Saidian Orientalism here is that in fact only a modicum of colonialist intentions, stereotypical bias or fantasy can be found in the German scholars’ studies of Taoism at the turn of the century. Germany and China are not in opposition against each other due to an imbalance of power in the

⁸⁴ Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 41.

⁸⁵ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 6.

⁸⁶ Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 137.

case of German Taoism study. For the same reason, Zantop's the colonizer-versus-colonized model cannot be used when analyzing German literature containing Taoist ideas. Qingdao was a German colonial town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but this has no relevance to German scholars studying Taoism and the literature associated with it. Moreover, the Orient should never be understood as the antithesis of the Occident. The concepts of Orient and Occident are mutually based on each other, and their influence on cultural development interacts with one another. No one side exerts absolute control over the other in its development because of its own absolute authority. In other words, even the colonized do not lose all their agency or have no active influence on the colonizer simply because they are dominated. In her book *Transculturality and German Discourse in the Age of European Colonialism*, Zhang deconstructs the binary in dealing with European and non-European cultures, while introducing the concept of transculturality with the aim of enhancing the visibility of non-European agency which is overlooked by the debate over the empire or Enlightenment and applying this agency to literary analysis. She argued that the agency is almost exclusively given to the European colonizers in the critique of Orientalist representations or the insistence on Enlightenment's critical stance, while the non-European are depicted as the passive and exploited objects and she thus intends to use the notion of transculturality as an alternative perspective.⁸⁷ Transculturality is defined as a "concept that recognizes the contribution of non-European cultures in European and German discourses while not ignoring Eurocentric and condescending elements".⁸⁸ In the framework of the colonizer-versus-colonized, the influence of the Other on European culture is passive. It is done by the Europeans who have appropriated the knowledge of the Other in

⁸⁷ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 7.

⁸⁸ Zhang, *Transculturality*, 8.

accordance with their self-recognition, fantasy, imagination as well as with their colonial aspirations for the non-European. By analyzing European and non-European cultural exchanges through the perspective of transculturality, Zhang confirms that non-European contributions to German literary discourse were not solely accomplished in this way.

Therefore, there are at least two kinds of non-European cultural influences on Europe: the first is a voiceless and passive influence without agency, which is a derivative of Saidian Orientalism, colonialism, or Eurocentrism. The second type is in the cultural exchange in which European scholars, such as Sinologists, Indologists, linguists, etc., study various non-European aspects on the basis of facts and the reality. Their findings are used in discussions about Europe itself, or in the creative work of literature or art. The distinction between the two lies in the difference in the intention and the objective of the knowledge produced in the process of knowing the other. The first kind of impact is closely related to the European intention to differentiate, control, and colonize. The purpose of the knowledge acquired with this intention thus naturally has the target on the other, thus creating an irreconcilable binary opposition, not contributing to a genuine understanding of the non-European. The intentions associated with the second type of influence can vary, such as for the purpose of the study of religious history, the construction of linguistic theories, or simply being fascinated by other cultures. But they have one thing in common: they do not aim to degrade, control, or colonize the other. The objective of knowledge also changed radically, as the knowledge acquired by European scholars eventually served Europe itself and is used to discuss its own religious, social, political, aesthetic, and other issues. In the process, non-European reality speaks for itself without being imagined or manipulated. Distinguished from the first kind of passive influence in the absence of non-European voice, I call the second kind “active influence”. The study and discussion of Taoism in

Germany at the turn of the century and the use of related ideas by writers of the same period in their literary works belong to the active influence of Taoism on German literature. In the following chapters, I will analyze German Taoist studies from this perspective and how writers used Taoist ideas to discuss issues of immediate relevance to German society.

2.2 Taoism

Taoism is an ancient Chinese school of thought that dates back to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. The founding figures of the school are Laozi and Zhuangzi. In both Confucian and Taoist classics, there are several references to Confucius having sought advice from Laozi, which indicates that Laozi lived at about the same time as Confucius, around the 5th century B.C.E. A brief account of Laozi's life is given in Sima Qian's *Shiji* (Historical Records), in which it is believed that Laozi, whose surname is Li and first name is Er, was an archivist of the Zhou Dynasty.⁸⁹ According to legend, he decided to withdraw from worldly life and seek refuge in seclusion because he could not bear to face the decline of the Zhou Dynasty. While passing through the Hangu Pass, a guard asked him for advice on the rituals of the Zhou dynasty. Instead of answering questions about the rituals, he wrote about 5,000 words of *Tao Te Ching*, which is considered to be the first classic Taoist work. Subsequent Taoist works such as *Zhuangzi* have built on the philosophical principles revealed in this work for further interpretation, composition, and adaptation.

Zhuang Zhou, or Zhuangzi, lived from 369 to 286 B.C. He inherited and developed the ideas of Laozi. It is recorded in *Shiji* that Zhuangzi's teachings cover a very wide range of topics,

⁸⁹ Sima Qian, “史记: 列传 : 老子韩非列传 - 中国哲学书电子化计划,” Chinese Text Project, accessed February 21, 2022, <https://ctext.org/shiji/lao-zi-han-fei-lie-zhuan/zhs>.

but their essence is attributed to the words of Laozi.⁹⁰ While *Tao Te Ching* sets out Laozi's philosophical concepts in direct and concise words, in some cases even abstract, the book *Zhuangzi* builds on this by further elaborating and explaining Laozi's ideas through fables, dialogues, etc. One of the many examples of this kind in *Zhuangzi* is the story of Catalpas, cypresses and mulberry trees. This story was included in the Richard Wilhelm's translation *Dschuang Dis: Das Wahre Buch vom Südlichen Blütenland* and later was used in one of Brecht's plays. The story points out that all those useful trees were cut down to make various kinds of goods. Although they grow well, they suffer from their "usefulness". This story is thus an elaboration of the dialectical principal transformation of the two sides of things in the *Tao Te Ching* and the reasoning of non-action by using the examples from daily life.

Taoist thought considers *Tao* as the origin force of all things. The Chinese word 道 (*Tao*) has two meanings, one being road or path, another one meaning to express or speak out. But neither of these meanings is what Laozi meant by the *Tao*. *Tao* has the quality of namelessness. In *Tao Te Ching* it says that there is something before the formation of heaven and earth, and it does not depend on any external force, but exists independently and never stops, runs in a cycle that never fails, and can be the foundation of all things. Laozi did not know its name, so he can just call it "Tao".⁹¹ Laozi uses *Tao* to refer to the totality of all things in their spontaneous state. *Tao* has the quality of imperceptibility. He says that the *Tao* that can be spoken of is not the *Tao* that determines the origin of the universe. In addition to not being able to be spoken, *Tao* cannot be apprehended by all our mere senses, for example seeing or hearing. *Tao* as an undefinable and imperceptible abstraction, is the fundamental driving force that generates all things: *Tao* creates

⁹⁰ Sima, 《史记：列传：老子韩非列传》.

⁹¹ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 25.

one, one creates two, two creates three, and three creates all things.⁹² One represents the state of chaos at the beginning of the universe. From the one, two forces, namely *Yin* and *Yang*, are produced. *Yin* and *Yang* are two opposing forces within the same unity. A new being that is created from the contradiction and conflict between these two opposing forces is the three. Anything produced by the two forces of *Yin* and *Yang* can be called three, so three refers to all things, i.e., three creates all things.

Similar to *Tao*, the word 德 (*Te*) is also not to be taken in its literal meaning, which is virtue or morality. There are two layers of relationship between *Tao* and *Te*. One is the collaboration in the process of creation and development of things: Laozi said that *Tao* creates all things and *Te* nurtures all things.⁹³ Another relationship between them shows that *Te* does not function independently of *Tao*. Chapter 21 of *Tao Te Ching* says that *Te* is broad and all-encompassing in its forms, but always obeys *Tao*. Their relationship is not only a collaborative one, but also one in which *Te* is subordinate to *Tao*. *Tao* itself is invisible, and *Te* is its concrete representative, or in other words, the expression of *Tao*'s effect on all things. *Te* does not have the transcendent nature of *Tao*. The transcendent nature means that it does not change with all things, nor does it perish with them. *Tao* is a unity, while all things exist in different forms. *Tao* is the One, while all things are innumerable and derived from it. All things do not lose *Tao* because of their changing or developing forms. The manifestation of *Tao* in particular things is *Te*. *Te* is the nature trait of all things, that is, the natural property of all things. Zhangzi's concept

⁹² Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 42.

⁹³ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 51.

of “順物自然” (*Shunwu Ziran*, Compliance with the natural properties of things) refers to allowing all things to develop and change according to their own *Te*, i.e. their own nature.⁹⁴

Things are not static after they are created by *Tao*, but rather constantly subject to change. The two forces of *Yin* and *Yang* generated by *Tao* are the fundamental driving forces of this change. *Yin* is dark, feminine, passive, and receptive; *Yang* is bright, masculine, active, and creative. The Taoist symbol of *Taiji* shows the relationship between the two (see *Figure One* below). The black part represents *Yin* and the white part represents *Yang*. They have clear boundaries yet contain each other in themselves. When *Yin* increases within a certain range, *Yang* decreases. When *Yin* reaches its extreme, it becomes *Yang*. The same process of change also applies to *Yang*. A new unity is formed when *Yin* and *Yang* clash and intermingle with each other and reach a state of harmony.⁹⁵ The concept of *Yin* and *Yang* embodies the dialectical view of Taoism: they are in the unity of opposites. The mutual opposition, dependence, transformation, and reciprocity of things are revealed through the relationship between *Yin* and *Yang*. Thus, Laozi said that being and non-nothing can transform into one another, difficult and easy form each other, long and short reveal each other, high and low enrich each other, sound and voice harmonize each other, front and back follow each other - this is eternal.⁹⁶ According to the Taoist view, there is no absolute good or evil. The so called good exists only because of the contrast with evil, and if they are separated from each other, then both will cease to exist. Laozi opposes the use of the standard of good and evil to judge things, not only because the relationship between the two is relative and can be transformed into each other, but also because

⁹⁴ Zhuang Zhou, “庄子：内篇：应帝王 - 中国哲学书电子化计划,” Chinese Text Project, accessed February 23, 2022, <https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/normal-course-for-rulers-and-kings/zhs>.

⁹⁵ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 42.

⁹⁶ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 2.

the so-called standard is man-made, which does not have eternal transcendence like *Tao*. For the same reason, Taoism opposes the moral teaching and bookish learning advocated by Confucianism.



Figure 1. Symbol of *Taji*

Whether in the governance of a state or in one's personal life, Taoism advocates the method of 無為 (*Wu Wei*, non-action). This advocacy is also based on the dialectical view of Taoism. Using the example of the wheel, containers, and houses, Laozi illustrates that these objects can have their respective function only because of the empty space that they have. Their function represents being, while the empty part is non-being.⁹⁷ Similarly, *Wu Wei* does not represent a passive or negative attitude. It is a prerequisite for things to be able to develop according to the laws of *Tao*. If people act according to their own will or personal desire, then the action will occupy the space for the development of *Tao* and make it inoperative. The essence of *Wu Wei* is to act following the laws of nature. Many translators have inaccurately translated *Wu Wei* as non-action. The principle of *Wu Wei* requires people to act but with disinterest and detachment. Laozi says that those who seek the way of *Tao* have their passions and desires reduced day by day and in the end, they are reduced and reduced again to finally reach the state of *Wu Wei*.⁹⁸ That is to say that their actions should not be bound by social distinctions, sensual desires or moral teachings. Since man as a microcosm is not separated from

⁹⁷ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 11.

⁹⁸ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 48.

the macrocosm, *Tao* is naturally present in the individual and governs his development as it is present in all other things in the form of *Te*. One has to find and return to *Tao* from within, free from the entanglements of the external world, and use the laws of *Tao* as a guideline for action. Not only should individuals act in accordance with the principle of *Wu Wei*, but also the same norm is needed to govern the country. Laozi's perspective is that the more taboos there are in the world, the poorer the people become; the sharper weapons the people have, the more chaotic the country falls into; the more skills the people have, the stranger things happen; the stricter the decrees, the more thieves increase. Therefore, the sages who follow *Tao* would say that if they follow the principle of *Wu Wei*, the people will nurture themselves; if they seek peace, the people will naturally be rich; if they have no desire, the people will naturally be simple.⁹⁹

It is important to note that the Taoist philosophical ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi should not be mistaken with Taoist religion. Taoist religion believes in Laozi as its founder. Although the religion nominally holds *Tao* as its supreme faith and draws theoretically on elements of Taoist thought, its followers worship immortals, have congregations and organizations, as well as a series of religious rituals and activities, all of which are never mentioned or implied in the books of Laozi or Zhuangzi. In addition, their religious practices are contrary to the original principle of *Tao*. For example, Taoist monks hoped to obtain an elixir through alchemy and to become immortal through ritual practice. This directly contradicts the discovery of *Tao* from within and the compliance with its laws of development, as required by *Wu Wei*. The early Jesuits in China also noted the difference between philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism. In Ricci's diary, he calls Laozi a philosopher, and the groups engaged in related religious activities he labeled "religious sects". He wrote "The third religious sect is called Lauzu, ..., the Old Man

⁹⁹ Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter. 57.

Philosopher... left no writings of his doctrine, nor does it appear that he desired to institute a new or separate cult. After his death, however, certain sectaries, called the Taufu, named him as the head of their sect and compiled various books and commentaries from other religions...”.¹⁰⁰

Ricci, however, does not give any description of the philosophical thought of Taoism, but focuses entirely on the formation, development, beliefs, and ritual practices of Taoist sects. This contrasts sharply with his presentation of Confucianism in terms of its teaching, principles, concepts, etc. It should be noted that Ricci used the term “religious” to describe the Taoist groups, but for the missionaries, there was no religion in China and it was they who introduced into Chinese the term 迷信 (*Mi Xin*), literally “deviant belief”, to describe Taoism.¹⁰¹ These facts illustrate the ignorance or lack of concern of the early missionaries for Taoist thought, which also explains why philosophical Taoism was not discovered and studied by German scholars until the end of the nineteenth century, after a long lag.

2.3 Taoism in Germany at the Turn of the Century

German scholars and writers were able to properly study and understand Taoist thought, instead of seeing Taoism as deviant belief, thanks to the translation of Taoist classics into German, first of all *Tao Te Ching*. The earliest German versions of *Tao Te Ching* include Reinhold von Plaenckner’s *Lao-Tse Tao-Te-King: Der Weg Zur Tugend* (1870), Victor von Strauss’ *Lao-Tse’s Tao Te King* (1870) and Friedrich Wilhelm Noak’s *Taotekking von Laotsee* (1888). Malcolm Read notes that *Tao Te Ching* was frequently translated and interpreted because during this period “Germany was full of prophets and saviours eager to offer substitute religions. Many turned to Taoism as a source of religious inspiration; the *Tao-te-king* was to become a

¹⁰⁰ Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 102.

¹⁰¹ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 16.

bridge between Germany and China.”¹⁰² In this way, it seems that the attention given to Taoism in Germany can be attributed to a significant extent to the German Orientalist tradition, as proposed by Marchand, of using Oriental texts to explore domestic religious issues. The earliest example of the inclusion of *Tao Te Ching* within German esoteric religious and philosophical traditions is Franz Hartmann’s *Theosophie in China: Betrachtungen über das Tao Teh King* (1897).¹⁰³

Most of the early German versions of *Tao Te Ching* were retranslated from the French versions. However, it is not clear from which version Hartmann’s was translated, since he did not write a preface to his translation, as most of other translators did, to indicate his sources of information or his view of *Tao Te Ching* in general. But he wrote extensive commentaries and explanations for each chapter of *Tao Te Ching*, from which his position on Taoist thought can be seen. The translation and interpretation of the most essential concepts of Taoism, such as *Tao*, reveal whether a translator takes a religious or secular approach to Taoist thought, or whether he understands these ideas accurately. Hartmann uses two expressions for *Tao*, one is *Pfad* (path), and the other is to use its pronunciation directly: *Tao*. To him, *Pfad*, as the literal meaning of the Chinese character *Tao*, is the process of finding and realizing the transcendent *Tao*. He equates the transcendent *Tao* with Jesus. In Chapter 14 of *Tao Te Ching* Laozi expresses the idea that he who can grasp the long-existing *Tao* and use it to master the concrete things that exist in reality will be able to recognize and understand the beginning of the universe; this is called knowing the law of *Tao*. Hartmann translates this thought as “Dennoch hat derjenige den Pfad gefunden, der

¹⁰² Malcolm Read, “China and Germany: A Study of Images and Influences of China in German Literature” (Dissertation, University of Hull, 1977), 30.

¹⁰³ Read, *China and Germany*, 32.

nach der alten Weisheit des Tao lebt” [Nevertheless, the one who lives according to the ancient wisdom of *Tao* has found the path] and writes his comment:

Nur das Göttliche im Menschen kann die Gottheit, d. h. sich selber, erkennen. Für alles, was nicht göttlich ist, und folglich auch für den menschlichen irdischen Verstand, bleibt dieses Licht ein unergründliches Geheimnis. „Christus“ im Menschen spricht: „Ich bin das Licht.“ Wer dieses Licht kennen will, muss in dasselbe eingehen und in seiner Persönlichkeit darin aufgehen. Diejenigen, welche in ihrem Eigendünkel sich „Jesus“ gegenüberstellen und ihn im Äusseren suchen, erkennen ihn nicht. Wohl aber derjenige, der in „Jesus“, d. h. Im Lichte der göttlichen Selbsterkenntnis lebt. Diese göttliche Selbsterkenntnis ist die göttliche Liebe, d. h. Die Liebe zum höchsten Guten, welche ganz in diesem Gegenstande ihrer Anbetung aufgeht und dadurch Eins mit demselben wird. Wer ausser „Jesus“ (Tao) auch noch sich selber liebt, der liebt nur sich selbst und kennt „Jesus“ nicht ; denn man kann die ewige Wahrheit nicht in sich aufnehmen, so lange man selber die Nichtwahrheit ist und an derselben festhält.¹⁰⁴

Only the divine in man can recognize the divinity, i.e. himself. For everything that is not divine, and consequently also for the human earthly mind, this light remains an unfathomable mystery. “Christ” in man speaks, “I am the light.” Whoever wants to know this light must enter into it and become absorbed in it in his personality. Those who, in their self-conceit, confront "Jesus" and seek him in the outside, do not recognize him. But he who lives in Jesus, i.e. in the light of divine self-recognition, does. This divine self-recognition is the divine love, i.e. the love for the highest good, which is completely absorbed in this object of its worship and thereby becomes one with it. He who loves not only “Jesus” (Tao) but also himself, loves only himself and does not know "Jesus"; for one cannot receive the eternal truth into oneself as long as one is the non-truth and holds on to it.

Hartmann accurately recognized that *Tao* must be found within each person and cannot be found externally. He associates this understanding with the religious view that Jesus lives in every person, thus equating the concept of *Tao* with Jesus. For other chapters of *Tao Te Ching*, he also explains them through the fundamental Christian perspective, and often includes specific chapters from the Bible for readers to compare with both. It is impossible to know whether he saw Taoism itself as a religion, but he did see *Tao Te Ching* as a work parallel to the Bible. Read

¹⁰⁴ Franz Hartmann, *Theosophie in China: Betrachtungen über das Tao Teh King* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Friedrich, 1897) 29-30.

argues that Hartmann's synthesis of Taoist and Christian thought is "is a form of syncretism which tries to support a failing religious belief by seeking confirmation of personally and intuitively held views in the writings of other cultures and historical periods."¹⁰⁵ Such an approach is similar to the early Jesuits' attempts to explain Christian doctrine to the Chinese in terms of Confucianism. But in this way, the uniqueness of *Tao Te Ching* was not discovered, and some of its concepts were even misinterpreted. After all, Laozi's intention was far from establishing a religion. The drawbacks of understanding Taoist teaching from a Christian perspective is more evident in Julius Grill's translation.

Julius Grill's *Lao-tszes Buch vom höchsten Wesen und vom höchsten Gut (Tao-tě-king)* was published in 1910. At the time when he was working on his book, he strongly agreed with Rudolf Dvoták that too little was known about Taoism, and that Laozi was only hastily passed over as a supplement to Mencius and Confucius.¹⁰⁶ Grill was frustrated by the fact that he could not find many books in the library to help him with his project. However, the reason why he did not give up on the project of the translation of *Tao Te Ching* was because "es sich hier für die moderne Wissenschaft um Die Einlösung einer Ehrenschild ersten Rangs handle". [it is about the redemption of a debt of honor of the first rank for modern science]¹⁰⁷ His translation is based on Stanislas Julien's French version, *Lao Tseu Tao Te King-Le livre de la voie et de la vertu composé dans le VI siècle avant l'ère chrétienne par le philosophe Lao-Tseu traduit en français et publié avec le texte chinois et un commentaire perpétuel* [Lao Tseu Tao Te King-The book of the way and the virtue composed in the Sixth Century before the Christian era by the philosopher

¹⁰⁵ Read, *China and Germany*. 33.

¹⁰⁶ Julius Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch vom höchsten Wesen und vom höchsten Gut (Tao-tě-king)* (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, 1910) V.

¹⁰⁷ Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch*, VI.

Lao-Tseu translated into French and published with the Chinese text and a running commentary], and refers to other commentaries on Taoist classics.

Although Grill has claimed that “Ich habe mich in meiner eigenen Uebersetzung vor allen Dingen bemüht, den Gedanken möglichst treu wiederzugeben” [In my own translation, I have tried above all to reproduce the idea as faithfully as possible], his use of Christian principles to translate and interpret *Tao Te Ching* inevitably takes his text away from its original meaning to some degree and creates difficulties for his translation.¹⁰⁸ Starting from the title of the book, Grill translates *Tao* and *Te* as *das höchste Wesen* [the highest being] and *das höchste Gut* [the highest good]. The word “Tao” can indeed be called the highest being because of its cosmogonic nature, but his association of the Laozi with Jesus makes the Taoist principle involuntarily more or less personified.¹⁰⁹ The concept of *Tao* is thus given additional qualities that it does not possess. Grill writes:

Indem er nun aber das Wesen des *Tao* d. h. des absolut Höchsten als reine, selbstlose Liebe zur Welt erkennt, kommt er nicht bloß dazu, wie nachmals Jesus, in dem ewig gleichbleibenden und unterschiedslos Böse wie Gute segnenden Verhalten des Himmels zu den Erdbewohnern die allgemeinst verständliche Erweisung jenes vorbildlichen höchsten Liebeswesens zu erblicken, sondern leitet er eben hieraus auch die allgemeine Verpflichtung des Menschen zu einer Liebe ab, die sich selbstlos in den Dienst des Nächsten hingibt, und die grundsätzlich und in allen Fällen das Böse mit Gutem vergilt.

But by recognizing the essence of the *Tao*, i. e. of the absolute highest as pure, he (Laozi) does not only come to see, as Jesus did later, in the eternally unchanging and indiscriminately evil and good blessing behavior of heaven to the inhabitants of earth the most generally understandable demonstration of that exemplary highest love being, but he also derives from this the general obligation of man to a love that selflessly devotes himself to the service of the neighbor, and which basically and in all cases repays evil with good.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Grill, *Lao-tsches Buch*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ A. Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China*, 95.

¹¹⁰ Grill, *Lao-tsches*, VII.

Because Grill sees Laozi as the same as Jesus, *Tao* becomes “das Urbild des Guten” [the archetype of good] as well as “das vollkommene Vorbild aller menschlichen Sittlichkeit” [the perfect model of all human morality], so much so that he believes that the mandate given to each person by *Tao* is devoting himself to the service of the neighbor and repaying evil with good.¹¹¹ Such a view led Grill to translate the concept of *Te* as the highest good. The dualism of good and evil in Christianity does not exist in Taoist thought in the first place, and there is therefore no repaying evil with good. Secondly, Laozi opposes all human morality. Instead of establishing the perfect model of morality, the essence of *Tao* lies in the abandonment of it thus returning to nature and the objective laws of *Tao*. Lastly, the relationship between individuals as advocated by Laozi is also different from that revealed by Grill through the Christian perspective. Laozi depicts his ideal community environment and the relationship between neighbors: people are so content within themselves that they don’t have to visit others, even though they live so close that the neighbors’ roosters crowing or dogs barking can be heard.¹¹² Rather than preaching love and the Gospel as Christians do to others, Laozi advocates discovering *Tao* within one’s self.

In addition to the “christianized” essence of *Tao*, Grill gets further away from his purported goal, “in das Geheimnis des Buches selbst einzudringen, das uns als das am meisten authentische Zeugnis seines Geistes geblieben ist” [to reach into the secret of the book itself, which has remained to us as the most authentic testimony of his spirit], when some other basic Christian concepts are added to the translation and commentary.¹¹³ In commenting on Chapter 23 of *Tao Te Ching*, where Laozi originally intended to express that people should act according to the principles of *Tao*, because *Tao* will accept the person who follows *Tao*, otherwise *Tao* will

¹¹¹ A. Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China*, 96.

¹¹² Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, Chapter 80.

¹¹³ Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch*, VI.

leave him. Grill interprets this as the *Tao* is respecting the free will of the individual, “Stets aber achtet es die Willensfreiheit” [But it always respects the freedom of will], namely people can choose freely whether they follow *Tao* or not.¹¹⁴ The concept of free will did not exist in any Chinese schools of thought of the same period as Taoism. Confucianism, for example, holds that people should comply with ethics and morality, and Legalism believes that they should submit to the laws and policies of the state. Grill’s view undoubtedly misinterprets Laozi’s original intent. On the basis of free will, *Wu Wei* is interpreted as “Erzwungen wird bei keinem, was zu seiner Rettung oder Vervollkommnung erforderlich ist. Es wird m.a. W. im Reich des Tao nichts ‘gemacht’ (*wu-wei*)!” [Nobody is forced to do what is necessary for his salvation or perfection. In other words, nothing is done (*wu-wei*) in the realm of Tao!]¹¹⁵ According to this interpretation, *Wu Wei* ceases to be a method of pursuing *Tao* and becomes an expression of man’s free will. Moreover, in Taoism the goal of insisting on *Wu Wei* is to return to the initial state of the *Tao* without being troubled by external objects, not to receive *Rettung* because of sin, as is believed in the Christian faith.

Both Hartmann’s and Grill’s versions represent early attempts by German scholars to interpret *Tao Te Ching* from a Christian perspective. Their efforts introduced German readers to a new kind of thought from China that differs from Confucianism, which had long been introduced into Europe. Their works to some extent explained various Taoist ideas, but at the same time “created” concepts that do not belong to Taoism. Although it is not known which European-language version Hartmann’s translation referenced, neither he nor Grill, like many early scholars who attempted to translate *Tao Te Ching*, had the ability to do so directly from the

¹¹⁴ Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch*, 18.

¹¹⁵ Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch*, 18.

Chinese version. Nor did they have as comprehensive an understanding of Chinese philosophical history or cultural practices as did sinologists, which led to many translation inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Even in Grill's translations, one can often see him expressing his guesses about a pronoun or concept in parentheses after a sentence and marking it with a question mark. For instance, in Chapter 2 the translation goes "Die Wesen alle regen sich (wollen etwas werden oder entstehen) und er (es? das Tao?) versagt (mit seinem Schaffen) nicht" [All things arise (want to become something or come into being) and he (it? Tao?) does not fail (with his creation)].¹¹⁶ In fact, "er" indeed refers to a person rather than to *Tao*, i.e., he who acts according to the *Tao*. Laozi's original meaning is that all things come into being according to the laws of nature, and those who act according to the *Tao* do not let their actions become the cause of things coming into being.

Scholars like Hartmann and Grill, while they are translators of *Tao Te Ching*, are first and foremost readers of. Their translations and commentaries derive in part from their understanding as readers of other foreign translations. As David Damrosch states about a different set of difficult Chinese texts "A specialist in classical Chinese poetry can gradually, over years of labor, develop a close familiarity with the vast substratum beneath each brief T'ang Dynasty poem, but most of this context is lost to foreign readers when the poem travels abroad. Lacking specialized knowledge, the foreign reader is likely to impose domestic literary values on the foreign work".¹¹⁷ Such translations of Taoist works based on foreign versions, rather than the original Chinese, combined with their lack of understanding of the Chinese cultural context, resulted in inaccuracies in their translations and the addition of Christian religious values to *Tao*

¹¹⁶ Grill, *Lao-tszes Buch*, 76.

¹¹⁷ David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4.

Te Ching. Precisely because these versions failed to provide an accurate translation based on faithfulness to the original, Richard Wilhelm explained “bei dieser überfülle der Übersetzungen...warum nun noch eine weitere dazukommen solle” [with this overabundance of translations...why add another one now?] when he retranslated *Tao Te Ching* in 1910: “Auch kommt es gerade dadurch, daß es so mitten drin steht in seinem natürlichen Zusammenhang, in eine Beleuchtung, die geeignet ist, manches, das in seiner Isoliertheit befremden muß oder unverständlich bleibt, aufzuklären und richtigzustellen.” [Also, precisely because it stands in the middle of its natural context, it is illuminated in a way that is suitable to clarify and correct many things that must be alienating or remain incomprehensible in their isolation.]¹¹⁸ Wilhelm’s reference to the “natural context” represents the authentic Chinese cultural background of Taoist thought, and his translation is also based on the original Chinese version.

In view of Wilhelm’s contribution to the translation of Chinese classics and the important influence of his work among German scholars, it is necessary to devote an appropriate amount of attention to his personal experience, especially to his Chinese experience and his attitude towards Chinese culture. Richard Wilhelm, with Chinese name of 衛希聖 (Wei Xisheng) or 衛禮賢 (Wei Lixian), was born in Stuttgart in 1873. During his 10 years of study at the Gymnasium, Wilhelm studied poetry, music, fine arts and philosophy. After completing the Gymnasium, he decided to study theology. Soon after he passed his theological exams, Wilhelm started a vicar position with the pastor Christoph Blumhardt in Bad Boll. In 1899, as city vicar in Backnang, he received the call to be a missionary and pastor for Kiautschou and went there in the same year. Although he came to China as a missionary, he did not devote himself to spreading Christianity in a dogmatic

¹¹⁸ Richard Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King: Das Buch Des Alten Vom Sinn Und Leben* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1974), 5-6.

way or evangelizing Chinese believers as other missionaries did. Shortly after he arrived in China, “[er hatte] sich vom Pfarramt zu befreien und in Berlin um einen Nachfolger gebeten, um sich ganz dem Studium Chinas und der Chinesen und der verbindenen Arbeit zwischen Deutschland und China zu widmen.” [he had to free himself from the pastorate and asked for a successor in Berlin in order to devote himself entirely to the study of China and the Chinese and to the connecting work between Germany and China.]¹¹⁹ This does not mean, of course, that he abandoned the mission given to him by the Church, but that he had a different understanding of his mission in China. In an article *Der Freiheitskampf in China* [The struggle for freedom in China], published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Wilhelm writes:

Man hat ihm Land weggenommen, man hat es durch einen Krieg dazu gezwungen, Opium einzuführen und Häfen dem fremden Handel zu öffnen, man hat ihm die christliche Mission aufgezwungen unter Anwendung von Sanktionen und Kanonenbooten. Man ist in China eingedrungen, und nicht genug, daß man dort wohnte, Handel trieb und Christentum verbreitete: man begnügte sich nicht mit der Rolle des Gastes, sondern riß die Gerichtsbarkeit über die fremden Staatsangehörigen an sich, wodurch es natürlich ausgeschlossen war, daß auch das schwerste Verbrechen gegen einen Chinesen seine volle Sühne fand.¹²⁰

Land was taken from it (China), it was forced by war to import opium and to open ports to foreign trade, the Christian mission was forced upon it with the use of sanctions and gunboats. China was invaded, and it was not enough to live, trade and spread Christianity: not content with the role of guest, jurisdiction over foreign nationals was usurped, which naturally precluded even the most serious crime against a Chinese from being fully atoned for.

This passage shows Wilhelm’s sympathy for China and against the imperialist aggression suffered by its people and his opposition to imperial colonial expansion. At the same time, he disapproved of the missionaries’ practice of imposing Christianity on the Chinese under the

¹¹⁹ Salome Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm, Der Geistige Mittler zwischen China und Europa* (Düsseldorf: Eugen Diederichs, 1956), 98.

¹²⁰ S. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, 318.

cover of imperialism. He believed that his task was to eliminate the factors that alienate people, cultures, and religions from each other, while avoiding the resulting hostility and thus promoting mutual understanding. He wrote “Wir stehen am Anfang einer neuen Zeit. Neue Lebensformen, neue Welt- und Lebensanschauungen müssen gefunden werden, die eine Menschheitskultur ermöglichen; denn die bisherigen Religionen und Kulturen waren letzten Endes doch alle national oder wenigstens kontinental beschränkt” [We are at the beginning of a new era. New ways of life, new views of the world and of life must be found that will make human culture possible; because the religions and cultures of the past were all limited to a national or at least continental scale].¹²¹ The realization of a new human culture implies the non-necessity of adhering to the dogmas or forms of the Christian faith as they are national or at least continental. His advocacy of human culture opposition to national and continental religions and cultures may have been derived from Goethe’s formulation of world literature. On this topic, Goethe writes “It is to be hoped that people will soon be convinced that there is no such thing as *patriotic art or patriotic science*. Both belong, like all good things, to the whole world, and can be fostered only by untrammelled intercourse among all contemporaries, continually bearing in mind what we have inherited from the past.” (My emphasis)¹²² In *Pekinger Abende*, Wilhelm writes an article with the title of “Goethe und die Chinesische Kultur” [Goethe and the Chinese Culture], where he analyzes some of Goethe’s works that come into direct contact with the actual Chinese spirit. In Goethe’s literary attempts, he saw “[i]mmer mehr tritt die Menschheit als Ganzes in seinen Gesichtskreis ein” [more and more mankind as a whole enters his circle of vision].¹²³ The essay

¹²¹ Richard Wilhelm, *Collected Essays from Pekinger Abende* (Peking?, 1922), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b5035389>, 17-18

¹²² Fritz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*. trans. C. A. M. Sym. (London: Routledge, 1949), 35.

¹²³ Richard Wilhelm, *Pekinger Abende*, 9.

ends with a quotation from Goethe's description of world literature, which suggests his awareness of Goethe's concept of world literature and "die Menschheit als Ganzes" that Wilhelm saw in Goethe was very likely the prototype for his "Menschheitskultur".

Wilhelm's work in China is also focused on this goal. To eliminate cultural misunderstandings, it is first necessary to accurately understand Chinese culture. To do this, learning Chinese is the first step. Before coming to China, he did not speak Chinese. His wife, Salome Wilhelm, later recalled that he devoted himself diligently to learning Chinese, even though he had to limit himself to the colloquial language for lack of time in the first few months and to often find opportunities to interact with local children so that he could also test how well his Chinese was already understood.¹²⁴ Wilhelm did not confine himself to the local European community. He had many opportunities to meet Chinese students in the schools he had established, and he also had close contacts with government officials and royalty, many of whom had a major impact on the political situation in China, such as Yuan Shikai, later President of the Republic of China. These conditions and efforts not only created the necessary conditions for Wilhelm to improve his Chinese language skills, but also allowed him to acquire a profound awareness of Chinese life, cultural traditions, beliefs, political environment, etc, all of which is the specialized knowledge that prepared and allowed him to read and translate Chinese classics in a similar way as Chinese scholars.

Among all his translations, such as *KUNGFUTSE Gespräche (Lun Yü)*, *I GING Das Buch der Wandlungen*, and *LI GI Das Buch der Sitte, Tao Te Ching* has a most special affection for him. In response to Rudolf Otto's query about Taoism, Wilhelm writes: "Das Buch ist so heilig, daß es immer in rote Seide eingewickelt ist...Ich mußte Weihrauch in meinem

¹²⁴ S. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, 85, 87.

Studierzimmer verbrennen, ich mußte die Mona Lisa von der Wand nehmen, da es sich nicht schickte, daß sie über dem Buch hing. Ich mußte die Hände waschen und den Mund reinigen...” (The book is so sacred that it is always wrapped in red silk...I had to burn incense in my office, I had to take the Mona Lisa off the wall because it was not appropriate for it to hang over the book. I had to wash my hands and clean my mouth....).¹²⁵ These rituals of his to *Tao Te Ching* are like the daily rituals of Chinese Confucian scholars in traditional societies, except that their worship was to Confucius.

The translation of *Tao Te Ching* began in 1910 and was completed in 1911. He wrote a foreword and introduction to this edition, which describes in detail Laozi, the basic contents of the book, the history of Taoism in China, etc. In particular, he highlighted the shortcomings of the previous translated German versions “die ihre Quellen nicht im Studium des chinesischen Textes hat, sondern in einem intuitiven Erfassen dessen, was andere, weniger geistvolle Übersetzer bei der Wiedergabe des Textes in englischer oder französischer Sprache sich an philosophischem Tiefsinn haben entgehen lassen.” [which has its sources not in the study of the Chinese text, but in an intuitive grasp of what other, less intellectual translators have missed out on in terms of philosophical profundity when reproducing the text in English or French.]¹²⁶ Because Taoist thought has never had anything to do with religion, a point Wilhelm also clearly recognizes, his translation does not take a Christian perspective similar to Hartmann’s or Grill’s, but rather in a context of the Chinese cultural tradition. The two basic concepts, *Tao* and *Te*, are translated as “SINN” and “LEBEN” (emphasis Wilhelm’s). The translation of “SINN” is inspired by Goethe’s *Faust* “Im Anfang war der Sinn” [In the beginning was sense].¹²⁷ Wilhelm

¹²⁵ S. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, 217.

¹²⁶ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 5.

¹²⁷ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 24-25.

cites the German definition of “Sinn” as the word that best represents the original meaning of *Tao*. “Tugend” is not suitable to be used as a translation of *Te*, because “die für einige spätere Moralabhandlungen geeignet ist, paßt bei Lotse noch weniger als bei Kungfutse.” [which is suitable for some later moral norms, fits with Laozi even less than with Confucius.]¹²⁸ Wilhelm capitalizes the letters of the words “SINN” and “LEBEN” in order to distinguish them from their original literal meaning. Like Laozi, Wilhelm cares more about finding the most appropriate words to refer to *Tao* and *Te* after making accurate interpretations of them, while avoiding misunderstandings caused by inappropriate translations. Such a translation would not be as reminiscent of the Christian concepts as “das höchste Gut”.

Because no other translated versions were used for his work, Wilhelm’s translation is more faithful to the original than any other the previous ones. In the form of the translation, the other works are almost paraphrased, i.e., they incorporate the German language conventions and add the author’s personal understanding, which makes the translation rather protracted. Instead, Wilhelm’s use of short poem-like sentences, without his own notes or comments, makes the work more concise and maintains the style of the original. In addition, other versions either ignore or adopt phonetic translations without explanation for Chinese names, places, or historical tales that appear in *Tao Te Ching* that are not familiar to Europeans. Wilhelm, however, uses his specialized knowledge of Chinese history and culture to provide the reader with their cultural contexts after the text.

Wilhelm’s great influence on Taoism in Germany at the time is owed, on the one hand, to the fact that his accurate translations did not take the text out of its proper cultural context or impose other foreign values on it, and, on the other hand, to the fact that he translated other

¹²⁸ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 26.

Taoist works in addition to *Tao Te Ching*, for example *Dschuang Dsi: Das wahre Buch vom südlichen Blütenland* [Zhuangzi: The True Book of the Southern Flowerland], *Liä Dsi: das wahre Buch vom quellenden Urgrund* [Liezi: the true book of the springing primordial ground] and *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte* [The secret of the golden flower]. These works were among the most widely read in Germany for the study of Taoism at the time. Intellectuals who studied Taoism including philosopher Martin Buber, psychologist C. G. Jung, writers like Hermann Hesse, and Bertolt Brecht all read Wilhelm's works.

Thus in Germany at the turn of the century, Confucianism was no longer the only dominant focus of German scholars studying Chinese thought. The trend that emerges from the various translations and presentations *Tao Te Ching* indicates the growing importance of Taoism as a "newly discovered" philosophical idea. Regardless of the accuracy of the translations, scholars attempted to explain the complex concepts from their own perspectives for the readers. At least Taoist thought is not seen as superstition any more or as inferior to European philosophy because of Eurocentrism. Thanks to the efforts of various translations, German intellectuals had the opportunity to understand the nature of true Taoist thought and to use it to explore their respective concerns.

Chapter 3 Hermann Hesse—Taoism: the way towards the inside

Whether in terms of religious beliefs, political views, attitudes towards social realities, or literary works, the philosophical ideas of Taoism had an important influence on Hermann Hesse. The influence of Taoism on Hesse overturned the role of the Orient as completely passive and without agency in Saidian Orientalism. Meanwhile as one of the most influential Sinophiles at the time, his attitude towards Taoism, as well as China, marks a shift of Sinophobia that Hegel and Herder advocated to Sinophilia at the turn of the century in Germany.

This chapter examines how Hesse came to appreciate Taoism, the changes Taoist thought imposed on the formation of his personal beliefs, and how he used the dialectical view of Taoism to deal with the issues of war and peace after his experiences through World War I and World War II. In addition, by examining *Innen und Außen* [Inside and Outside] and his autobiographical novel *Klingsors Letzter Sommer* [Klingsor's Last Summer], this chapter explores how Hesse used Taoist ideas in his literary works to reflect on the crises and problems that Europe, and consequently Germany, was facing at that time. These crises and problems include the psychological illnesses caused by the dichotomy and subsequent separation of the conscious and unconscious due to Europeans' excessive preoccupation with scientific and logical thinking as suggested by psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, the question of the artist's duty and artistic truth in the face of social devastation and destruction after the war, and the irreconcilable relationship between aesthetics and real social life often discussed in German literature. I argue that in dealing with these crises and problems, Hesse constantly uses the dialectic of Taoism in his attempts to reconcile the two opposing sides of the contradiction. He also uses the Taoist method of the way towards the inside, which proposes to free oneself from the disturbance of the external environment and to examine the essence of the problem from within the individual, in order to realize the transformation of the individual and society.

3.1 Hesse and Taoism

Hermann Hesse is one of the influential sinophilic German writers at the turn of the century. His life, including his literary endeavors, was influenced by oriental cultures and philosophies, mainly Indian Buddhism and Chinese Confucianism and Taoism. Hesse was raised under the mutual influence of Christianity and Indian Buddhism. Because his father, as well as his mother and her father, spent their lives in Christian missionary service in India, Hesse has “in zwei Formen Religion erlebt, als Kind und Enkel frommer rechtschaffener Protestanten und als Leser indischer Offenbarung” [experienced religion in two forms, as a child and grandchild of pious righteous Protestants and as a reader of Indian revelation].¹²⁹ Whereas Christianity was a rigid form for him, in Indian religion he had room for his imagination and “konnte die ersten Botschaften, die mich aus der indischen Welt erreichten, ohne Widerstände in mich einlassen” [was able to let in the first messages that reached me from the Indian world without any resistance].¹³⁰ Hesse later studied Chinese philosophy, which had a new influence on his religious beliefs and philosophical views: “der klassische chinesische Tugendbegriff, der mir Kung Fu Tse und Sokrates als Brüder erscheinen ließ und die verborgene Weisheit des Lao Tse mit ihrer mystischen Dynamik haben mich stark beschäftigt.” [The classical Chinese concept of virtue, which made Kung Fu Tse and Socrates seem like brothers to me, and the mystical dynamics of the mystic wisdom of Lao Tse have kept me busy.]¹³¹ The study of Chinese and Indian philosophy complement each other, and for Hesse they are equally important. In Chinese philosophy he found the missing part in Indian philosophy, namely “die Lebensnähe, die Harmonie einer Edlen, zu den höchsten sittlichen Forderungen entschlossenen Geistigkeit mit

¹²⁹ Hermann Hesse, “Mein Glaube,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 70-74, 70.

¹³⁰ Hesse, *Mein Glaube*, 72.

¹³¹ Hesse, *Mein Glaube*, 72.

dem Spiel und Reiz des sinnlichen und alltäglichen Lebens” [the closeness to life, the harmony of a noble spirituality, determined to the highest moral demands, with the play and charm of sensual and everyday life].¹³²

Like the literati in dynastic China, Hesse read many Chinese classics, including the translations of *Tao Te Ching*, *I Ching*, *Confucius Analects*, Lü Bu Wei’s *Frühling und Herbst* [Spring and Autumn], a book which consists of political theories of various schools of thought during the Spring and Autumn Period in China, Chinese poetry as well as folk tales in Pu Song Ling’s *Chinesische Geistergeschichten* [Chinese spiritual stories]. His evaluation of Chinese culture and philosophy is completely different from that of sinophobes, such as Herder or Hegel. In 1911, Hesse has complained that the Europeans had seen so little fruit from the work of the academic orientalists, implying the sinophobic misunderstanding of China.¹³³ When Hegel concluded that China had no real philosophy and was an inferior and stagnant civilization compared to Europe, he used the argument that the Chinese lacked the *innere Bestimmung*, inner determination, necessary for development. This lack of inner determination is essentially inner *Geist*, as discussed in Chapter 2. To this view, Hesse responds that “wir tun den Chinesen unrecht, wenn wir auf Grund dieses Urteils den chinesischen Geist überhaupt für steif und unphilosophisch-äußerlich halten” [we do injustice to the Chinese if, on the basis of this judgment, we consider the Chinese spirit to be stiff and unphilosophical-external in general].¹³⁴ The backwardness in modern technological and industrial development should not be seen as a negation of China’s spiritual and philosophical achievements. After the Washington Naval

¹³² Hermann Hesse, “Eine Bibliothek der Weltliteratur,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 335-372, 369-370.

¹³³ Hermann Hesse, “Chinesisches,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 25-29, 27.

¹³⁴ Hesse, *Chinesisches*, 25.

Conference in 1921, Hesse wrote in his *Chinesische Betrachtung* [Chinese observation] the statement that China, as the oldest world power, was lagging behind in weaponry and politics because it had not yet found a way to integrate into Western development, as Japan had done decades earlier.¹³⁵ However China is “reich an Leben, reich an Geist, reich an uralter Gesittung” [rich in life, rich in spirit, rich in ancient morals].¹³⁶ Contrary to Hegel’s “warning” that Chinese civilization would hinder the development of Europe, Hesse believed that:

...das Denken des alten China, zumal das des frühen Taoismus, für Europäer keineswegs eine entlegene Kuriosität ist, sondern uns im wesentlichen bestätigt, in Wesentlichem berät und hilft...wir sehen im alten China, zumal bei Lao Tse, Hinweisungen auf eine Denkart, welche wir allzusehr vernachlässigt haben, wir sehen dort Kräfte gepflegt und erkannt, um welche wir uns, mit anderm beschäftigt, allzulange nicht mehr gekümmert hatten.¹³⁷

...the thinking of ancient China, especially that of early Taoism, is by no means a remote curiosity for Europeans, but essentially confirms us, advises and helps us in essentials...we see in ancient China, especially in Lao Tse, indications of a way of thinking which we have too much neglected, we see there forces cultivated and recognized which we, occupied with other things, had not cared about for too long.

Among the various Chinese schools of thought and literary works, Taoist thought was the most influential for Hesse. At first, Hesse was introduced to Laozi by his father. He read Alexander Ular’s *Die Bahn und der rechte Weg des Lao Tse* [The Path and the Right Way of Lao Tse, 1903] as well as Grill’s translation of *Tao Te Ching*. Grill’s interpretation of Taoist teaching from a Christian perspective and the parallel between Laozi and Jesus is not recognized by Hesse, who says that Taoist teachings does not contain “eine so persönlichkräftige, große und schöne Ethik, das ihr letzter deutscher Bearbeiter, übrigens ein Theologieprofessor, den Lao-tse direkt in Parallele mit Jesus stellt.” [such a personally powerful, great and beautiful ethics, that

¹³⁵ Hermann Hesse, “Chinesische Betrachtung,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 66-69, 67.

¹³⁶ Hermann Hesse, *Chinesische Betrachtung*, 67.

¹³⁷ Hesse, *Chinesische Betrachtung*, 68.

its last German editor, by the way a professor of theology, puts Lao-tse directly in parallel with Jesus.]¹³⁸ Hesse then read Richard Wilhelm's version of *Tao Te Ching* as well as Wilhelm's other works on Chinese thought and culture. Hesse was not only well acquainted with his works, but also with Wilhelm himself. The two were friends and kept in correspondence. Hesse may have known Wilhelm before he arrived in China and became a sinologist. In 1897, when Wilhelm was a vicar in Bad Boll, he befriended Maria Bernoulli, who was later to become Hesse's wife, at a wedding feast.¹³⁹ Hesse credits Richard Wilhelm with truly introducing classic Chinese literature and wisdom to German readers. Before him, Chinese culture as "eine der edelsten und höchstentwickelten Blüten menschlicher Kultur" [one of the noblest and most highly developed blossoms of human culture] was seen as "ungekanntes belächeltes Kuriosum" [unknown and ridiculed curiosity] in the past.¹⁴⁰ In a letter to his cousin Fanny Schiler Hesse told Schiler that he owned 4 or 5 versions of *Tao Te Ching* among which he used Wilhelm's version the most because he liked the tone from Wilhelm's other translations, and also because he liked Wilhelm and his German.¹⁴¹

After Hesse learned more about Taoism, it becomes a part of his faith. Despite growing up in a Christian family, Hesse did not fully agree with the dogmatic teaching of Christianity that he received in his early years. The Christian education that he received was "durch eine strengfromme Erziehung, durch die Lächerlichkeit und Zänkerei der Theologie, durch die Langweile und gähnende Öde der Kirche" [by a strict and pious education, by the ridiculousness

¹³⁸ Hesse, *Chinesisches*, 26.

¹³⁹ S. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm*, 71.

¹⁴⁰ Hesse, *Eine Bibliothek der Weltliteratur*, 369.

¹⁴¹ Hermann Hesse, "An seine Cousine Fanny Schiler," in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Briefe: Zweiter Band 1922-1935* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), 389-390, 389-390.

and quarrelsomeness of theology, by the boredom and yawning tedium of the church].¹⁴² Hesse believes that there is only one God and only one truth, but they have different ways of expression among different peoples and in different times. Thus he “suchte also Gott auf anderen Wegen, und fand bald den indischen...Später fand [er] auch den chinesischen Weg durch Lao Tse, was für [ihn] das befreiendste Erlebnis war.” [sought God in other ways, and soon found the Indian way...Later he also found the Chinese way through Lao Tse, which was the most liberating experience for him]¹⁴³ When Hesse talks about God, this concept cannot therefore be equated with that of the Christian tradition. He searched for truth in different cultures, religions, and philosophies, and everything that could demonstrate the wisdom of truth became part of his “Gott”. The philosophical ideas of Taoism naturally became an integral part of it. Since the formation of his faith was a dynamic process of continuous learning and assimilation of other wisdom, so much so that he wrote to Klaus Mann in 1933 that he did not know how to describe his religious belief: “Ich stehe damit ziemlich allein, da meine ‘Religion’ keine konfessionelle Färbung hat, sie ist im Lauf meines Lebens aus indischen, chinesischen, christlichen und jüdischen Quellen langsam zusammen geronnen und bis heute einer verantwortlichen Formulierung nicht fähig.” [I am quite alone in this, as my ‘religion’ has no denominational coloring, it has slowly coagulated over the course of my life from Indian, Chinese, Christian, and Jewish sources, and to this day is incapable of responsible formulation.]¹⁴⁴

After the First World War, Hesse once commented on Taoist thought “Die Weisheit, die uns not tut, steht bei Lao Tse, und sie ins Europäische zu übersetzen, ist die einzige geistige

¹⁴² Hermann Hesse, “An Berthli Kappeler,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Briefe: Zweiter Band 1922-1935* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), 49-51. 50.

¹⁴³ Hesse, *An Berthli Kappeler*, 50

¹⁴⁴ Hermann Hesse, “An Klaus Mann,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Briefe: Zweiter Band 1922-1935* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), 386-387. 387.

Aufgabe, die wir zur Zeit haben.” [The wisdom we need is in Laozi, and translating it into European is the only spiritual task we have at this time.]¹⁴⁵ The philosophical wisdom of Taoism for Hesse is not a mere admiration and appreciation of Chinese culture, rather it becomes a part of the solution to his political views and social crises. In 1918 he wrote a short essay *Krieg und Frieden* [War and Peace], expressing his views on the topics. The article points out that war is a part of human life, because the instinct of man as an animal is to fear and hate others and to survive through struggle at the expense of others. In contrast, peace as an ideal concept is complex, unstable, and threatening. In order to achieve the human aspiration of peace, the divine command of “Du sollst nicht töten” [You shall not kill] was proposed a long time ago. Hesse believes that such a command is as contrary to human nature as “Du sollst nicht atmen” [You shall not breathe].¹⁴⁶ In fact the war keeps happening again and again despite of the divine command. There is a view always heard in war, as if to make people feel that what they are experiencing is the last war before peace comes: “dieser Krieg sei schon durch seinen bloßen Umfang, seine gräßliche Riesenmechanik geeignet, künftige Generationen vom Kriege abzuschrecken.” [this war, by its sheer scale, its ghastly giant mechanism, is already capable of deterring future generations from going to war.]¹⁴⁷ But deterrence and the insight into the material damage will not stop the war. Hesse wrote:

[Die Frieden kommt] nicht von Geboten und nicht aus materiellen Erfahrungen. Sie kommt, wie jeder Menschenfortschritt, aus Erkenntnis. Alle Erkenntnis aber, wenn man darunter etwas Lebendiges und nicht Akademisches versteht, hat nur einen Gegenstand. Es wird von Tausenden und tausendfach anerkannt und in tausend verschiedenen Arten ausgedrückt, ist aber nur eine Wahrheit. Es ist die Erkenntnis des Lebendigen in uns, in jedem von uns, in mir und dir, des geheimen Zaubers, der geheimen Göttlichkeit, die jeder von uns in sich trägt. Es ist die Erkenntnis von der

¹⁴⁵ A. Hsia, *Hermann Hesse und China*, 99.

¹⁴⁶ Hermann Hesse, “Krieg und Frieden,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 435-438, 436.

¹⁴⁷ Hesse, *Krieg und Frieden*, 437.

Möglichkeit, von diesem innersten Punkte aus alle Gegensatzpaare zu je der Stunde aufzuheben, alles Weiß in Schwarz, alles Böse in Gut, alle Nacht in Tag zu verwandeln. Der Inder sagt "Atman", der Chinese sagt "Tao", der Christ sagt "Gnade".¹⁴⁸

Peace does not come from commands or material experiences. It comes, like every human progress, from realization. All realization, however, if one understands it as something living and not academic, has only one object. It is recognized by thousands and thousands of expressions in a thousand different ways, but it is only one truth. It is the realization of the living in us, in each of us, in me and you, of the secret magic, of the secret divinity that each of us carries within. It is the realization of the possibility, from this innermost point, of annulling all pairs of opposites at any hour, of transforming all white into black, all evil into good, all night into day. The Indian says "Atman", the Chinese says "Tao", the Christian says "Grace".

The only solution to the conflict between war and peace is to discover and recognize *Erkenntnis*. Like *Te* as the external manifestation of *Tao*, *Erkenntnis* has an infinite number of expressions, while the truth it represents, like *Tao*, is only one. The way to find *Erkenntnis* is the same as the way to find *Tao*, which is to be free from the shackles and distractions of external things and to discover it from each person himself. On the distractions of external things, Hesse wrote "Alles, was außer uns ist, kann Feind, kann Gefahr, kann Angst und Tod werden. Mit der Erfahrung, daß all dies 'Äußere' nicht nur Gegenstand unserer Wahrnehmung, sondern zugleich Schöpfung unserer Seele ist, mit der Verwandlung des Äußeren in das Innere, der Welt in das Ich, beginnt das Tagen." [Everything that is outside of us can become enemy, can become danger, can become fear and death. With the experience that all this 'outside is not only object of our perception, but at the same time creation of our soul, with the transformation of the outside into the inside, of the world into the I, the days begin.]¹⁴⁹ The dialectical view of the interchange of opposites of things, as proposed by Laozi, is also expressed in this passage. War as human nature does not cease because it is deterred or suppressed, nor does peace arise as a result of war

¹⁴⁸ Hesse, *Krieg und Frieden*, 438.

¹⁴⁹ Hesse, *Krieg und Frieden*, 438-439.

being suppressed. When *Tao*, or *Erkenntnis* as Hesse calls it, is realized, *alle Gegensatzpaare* ceases to exist, which also includes the opposite of war and peace.

Also at the end of the war, in 1945 Hesse wrote his *Rigi-Tagebuch* [Rigi-Diary] in Rigi-Kaltbad to record his brief stay there. During those days, he received letters from friends of Swabia who were not identified by name. He commented that these friends “zur Zeit leidgeprüftesten, reifsten und weisesten in Europa sind, haben teils bewußt und willentlich, teils unbewußt und instinktiv versucht, sich völlig von allem Nationalismus zu befreien” [are at present the most long-suffering, mature and wise in Europe, have tried, partly consciously and willingly, partly unconsciously and instinctively, to free themselves completely from all nationalism].¹⁵⁰ These friends of his were dedicated to the spiritual and moral awakening of the German people after the fall of the Nazi government. Hesse recorded his reply to his friends at the end of his diary. The letter contains Hesse’s affirmation of their commitment to the battle against nationalism and offers suggestions on how to take this task forward more profoundly:

[I]hr könnt den Wahn jedes Nationalismus, den ihr ja im Grunde längst schon hasset, durchschauen und euch von ihm befreien. Ihr habet das schon weitgehend getan, aber doch noch nicht weitgehend, nicht gründlich genug. Denn wenn ihr diese Entwicklung in euch vollends vollzogen habet, dann werdet ihr über das deutsche Volk und die Kollektivschuld noch ganz andere Worte, dann werdet ihr jede Beleidigung oder Provokation ganzer Völker lesen oder anhören können, ohne euch im mindesten mitbetroffen zu fühlen. Tut diesen Schritt vollends zu Ende, und ihr werdet, ihr wenigen, eurem eigenen und jedem andern Volk an Menschenwert überlegen und einen Schritt näher bei Tao sein.¹⁵¹

You can see through the delusion of every nationalism, which you basically already hate, and free yourselves from it. You have already done this to a considerable extent, but not yet to a great extent, not thoroughly enough. For when you have fully completed this development within yourselves, then you will be able to read or listen to completely different words about the German people and the collective guilt, then you will be able to read or listen to every insult or provocation of whole peoples without

¹⁵⁰ Hermann Hesse, “Rigi-Tagebuch,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 8 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 407-418, 415-416.

¹⁵¹ Hesse, *Rigi-Tagebuch*, 418.

feeling affected in the least. Do this step completely to the end, and you will be, you few, superior to your own and every other people in human value and one step closer to Tao.

To see through the delusion of nationalism and to free oneself from it to a thorough enough extent, Hesse considers that the necessary step is to complete the development within oneself. This is the same Taoist approach as his method of proposing how to solve the conflicting problems of war and peace. When the target of spiritual and moral awakening is only others, that is to say these tasks are carried out only externally, it is not enough. And that's why Hesse commented on his friends who partly consciously and willingly, partly unconsciously and instinctively free themselves from nationalism. Only after the inner transformation of each person is completed will the task of liberation from nationalism be accomplished and will one be one step closer to *Tao*.

3.2 Taoism in Hesse's literary works

Just as he incorporated Indian Buddhist wisdom into his *Siddhartha*, Taoist wisdom was also used by Hesse in his literary works. Among Hesse's views on war and peace, and nationalism as discussed in the previous section, two Taoist views are most prominent: the first is the dialectical view of the changes between things and the way of dealing with the opposite aspects of the contradiction; the second is to avoid the distractions of external things and to look for the ultimate truth from within the individual. These two ideas are also central to his use of Taoist wisdom in his literary works that contain Taoist philosophical thought. This section analyzes two of Hesse's literary works, *Innen und Außen* [Inside and outside] and *Klingsors Letzter Sommer* [Klingsor's last summer], in order to explore his use of Taoist thought to address different issues.

3.2.1 *Innen und Außen*

Innen und Außen is a short story included in Hesse's *Fabulierbuch* [Book of invented stories, 1900-1933]. It tells a story of the process of the transformation of the protagonist Friedrich's cognitive perception. Friedrich recognizes and supports only one way of thinking, namely logic. Logic for him is science. He believed that science could observe and explain everything that exists and is worth knowing on earth, except for the subject of the human soul, which is left to religion to explore. Thus, he is tolerant of religion, but abhors all the superstitions that he identifies. Friedrich is not able to tolerate people who do not look at the world with the scientific way of thinking, and at the same time cannot tolerate such a view: "daß das 'wissenschaftliche Denken' möglicherweise keine höchste, keine zeitlose, ewige, vorbestimmte und unerschütterliche Denkart sei, sondern nur eine von vielen, eine zeitliche, vor Veränderung und vor Untergang nicht geschützte Art des Denkens." [that 'scientific thinking' is possibly not the highest, not a timeless, eternal, predetermined and unshakeable way of thinking, but only one of many, a temporal way of thinking, not protected from change and from downfall.]¹⁵² One day Friedrich visits his long-time friend Erwin and finds a quote on the wall: "Nichts ist außen, nichts ist innen, denn was außen ist, ist innen." [Nothing is outside, nothing is inside, because what is outside is inside.]¹⁵³ These words, which Friedrich calls Gnosticism and Mysticism, makes him furious and demanded an explanation from Erwin. Friedrich could not understand Erwin's explanation. On his way out, Erwin gives him a figurine made of clay and tells him that when the figurine no longer exists outside of him but inside, Friedrich can come back to Erwin. Friedrich does not know what this strange figurine with two heads means and finds it simply

¹⁵² Hermann Hesse, "Innen und Außen," in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 372-386, 373.

¹⁵³ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 375.

ugly. He does not know where to put it, so he keeps changing its location in his room. But no matter where it is, Friedrich can always see it intentionally or unintentionally. Until one day when he comes home, Friedrich suddenly finds that it is missing and “[e]in sonderbarer Schreck fuhr ihm über die Haut” [a strange terror ran over his skin].¹⁵⁴ He becomes frantic and can’t stop thinking about where the figurine has gone. He cannot understand how the disappearance of something he is deeply disgusted with can make him so upset and torment him. Suddenly one day he hears a voice coming from his consciousness saying “Ja, jetzt bist du in mir drin!” [Yes, now you are inside of me!] At this point he recalls what Erwin has said earlier about what is outside is also inside. He immediately goes on the way to Erwin’s house, and at the end of the story Erwin addresses Friedrich on what it all signifies.

Friedrich’s insistence on logical thinking, which he calls science, reaches a state of paranoia. He has no tolerance for other ways of thinking and for those who hold these ways, especially educated people who do not yet adhere to logical thinking. He cannot understand these people and feels that they are a threat to him: “wenn ihm in seinem Umkreise Spuren von Aberglauben zu Gesicht kamen, wurde er ärgerlich und fühlte sich wie von etwas Feindseligem berührt.” [whenever he saw traces of superstition in his surroundings, he became angry and felt as if he had been touched by something hostile.]¹⁵⁵ In reality no one has ever forced Friedrich to accept any way of thinking that he does not approve of and therefore no one really has threatened him. Instead, it is his paranoia became a potential threat to his personal mental health. Before Friedrich is reunited with his friend Erwin and reads the words on the wall that he considers Mysticism, there are already signs that his mental health is affected by his paranoia. “Je mehr

¹⁵⁴ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 380.

¹⁵⁵ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 373.

Friedrich darunter litt, daß dieser Gedanke vorhanden war und ihn so tief beunruhigen konnte, desto leidenschaftlicher befeindete er ihn und jene, welche er im Verdacht hatte, heimlich an ihn zu glauben.” [The more Frederick suffered from the fact that this thought was present and could disturb him so deeply, the more passionately he envied it and those whom he suspected of secretly believing in it.]¹⁵⁶ “This thought” refers to the belief that scientific thinking is not the highest, not a timeless, eternal, predetermined and unshakeable way of thinking. The mere fact that such thinking might exist in others causes Friedrich pain. He envies those who do not think in what he calls scientific thinking as the only or highest way of thinking, because they do not suffer for the ways of thinking that others believe. Friedrich thus also realizes that if he has been open and tolerant of other ways of thinking, he would not have suffered. But his paranoia prevents him from doing so, and this has become a mental illness. However, the symptoms of the disease do not appear immediately, because he excludes himself from the circle of others and has no opportunity to confront people with different ways of thinking. It is only when he meets Erwin by chance that the symptoms start to appear.

By the time Friedrich meets Erwin, his psychological state has deteriorated to a state of complete intolerance for a way of thinking he does not approve of. He is no longer able to maintain his temporary inner peace by avoiding or isolating himself from such a way of thinking. “Zu einer andern Zeit hätte er dies Blatt gelten lassen, hätte es nachsichtig geduldet, als eine Laune, als eine harmlose und schießlich jedem erlaubte Liebhaberei, vielleicht als eine kleine, der Schonung bedürftige Sentimentalität.” [At another time, he would have let this paper stand, would have tolerated it indulgently, as a mood, as a harmless and, after all, permissible

¹⁵⁶ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 373.

amusement for everyone, perhaps as a small sentimentality in need of protection.]¹⁵⁷ Obviously, he has lost such ability and has to confront Erwin, thus releasing his anger and pain. After he took the figurine Erwin gave him home “sah er sie Im Lauf der Tage an, über sie und ihre Herkunft grübelnd, und grübelnd über den Sinn, den dies törichte Ding für ihn haben sollte.” [he looked at it as the days went by, pondering it and its origin, and pondering the meaning that this foolish thing should have for him.]¹⁵⁸ He is unable to figure out the origin and meaning of this thing by the scientific knowledge he holds. This challenges his belief that science could observe and explain everything that exists. When the figurine is lost, the situation becomes worse. The image of the figurine keeps appearing in his mind, and he cannot explain these phenomena with logic. Although “er fühlte deutlich die Gefahr — er wollte nicht wahsinnig werden” [he clearly felt the danger - he did not want to become insane], he still isn’t willing to give up the science he is committed to and considers himself “als Opfer, als Verteidiger der Vernunft und Wissenschaft gegen diese dunklen Mächte” [as a victim, as a defender of reason and science against these dark forces].¹⁵⁹

The causes of Friedrich’s psychological disorders are fully consistent with what Carl Gustav Jung calls the psychological problems caused by the dissonance between the conscious and the unconscious due to the one-sided adherence to scientific thinking. Among the many Chinese classics that Richard Wilhelm has translated is a book entitled *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte* [The Secret of Golden Flower] in 1929. This book, titled 太乙金華宗旨, Taiyi Jinhua Zongzhi, in Chinese, is a Qing Dynasty Taoist book about meditation practice. The Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology C. G. Jung wrote the

¹⁵⁷ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 376. “dies Blatt”, the paper, stands for the words on the wall.

¹⁵⁸ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 379.

¹⁵⁹ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 383.

commentary for William's translation. Jung had not studied Chinese thought at all before reading this book, but after reading it he realized that in his technique of practicing psychology he had been unconsciously led to the path of *Tao*, a path that had been the concern of the best Eastern thinkers for centuries.¹⁶⁰ In his commentary, he discusses his views on modern Western science and says "Wissenschaft ist das Werkzeug des westlichen Geistes, und man kann mit ihr mehr Türen öffnen als mit bloßen Händen. Sie gehört zu unserem Verstehen und verdunkelt die Einsicht nur dann, wenn sie das durch sie vermittelte Begreifen für das Begreifen überhaupt hält." [Science is the tool of the Western mind, and one can open more doors with it than with bare hands. It belongs to our understanding and only obscures the insight if it considers the understanding provided by it to be the only kind of understanding at all.]¹⁶¹ Jung rejects a one-sided or single-minded approach to things and believes that "[d]ie Gegensätze hielten sich stets die Waage - ein Zeichen hoher Kultur; während Einseitigkeit zwar immer Stoßkraft verleiht, dafür aber ein Zeichen der Barbarei ist." [Opposites always balanced each other out - a sign of high culture; while one-sidedness always gives thrust, but it is a sign of barbarism.]¹⁶² Jung sees the problem of the contradiction and confusion between Eastern and Western ideas when they come into contact. Jung's view is not to reject non-scientific ideas without reservation, but to call for cooperation between East and West and to find a balance between the two, i.e., spirituality must rely on science as a guide, and science must turn to spirituality for the meaning of life. For Jung believes that the so-called non-scientific way of thinking can contribute to the West if one does not turn away from science in total contempt, as Faust did, under the misguided guidance of

¹⁶⁰ Richard Wilhelm and Carl Gustav Jung, *Das Geheimnis Der Goldenen Blüte: Das Buch von Bewußtsein und Leben* (München: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1994), 15.

¹⁶¹ R. Wilhelm and Jung, *Das Geheimnis*, 11.

¹⁶² R. Wilhelm and Jung, *Das Geheimnis*, 14.

the devil, and is attracted to mysticism. Eastern thought can be used as an antithesis to scientific thinking, offering ways of thinking from another perspective, and it “uns ein anderes, weiteres, tieferes und höheres Begreifen lehrt, nämlich *das Begreifen durch das Leben.*” [teaches us another, further, deeper and higher comprehension, namely *the comprehension through life.*]¹⁶³ Hence when Jung says that the fatal error of the West in his era was that people believed they “religiöse Tatsachen intellektuell kritisieren zu können” [were able to intellectually criticize religious facts], he is still referring to the dissonant relationship between modern scientific thinking and so-called non-scientific thinking.¹⁶⁴

The concept of *Yin* and *Yang* in Taoist thought provides Jung with the inspiration to resolve this dissonance. The dialectical and interchangeable concepts of *Yin* and *Yang* are analogous to the psychological concepts of consciousness and unconsciousness. Consciousness and unconsciousness need to reach a state of harmony and unity, otherwise it will lead to disaster, mental illness and various problems:

Sei dem, wie ihm wolle, auf alle Fälle ist es eine Tatsache, daß ein durch notwendige Einseitigkeit gesteigertes Bewußtsein sich so weit von den Urbildern entfernt, daß der Zusammenbruch folgt. Und schon lange vor der Katastrophe melden sich die Zeichen des Irrtums, nämlich als Instinktlosigkeit, als Nervosität, als Desorientiertheit, als Verwicklung in unmögliche Situationen und Probleme usw.¹⁶⁵

Be that as it may, in any case it is a fact that a consciousness increased by necessary one-sidedness moves so far away from the archetypes that collapse follows. And already long before the catastrophe the signs of the error announce themselves, namely as absence of instinct, nervousness, disorientation, and entanglement in impossible situations and problems, etc.

Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte provides meditation methods that can avoid catastrophes. The purpose of this book is to teach the individual to concentrate on the innermost

¹⁶³ R. Wilhelm and Jung, *Das Geheimnis*, 11. Original emphasis.

¹⁶⁴ R. Wilhelm and Jung, *Das Geheimnis*, 41.

¹⁶⁵ R. Wilhelm and Jung, *Das Geheimnis*, 18.

light and, in doing so, to free himself from all external and internal entanglements, so that his vital impulses are directed to a consciousness without content, which in turn allows for the existence of all content. In this way consciousness no longer focuses on external compulsive intentions, but becomes a contemplative vision, thus developing a kind of detachment.

Thus the reason Friedrich eventually becomes nearly insane is his paranoia that logic and science can explain everything and his rejection of any other form of thinking. Science represents the external. He focuses only on the external and gradually makes it an obsessive intention. The insistence on the scientific way of thinking seems to be intended to exclude the emotional influence of the individual. But this emotional influence does not disappear because of his rejection. It evolves into a stronger influence in a negative way. The conflict between internal and external eventually reaches an irreconcilable state and leads to his psychological problems. In Taoism, the internal and external are opposites, like the two sides of other things. It is not possible to suppress one side so that the other side can develop infinitely. This dichotomy is not like the either-or in logic. This is why Friedrich, upon seeing the phrase “Nothing is outside, nothing is inside, because what is outside is inside”, immediately calls it *Mystik* and asks Erwin to explain it. Erwin’s explanation is:

...Es gibt die Möglichkeit für unsern Geist, sich hinter die Grenze zurückzuziehen, die wir ihm gezogen haben, ins Jenseits. Jenseits der Gegensatzpaare, aus denen unsre Welt besteht, fangen neue, andere Erkenntnisse an. — Aber, lieber Freund, ich muß dir bekennen: seit mein Denken sich geändert hat, gibt es keine eindeutigen Worte und Sprüche mehr für mich, sondern jedes Wort hat zehnerlei, hunderterlei Sinn. Hier eben beginnt, was du fürchtest: Magie.¹⁶⁶

...There is the possibility for our spirit to retreat behind the border we have drawn for it, into the beyond. Beyond the pairs of opposites that make up our world, new and different insights begin. - But, dear friend, I must confess to you: since my thinking has changed, there are no more unique words and sayings for me, but each word has tens, hundreds of meanings. Here begins what you fear: Magic.

¹⁶⁶ Hesse, *Innen und Außen*, 378.

Some expressions from Hesse's thoughts on war and peace that he discussed using Taoist ideas are used again here, such as *Erkenntnis* [insight] and *Jenseits der Gegensatzpaare* [beyond pairs of opposites]. In Erwin's explanation, although Taoism is not mentioned, it fits well with it. Laozi said that "Der SINN erzeugt die Eins. Die Eins erzeugt die Zwei. Die Zwei erzeugt die Drei. Die Drei erzeugt all Dinge." [The SENSE (Wilhelm's translation of *Tao*) generates the one. The one generates the two. The Two generates the Three. The Three generates all things.]¹⁶⁷ One represents the state of chaos at the beginning of the universe. From the one, two forces of *Yin* and *Yang* come into being, which as two aspects of the dialectical unity of things are the *Gegensatzpaare*. Beyond the pairs of opposites, new and different insights begin. This idea is identical to two creates three and three creates all things. Moreover, Erwin adds that nothing has an absolutely unique and unchanging meaning, and that all things have a thousand meanings for him. This is also in line with the Taoist view that everything is in constant movement in accordance with the laws of *Tao*, and that new forms and meanings of things emerge from this process of movement.

The loss of the figurine drives Friedrich insane. He comes to Erwin once again and tells Erwin that he can't stand the situation and asks what can be done to get the figurine out of him. Erwin says the following:

Der Götze wird wieder aus dir herauskommen. Vertraue mir. Vertraue dir selbst. Du hast an ihn glauben gelernt. Jetzt lerne: ihn lieben! Er ist in dir innen, aber er ist noch tot, er ist noch ein Gespenst für dich. Erwecke ihn, sprich mit ihm, frage ihn! Er ist ja du selbst! Hasse ihn nicht mehr, fürchte ihn nicht, quäle ihn nicht — wie hast du diesen armen Götzen gequält, der doch du selber warst! Wie hast du dich selber gequält!¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 85. Original Chinese text: 道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。

¹⁶⁸ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 385.

The idol will come out of you again. Trust me. Trust yourself. You have learned to believe in him. Now learn: love him! He is inside you, but he is still dead, he is still a ghost for you. Awaken him, talk to him, ask him! He is you yourself! Hate him no more, fear him no more, torment him no more - how you have tormented this poor idol, who was yet yourself! How you have tormented yourself!

Friedrich's desire to get the figurine out of himself means to return to the state he was in before he met Erwin, i.e., to completely forget everything that has happened, to return to a state where the logical thinking he believes in has not yet been subverted. By getting out, Erwin means the liberation of the unconscious based on facing and communicating with the individual's inner self. Erwin believes that the reason Friedrich suffers so much is because he refuses to acknowledge the figurine. The figurine is not an external object but a part of Friedrich. He shows Friedrich the importance of the inner, as opposed to the external, which is represented by logic. This is compatible with Jung's idea that when one focuses only on the external with compulsive consciousness it leads to mental illness. After listening to Erwin's explanation, Friedrich remains in doubt and asks if this is not the path to magic. Erwin replies:

Dies ist der Weg, und den schwersten Schritt hast du vielleicht schon getan. Du hast erlebt: Außen kann zu Innen werden. Du bist jenseits der Gegensatzpaare gewesen. Es schien dir eine Hölle: lerne, Freund, daß sie Himmel ist! Denn es ist der Himmel, was dir bevorsteht. Siehe, das ist Magie: Außen und Innen vertauschen, nicht aus Zwang, nicht leidend, wie du es getan hast, sondern frei, wollend. Rufe Vergangenheit, rufe Zukunft herbei: beide sind in dir! Du bist bis heute der Sklave deines Innern gewesen. Lerne sein Herr sein. Dies ist Magie.¹⁶⁹

This is the path, and you may have already taken the hardest step. You have experienced: outside can become inside. You have been beyond the pairs of opposites. It seemed to you a hell: learn, friend, that it is heaven! For it is heaven what lies ahead of you. Behold, this is magic: to exchange outside and inside, not out of compulsion, not suffering, as you did, but freely, willingly. Call the past, call the future: both are in you! You have been the slave of your inside until today. Learn to be its master. This is magic.

¹⁶⁹ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 386.

Isn't this the path to magic? Based on this question of Friedrich, Erwin gives the above explanation. His question reflects the European prejudice against Eastern ideas due to ignorance and mistrust of the world of inner experience, considering them as magic, mysticism or occult thoughts, which are incompatible to the European scientific ways of thinking. Erwin does not refute Friedrich's calling this idea magic. Whatever this idea is called, it does not change the fact that the external and the internal can be transformed into each other. Like the nameless nature of *Tao*, Laozi does not know what to call this abstract concept but refers to it by the word "Tao". No matter what *Tao* is called, the principles contained within it do not change. The idea that the transformation of the internal and external is done freely and willingly, not due to compulsion or suffering, can once again be linked to the Taoist idea that things change according to the laws of *Tao* and not by human will.

The story ends with Erwin's answer above, and Hesse does not describe to the reader whether Friedrich's mental condition has improved. Whether his condition improves or not is irrelevant to focal point of this story. His improvement depends on his personal willingness to accept the "magic" he does not acknowledge and to find the way to his inner self. Hesse presents the reader with a literary approach to Jung's suggestion that dissonance between the conscious and the unconscious can lead to personal psychological problems. At the same time he denies the arrogant prejudice of European scientific thinking against Eastern thought. Hesse presents Taoist thought as a path to the inner self as a solution to the contradiction between Eastern and Western thought. This approach is similar as the book *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte* teaches students to do, achieving the deepest personal fulfillment through detachment from the outside world.

3.2.2 *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*

Hesse was a poet as well as a painter. After undergoing psychoanalytic treatment in 1916, on the advice of his analyst, Hesse began to paint.¹⁷⁰ Hesse produced many watercolor landscapes and published his first work containing his paintings, *Wanderung*, in 1920. Shortly after *Wanderung*'s publication, Hesse completed the fiction *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*. The story is one of the pieces in Hesse's trio including *Klein und Wagner* [Klein and Wagner] and *Kinderseele* [Children's Soul]. Klingsor is a painter, and his paintings, except for the self-portrait at the end of the story, "were Hesse's own watercolors, his own fanciful paraphrasing and poeticizing of the visible world in brilliant transparent hues."¹⁷¹ In 1938, in his *Erinnerung an Klingsors Sommer* [Memory of Klingsor's summer], Hesse wrote:

Die glühenden Tage wanderte ich durch die Dörfer und Kastanienwälder, saß auf dem Klappstühlchen und versuchte, mit Wasserfarben etwas von dem flutenden Zauber aufzubewahren; die warmen Nächte saß ich bis zu später Stunde bei offenen Türen und Fenstern in Klingsors Schloßchen und versuchte, etwas erfahrener und besonnener, als ich es mit dem Pinsel konnte, mit Worten das Lied dieses unerhörten Sommers zu singen.¹⁷²

During the hot days I wandered through the villages and chestnut woods, sat on the folding chair and tried to preserve something of the flooding magic with watercolors; during the warm nights I sat until late at night with open doors and windows in Klingsor's little castle and tried to sing the song of this unheard-of summer with words, a little more experienced and prudent than I could with a brush.

Hesse tried to document his summer in Switzerland after World War I with brushes and watercolors, but it did not satisfy the attitude he wanted to express about art and life. Since his

¹⁷⁰ Ingo Cornils and Godela Weiss-Sussex, "On the Relationship between Hesse's Painting and Writing: *Wanderung*, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, *Gedichte Des Malers and Piktors Verwandlungen*," in *A Companion to the Works of Hermann Hesse* (Rochester, Camden House, 2013), 345-372, 346.

¹⁷¹ Joseph Mileck, *Hermann Hesse: Life and Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 149.

¹⁷² Hermann Hesse, "Erinnerung an Klingsors Sommer," in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 43-46, 45-46.

writing technique was more skilled and rigorous than painting, he used words to record his summer.

Klingsors Letzter Sommer is Hesse's autobiographical fiction, in which the names of fictional places come from the vicinity of where Hesse lived around 1919. For example as Joseph Mileck has identified that the setting of the story is clearly Ticino in Switzerland and Klingsor's small, iron-railed stone balcony of his *palazzo* is where "Hesse was wont to gaze at that very view from the same little balcony of his Casa Camuzzi".¹⁷³ The name of Klingsor originated from the 13th-century German epic poem *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach. Richard Wagner later adapted the story into opera *Parsifal* which was first produced in 1882. In *Parsifal*, Klingsor is a magician who practices dark magic. Wagner once wrote "Klingsors Zaubergarten ist gefunden!" when he came to Ravello and, in Villa Ruffoli, looked out from the wide cypress and flower terrace onto the infinite azure of the Tyrrhenian Sea.¹⁷⁴ The same words "so hätte auch der Romantiker Hesse ausrufen können, als er eines Tages im Frühling 1919 nach Montagnola hinaufkam und vom kleinen Balkon des Camuzzi-Hauses über den Terrassengarten und den Luganer See bis weit in die Schneeberge sah." [so could have been exclaimed by the romantic Hesse when one day in the spring of 1919 he came up to Montagnola and looked from the small balcony of the Camuzzi house over the terraced garden and Lake Lugano far into the snowy mountains.]¹⁷⁵ In addition, the second act of the Wagner's opera takes place in Klingsors Zauberschloß [Klingsor's Magic Castle]. When Hesse said that "I sat until late at night with open doors and windows in Klingsor's little castle", it is likely that the inspiration for his Klingsor

¹⁷³ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 149.

¹⁷⁴ Hugo Ball, *Hermann Hesse: Sein Leben Und Sein Werk* (Berlin, S. Fischer Verlag, 1927), 195.

¹⁷⁵ Ball, *Hermann Hesse*, 195.

character was Wagner's *Parsifal*. However, the figure Klingsor in Hesse's work refers to Hesse himself and he is not a magician. The names of other people come from real friends and loved ones around Hesse, such as Louis der Grausame [Louis the Horrible] is "Klingsor's close friend, fellow painter, and restless inveterate traveller, was none other than Hesse's itinerant painter-friend Louis Moilliet".¹⁷⁶ This story chronicles the last months of the painter Klingsor's life. During the summer he suffers physically from illness and is also experiencing great psychological stress due to the devastation of Europe after World War I. Klingsor travels with his friends and records what he sees along the way in the form of paintings. They drink together, debated different topics, and wanders around the south of Europe until Klingsor finishes his self-portrait. When the summer is over, his life is over.

Li Bai is Klingsor's favorite poet and "im Rausche nannte er oft sich selbst Li Tai Pe und einen seiner Freunde Thu Fu" [in intoxication he often called himself Li Tai Pe and one of his friends Thu Fu].¹⁷⁷ Li Bai (701-762 AD) was a Chinese poet of the Tang Dynasty, often addressed by later generations of Chinese as 诗仙, Shi Xian, the Immortal of Poetry. Du Fu (712-770 AD) was also a poet of the Tang Dynasty and was one of Li Bai's best friends. Because of their close friendship and their great achievements in poetry, their poems have often been compared and studied together by later scholars. This tradition has also been carried over to Germany in the circulation of their works. In both introductions to Chinese poetry in Hans Heilmann's *Chinesische Lyrik* (1905) and Hans Bethge's *Die Chinesische Flöte* (1923), Du Fu's life and poetry are compared to Li Bai's. Although Klingsor refers to himself only as Li Bai, he is a synthesis of both poets Li Bai and Du Fu.

¹⁷⁶ Ball, *Hermann Hesse*, 195.

¹⁷⁷ Hermann Hesse, "Klingsors Letzter Sommer," in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Werke*, 1st ed., vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 293-352, 294.

Besides painting, alcohol is the most important thing in Klingsor's life. There are many reasons why he indulges in alcohol. Alcohol provides him with a temporary relief from the pain of his illness and also allows him to momentarily escape from his melancholy. Thus he has "den Weinrausch bewußt als Betäubung seiner Schmerzen und einer oft schwer erträglichen Schwermut gesucht." [consciously sought wine intoxication as an anesthetic to his pain and an often difficult to bear melancholy].¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Li Bai lived his life in the company of wine. Wine is an important symbol in his works. He wrote poetry about "die verschwebende, verwehende, unaussprechliche Schönheit der Welt, den ewigen Schmerz und die ewige Trauer und das Rätselhafte alles Seienden" [the floating, blurring, inexpressible beauty of the world, the eternal pain and sorrow, and the mysteriousness of everything that exists].¹⁷⁹ Drinking is to get drunk and thus temporarily forget the pain, but in reality "treibt er nur in neue Schwermut hinein" [he only drives into new melancholy].¹⁸⁰ This is best reflected in his poem 宣州謝朓樓餞別校書叔雲 [Farewell to Uncle Yun, the Imperial Librarian, at Xie Tiao's Pavilion in Xuanzhou] "抽刀斷水水更流，舉杯銷愁愁更愁。"[Draw a sword to cut the water, the water still flows; Drink wine to relieve the sorrow, it only adds more] In this respect Klingsor and Li Bai are the same, they both choose alcohol as a temporary relief because of their melancholy.

However, Klingsor and Li Bai are not the same if a deeper look is taken into the causes of their melancholy. The physical pain due to illness was minor. Although it inconveniences his painting, when he thinks of "dieser tolle flackernde Sommertraum, und mit ihm tausend ungetrunkene Becher verschüttet, tausend ungesehene Liebesblicke gebrochen, tausend

¹⁷⁸ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 294.

¹⁷⁹ Hans Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte* (Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1923), 108.

¹⁸⁰ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 108.

unwiederbringliche Bilder ungesehen erloschen” [this great flickering summer dream, and with it a thousand un-drunken cups spilled, a thousand unseen glances of love broken, a thousand irretrievable images extinguished unseen], it is still bearable.¹⁸¹ The actual unbearable pain for him was the fear of death. This fear of death is twofold. First, there is the fear of the end of his own life. Klingsor does not understand why life should have a time limit when there are so many beautiful things in the world. He has very little time left and lamented “Gott im Himmel, so viel tausend Dinge warteten, so viel tausend Becher standen eingeschent! Kein Ding auf der Erde, das man nicht hätte malen müssen! Keine Frau in der Welt, die man nicht hätte lieben müssen! Warum gab es Zeit!” [God in heaven, so many thousand things waited, so many thousand cups stood poured! Nothing on earth, which one would not have had to paint! No woman in the world that one did not have to love! Why was there time!]¹⁸² A poem of Li Bai was quoted, expressing his feelings that his life would soon end “Das Leben vergeht wie ein Blitzstrahl, Dessen Glanz kaum so lange währt, daß man ihn sehen kann.” [Life passes like a ray of lightning, Whose brilliance hardly lasts long enough to be seen.]¹⁸³ Klingsor fears death and the passing of time. He wants to stop time and defeat death in the moment of drunkenness. In a conversation with his Armenian magician friend, he said “dies sind unsre Kanonen...mit diesen Kanonen schießen wir die Zeit kaputt, den Tod kaputt, das Elend kaputt.” [these are our cannons...with these cannons we shoot the time broken, the death broken, the misery broken.]¹⁸⁴ The Armenian replies to Klingsor that wine is not his weapon and there is no weapon to use against death. The Armenian continues to say that he and Li Bai are different when it comes to death and *Schwermut*, “Li liebt

¹⁸¹ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 295.

¹⁸² Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 299.

¹⁸³ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 308.

¹⁸⁴ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 333.

ja den Tod, er liebt ja seine Angst vor dem Tode, seine Schwermut, sein Elend, nur die Angst hat ihn ja all das gelehrt, was er kann und wofür wir ihn lieben.” [Li loves death, he loves his fear of death, his melancholy, his misery, only fear has taught him all that he can do and for which we love him.] This can also be seen in a poem by Li Bai quoted by Klingsor. In this novella, Hesse retranslated and adapted the poems of Li Bai, as Hans Heilmann in his *Chinesische Lyrik* did. One of Li Bai’s most famous poems 将进酒 [Please drink wine] was given a German title *Trinklied* [Drinking Song] by Heilmann. Four of the lines reads “Am Morgen glänzten sie Wie schwarze Seide; Am Abend find sie schon mit Schnee vermengt. Wer das Leben recht versteht, genieße den Augenblick; Und lasse den Becher nicht feiern, wenn der Vollmond scheint.” [In the morning they shine like black silk; In the evening they are already mixed with snow. Who understands life right, enjoy the moment; And do not let the cup celebrate when the full moon shines].¹⁸⁵ The pronoun “they” refers to hair. Life is so short that in the morning, one has black hair like silk and in the evening, hair is white as snow, as if the change from youth to old age was accomplished in one day. Hesse could not have chosen a more appropriate poem to add to his work to convey Klingsor’s *Schwermut* in his last summer. But in the face of the unstoppable passage of time, what Li Bai did was not to seek escape in intoxication. Li Bai believed that he should seize all the time to enjoy the present moment. Hesse’s adaptation of the poem in Klingsor’s story reads: “Noch am Morgen glänzten deine Haare wie schwarze Seide; Abend hat schon Schnee auf sie getan, Wer nicht will, daß er lebendigen Leibes sterbend leide, Schwinge den Becher und fordre den Mond als Kumpan!” [Still in the morning your hair shone like black silk; evening has already put snow on it, who does not want that he dies alive, swing the cup and

¹⁸⁵ Hans Heilmann, *Chinesische Lyrik* (München und Leipzig: R. Piper & Co., 1905), 44.
Original Chinese text: 朝如青絲暮成雪。人生得意須盡歡，莫使金樽空對月。

demand the moon as a companion!]¹⁸⁶ There may have been another poem by Li Bai, 月下独酌, Yue Xia Du Zhuo, Drinking Alone by Moonlight, in Hesse's mind when adapting this poem. 月下独酌 is translated in Hans Heilmann's version as *Die drei Gesellen* [The three companions] and part of the poem reads "Da kommt der Mond, grüßt mich mit leuchtendem Schein, Und mein Schatten tut, als wär er der Dritte im Bunde." [There comes the moon, greets me with a shining glow, And my shadow pretends to be the third in the group.], which corresponds to the idea of demanding the moon as a companion.¹⁸⁷ The most critical change, however, is that the one detail "Who understands life right" is changed to "Who does not want that he dies alive". That is to say the purpose of drinking is fundamentally different between Klingsor and Li Bai. By deleting the idea of enjoying the moment expressed in the original, drinking becomes an escape from the fear of death.

There is also the fear of the changes that European society was undergoing. Klingsor says to his Armenian friend:

Jeder hat seine Sterne...jeder hat seinen Glauben. Ich glaube nur an eines: an den Untergang. Wir fahren in einem Wagen überm Abgrund, und die Pferde sind scheu geworden. Wir stehen im Untergang, wir alle, wir müssen sterben, wir müssen wieder geboren werden, die große Wende ist für uns gekommen. Es ist überall das gleiche: der große Krieg, die große Wandlung in der Kunst, der große Zusammenbruch der Staaten des Westens. Bei uns im alten Europa ist alles das gestorben, was bei uns gut und unser eigen war; unsre schöne Vernunft ist Irrsinn geworden, unser Geld ist Papier, unsre Maschinen können bloß noch schießen und explodieren, unsre Kunst ist Selbstmord. Wir gehen unter, Freunde, so ist es uns bestimmt, die Tonart Tsing Tse ist angestimmt.¹⁸⁸

Everyone has his stars...everyone has his faith. I believe in only one thing: doom. We are riding in a chariot over the abyss, and the horses have become timid. We are in the downfall, all of us, we have to die, we have to be born again, the great turn be born again, the great turning point has come for us. It is the same everywhere: the great war, the great change in art, the great collapse of the states of the West. In old

¹⁸⁶ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 308.

¹⁸⁷ Heilmann, *Chinesische Lyrik*, 46. Original Chinese text: 舉杯邀明月，對影成三人。

¹⁸⁸ Heilmann, *Chinesische Lyrik*, 329-330.

Europe everything that was good and our own has died; our beautiful reason has become insanity, our money is paper, our machines can only shoot and explode, our art is suicide. We are going down, friends, it is destined for us, the Tsing Tse key is set.

The Tsing Tse key is set for Europe. Klingsor sees no hope in these times of change.

Tsing Tse Key, which echoes the title of this section *Die Musik des Untergangs* [The Music of decline], is an ancient Chinese melody that symbolizes decadence. It was first mentioned in *Han Fei Zi*, a classic work of the School of Legalism during the Warring States period. Hesse's knowledge of Tsing Tse Key should have come from *Chinesische Abende: Novellen und Geschichten. In Gemeinschaft mit Tsou Ping Shou aus der chinesischen Ursprache übertragen von Leo Greiner. Mit zehn Originallithographien von Emil Orlik* [Chinese Evenings: Novellas and Stories. Translated from the original Chinese language by Leo Greiner in collaboration with Tsou Ping Shou. With ten original lithographs by Emil Orlik.] As the title of the book says, the stories in the book are translated from Chinese stories without adaptation. One of its stories, with the title of *Die Musik des Untergangs* [The Music of decline], is from *Han Fei Zi*.

Ping Kung, freudig erregt, fragte Kuang: »Wie nennt sich diese Tonart?« »Sie nennt sich Tsing Schang«, erwiderte Kuang. »Tsing Schang ist wohl die traurigste von allen?« fragte Ping Kung. »Tsing Schang ist wohl traurig,« entgegnete Kuang, »aber noch trauriger ist die Tonart Tsing Tse.« Da fragte Ping Kung: »Kann ich Tsing Tse zu hören bekommen?« »Unmöglich«, fiel ihm Kuang ins Wort. »Wenn frühere Herrscher Tsing Tse zu hören bekamen, so waren es tugendhafte und aufrechte Männer. Heute ist der Herrscher Tugend gering, sie dürfen diese Tonart nicht vernehmen.«

Ping Kung, joyfully excited, asked Kuang, "What is this key called?" "It is called Tsing Schang," Kuang replied. "Tsing Schang is probably the saddest of all?" asked Ping Kung. "Tsing Schang is sad, I suppose," Kuang replied, "but even sadder is the key of Tsing Tse." Then Ping Kung asked, "Can I get to hear Tsing Tse?" "Impossible," Kuang interrupted him. "When former rulers got to hear Tsing Tse, they were virtuous and upright men. Today the rulers' virtue is low; they must not hear that key."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Leo Greiner, *Chinesische Abende: Novellen Und Geschichten*. (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1913), 63-64.

The Tsing Tse Key in the story is 清徵, Qing Zheng, in *Han Fei Zi*. The dialogue between Ping Kung and Kuang is translated almost verbatim from the original text.¹⁹⁰ Hesse used the title of Leo Greiner's translation of the story, *Die Musik des Untergangs*, as the title of a section in his Klingsor story, while retaining the concept of Tsing Tse Key, the tone of decadence, in his story to refer to the post-war pessimism in Europe.

Massive wars, the disappearance of classical European art, the absence of beautiful reason, all this meant to Klingsor the end of the nations, and indeed the end of Europe. When Hesse recalls the work of Klingsor more than a decade later, he expressed similar sentiments again:

Es war im Jahre 1919. Der vierjährige Krieg war zu Ende, die Welt schien in Scherben geschlagen. Millionen von Soldaten, von Kriegsgefangenen, von Bürgern kehrten aus Jahren des starren uniformierten Gehorchens in eine so ersehnte wie gefürchtete Freiheit zurück. Der Krieg, der große Weltregent, war gestorben und begraben; leer wartete eine veränderte und verarmte Welt auf entlassene Sklave... Jeder hatte das Gefühl, etwas verloren und versäumt zu haben, ein Stück Leben, ein Stück vom Ich, ein Stück Entwicklung, Anpassung und Lebenskunst. Es gab junge Männer, welche noch in der Kinderwelt gelebt hatten, als der Krieg sie wegholte, und welche jetzt diese sogenannte Welt und Wirklichkeit, in die sie "heimkehrten", vollkommen fremd und unbegreiflich fanden. Und von uns Älteren waren viele der Meinung, es seien ihnen gerade die wichtigsten, die unersetzlichsten Jahre geraubt worden, und es sei jetzt zu spät, um nochmals anzufangen und mit den Jüngeren zu konkurrieren, welche ja auch nicht zu beneiden waren.¹⁹¹

It was 1919. The four-year war was over, the world seemed to be in shatters. Millions of soldiers, prisoners of war, citizens returned from years of rigid uniformed obedience to a freedom as longed for as it was feared. The war, the great world ruler, had died and been buried; empty waited a changed and impoverished world for released slaves... Everyone had the feeling of having lost and missed something, a piece of life, a piece of the self, a piece of development, adaptation and art of living. There were young men who had still lived in the world of children when the war took them away, and who now found this so-called world and reality to which they were "returning home" completely strange and

¹⁹⁰ Original Chinese text: 平公問師曠曰：“此所謂何聲也？”師曠曰：“此所謂清商也。”公曰：“清商固最悲乎？”師曠曰：“不如清徵。”公曰：“清徵可得而聞乎？”師曠曰：“不可。古之聽清徵者，皆有德義之君也。今吾君德薄，不足以聽。”

¹⁹¹ Hesse, *Erinnerung an Klingsors Sommer*, 43-44.

incomprehensible. And of us older ones, many were of the opinion that they had just been robbed of the most important, the most irreplaceable years, and that it was now too late to start again and compete with the younger ones, who were also not to be envied.

The melancholy experienced by Klingsor, or Hesse, was beyond a personal problem, it is rather experienced by a generation of Europeans at that time. The melancholic atmosphere of the society is accompanied by great changes. Its earliest appearance can be traced back to the Enlightenment and further developed through the Romantic period. Melancholy and the modernization process are inseparable. The apocalyptic atmosphere before World War I recorded the uneasiness of the whole society. Large-scale warfare became the catalyst for accelerated change. Europeans lamented the passing of the Golden Age, the artistic and philosophical period of ancient Greece and Rome. Nina Berman argues that that the discourse of melancholy that prevailed at the turn of the century can be understood as a reaction of all members of society to the modernization process, which illuminates the range of anxieties experienced during the transition from traditional to modern society.¹⁹²

Klingsor's melancholy from witnessing the devastating changes that the war brought to Europe was very different from Li Bai's. Li Bai's melancholy stems from the fact that his talent was not valued and his art was not understood by the world. In his *Der Tanz der Götter* [The dance of the gods] he wrote: "Sang ich den Menschen tief bewegt ein Lied, — Die Menschen lachten, sie verstandens nicht...brachte mein Lied den Götter dar. Die Götter waren beglückt und Huben auf erglühenden Wolken nach meinem Lied zu tanzen an" [I sang a song to the people, deeply moved, - The people laughed, they did not understand...offered my song to the gods. The gods were delighted and began to dance to my song on glowing clouds.]¹⁹³ Although Li Bai

¹⁹² Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, 203.

¹⁹³ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 25.

plays with great passion, his art is ridiculed by ordinary people. This poem fully reflects his loneliness and melancholy because his art was not understood by the common people. Thus he once lamented in *Lied auf dem Flusse* that only heaven was his rightful place, “mir ist, ich wäre gesellt dem Kreis der Himmlischen” [I feel I have joined the circle of the heavenly ones].¹⁹⁴ Since Li Bai was not understood by the world, he did not bother to pay much attention to worldly sufferings. His poems mostly use a romantic approach to describe nature and rarely portray social reality.

Klingsor is melancholic because of the decline of society, and in this respect, he is more like Du Fu. Hans Heilmann commented on Du Fu “[b]ei ihm ist alles reinlich, maßvoll und verständig...Die Not seiner Mitbürger und des von Kriegen verwüsteten Landes rühren ihn tief, er widmet ihnen viele und schöne Gedichte, die Ereignisse der Zeit und der Geschichte find bevorzugte Themata seiner Lyrik.” [In him, everything is pure, moderate and reasonable... He is deeply moved by the plight of his fellow citizens and the country devastated by wars, he dedicates many and beautiful poems to them, the events of the time and history find favorite themes of his poetry.]¹⁹⁵ At the same time, Du Fu is also more pessimistic than Li Bai. For example, in his poem *Das Verbrannte Haus*:

...
Auf meiner schön geschnitzten Flöte hab
Ein Lied ich zu dem Mond hinaufgesungen,
Ein Lied voll Sehnsucht durch die laue Nacht.
O weh, der Mond war traurig, da er so
Mein Lied vernahm. Mit einer großen Wolke
Hat er sein greises Angesicht verhüllt.

...¹⁹⁶

...
On my beautifully carved flute

¹⁹⁴ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 34.

¹⁹⁵ Hans Heilmann, *Chinesische Lyrik*, XLV.

¹⁹⁶ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 43.

A song I sang up to the moon,
A song full of longing through the mild night.
O sad, the moon was sad, since he heard so
My song. With a big cloud
He has covered his aged face.
...

The poem features symbols common to Li Bai's poetry, namely music and the moon. Li Bai also described playing his flute to the sky, where he got the satisfaction of being understood by the gods. Du Fu's music, on the other hand, is full of "Sehnsucht" [longing] and has not yet reached the point where he could communicate with the heaven. Because of his own sadness, he was touched by the moon and thought that it was also in pain. He did not sing to the moon nor dance with it as Li Bai did.

In this way, Klingsor is actually a synthesis of two poets, Li Bai and Du Fu. He only identifies himself as Li Bai simply by seeing the commonality of his and Li Bai's craving for alcohol in the face of melancholy. He does not realize the different causes of their melancholic condition and the essential need for alcohol craving. Klingsor's misperception of his own identity is due to not examining himself in the right way. Friedrich in *Innen und Außen*, who was unable to recognize the problems he was experiencing because he rejected his inner self and thus almost fell into madness. Unlike Friedrich, "Anders tat Klingsor. Er konnte nicht schweigen. Er konnte sein Herz nicht verbergen." [Klingsor did differently. He could not remain silent. He could not hide his heart.]¹⁹⁷ At the same time, Klingsor knows that the internal and external are not opposed to each other but are unified. He says "Man überschätzt das Sinnliche, wenn man das Geistige nur als einen Notersatz für fehlendes Sinnliches ansieht. Das Sinnliche ist um kein Haar mehr wert als der Geist, so wenig wie umgekehrt. Es ist alles eins, es ist alles gleich gut."

¹⁹⁷ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 305.

[One overestimates the sensual, if one regards the spiritual only as an emergency substitute for missing sensual. The sensual is not worth a hair more than the spirit, as little as vice versa. It is all one, it is all equally good.]¹⁹⁸ He knows exactly what his problems are. Therefore, Klingsor clearly understands where his problem lies. By choosing to escape from melancholy by getting intoxicated, he is actually avoiding facing his inner self. He is in a stage of transition from accepting his inner self to confronting it. Li bai's way of life is thus a transitioning method for Klingsor to ease his sorrow before he adopts the Taoist way towards inner.

In Klingsor's conversation with the Armenian magician, the Armenian pointed out that his use of alcohol to escape death and reality was not the solution. He says to Klingsor "Gegen den Tod brauche ich keine Waffe, weil es keinen Tod gibt. Es gibt aber eines: Angst vor dem Tode. Die kann man heilen, gegen die gibt es eine Waffe. Es ist die Sache einer Stunde, die Angst zu überwinden." [Against death, I do not need a weapon because there is no death. But there is one thing: fear of death. It can be cured, there is a weapon against it. It is the matter of an hour to overcome fear.]¹⁹⁹ Using a Taoist viewpoint, the magician explained to Klingsor that neither death nor collapse exist:

Wie Sie wollen...Man kann ja sagen, und man kann nein sagen, das ist nur Kinderspiel. Untergang ist etwas, das nicht existiert. Damit Untergang oder Aufgang wäre, müßte es unten und oben geben. Unten und oben aber gibt es nicht, das lebt nur im Gehirn des Menschen, in der Heimat der Täuschungen. Alle Gegensätze sind Täuschungen: weiß und schwarz ist Täuschung, Tod und Leben gebissenen Zähnen, dann hat man das Reich der Täuschungen überwunden.²⁰⁰

As you like...You can say yes, and you can say no, it's just child's play. Downfall is something that does not exist. So that downfall or rise would be, there would have to be below and above. But below and above do not exist, that lives only in the brain of the human being, in the home of the illusions. All opposites are illusions: white and black is illusion, death and life bit teeth, then one has overcome the realm of illusions.

¹⁹⁸ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 304.

¹⁹⁹ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 334.

²⁰⁰ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 330.

In the second chapter of *Tao Te Ching* it says “Wenn auf Erden alle das Schöne als schön erkennen, so ist dadurch schon das Häßliche gesetzt. Wenn auf Erden alle das Gute als gut erkennen, so ist dadurch schon das Nichtgute gesetzt. Denn Sein und Nichtsein erzeugen einander. Schwer und Leicht vollenden einander. Lang und Kurz gestalten einander...” [If everyone on earth recognizes the beautiful as beautiful, then the ugly is already set. If everyone on earth recognizes the good as good, the non-good is already set by it. For being and non-being produce each other. Heavy and light complete each other. Long and short form each other...] ²⁰¹

The seemingly opposing concepts of being and non-being, heavy and light, as well as long and short are all dialectically unified in Taoist thought. They are the same to the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* which produces and can transform into each other. The idea “But below and above do not exist, that lives only in the brain of the human being” is consistent with Taoist idea that if everyone on earth recognizes the beautiful as beautiful, then the ugly is already set. Taoism believes that there is no such thing as absolute beauty and ugliness, or good and evil, simply because they are not originally opposed to each other. The reason why such a criterion of judgment exists is because of the perceived, man-made, “standard“, “law“, etc. Thus they exist only in the brain of the human being. Here Hesse still uses the same Taoist view, as in his other works, to show that things have no absolute opposites. Only by recognizing its nature as a unity of opposites and transcending the temporary opposition presented by the contradiction, the illusion can be eliminated and the essence can be recognized. This is what the magician suggests that Klingsor needs to learn by spending an hour. Not only are the same Taoist ideas reused here, but the role of the Armenians is exactly the same as that of Erwin in *Innen und Außen*. Erwin

²⁰¹ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 42. Original Chinese text: 天下皆知美之為美，斯惡已；皆知善之為善，斯不善已。有無相生，難易相成，長短相形，高下相盈...

calls this idea *Magie*. The Armenian is even directly given the identity as a magician, and unsurprisingly also calls this idea *Magie*: “Alles ist gut. Nichts ist gut. Magie hebt Täuschungen auf.” [Everything is good. Nothing is good. Magic cancels illusions.]²⁰² This shows the importance of this Taoist idea for Hesse, who constantly used this principle in his different works to discuss different issues. In Klingsor’s story, the issue discussed is personal melancholy in the face of death and the turbulence of the times.

Different from *Innen und Außen*, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer* ends with Klingsor’s transformation and transcendence. This transformation is accomplished through painting, and the self-portrait at the end of the story marks the completion. Klingsor has been exploring the direction of his painting all his life, and he has experienced many brief creative peaks. Despite some momentary achievements in painting, because of the failure to find his ultimate poetic truth, he “war von Mal zu Mal das Ende einer Glutzeit schlimmer geworden, trauriger, vernichtender. Aber immer war auch das überlebt worden, und nach Wochen oder Monaten, nach Qual oder Betäubung war die Auferstehung gekommen” [from time to time, the end of a glowing period had become worse, sadder, more devastating. But this had always been survived, and after weeks or months, after agony or stupefaction, the resurrection had come].²⁰³ In view of Klingsor’s inability to achieve greater breakthroughs in painting and the pain he suffered, his friend Louise asked him if all painting was worthwhile and urged him to stop torturing himself with this childish game. Another doctor friend told him that his beautiful watercolors would fade after ten years, that the colors he favored would not last, and suggested that Klingsor should give up painting and enjoy life. For Klingsor, without art, everything in life would have no meaning

²⁰² Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 333.

²⁰³ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 296.

and a man would become a miserable devil without a soul. He says “wenn du nicht einige solche Sachen gemalt hättest, dann würden alle guten Essen und Weine und Weiber und Kaffees dir nichts helfen, du wärest ein armer Teufel.” [if you had not painted some such things, all the good food and wine and women and coffees would do you no good, you would be a poor devil]. Just like Hesse said that after the war he wanted to be a poet again, to return the world to reason and unity, to rediscover the soul, to release beauty again, to be called by God again - all of which his people used to believe before the great collapse. No matter what, “sah ich für mich keinen anderen Weg als den zur Dichtung zurück, einerlei ob die Welt der Dichtung noch bedürfe oder nicht.” [I saw no other way for me than to return to poetry, regardless of whether the world still needed poetry or not.]²⁰⁴ For Klingsor as well, whether the world needs painting or not, or whether his paintings can be understood, this is the only way he can return to the lost beauty. Thus he is still searching for the expression of his paintings while feeling melancholic before he finds his way.

Before he completes his last work, Klingsor seems to deliberately avoid the post-war landscape. He documents the beauty of the landscapes he encounters on his travels, for example, “die rote Villa im Gehölz, feurig glühend wie ein Rubin auf grünem Sammet, und die eiserne Brücke bei Castiglia, rot auf blaugrünem Berg, der violette Damm daneben, die rosige Straße” [the red villa in the grove, fiery glowing like a ruby on green velvet, and the iron bridge at Castiglia, red on blue-green mountain, the purple dam beside it, the rosy road]. Not only is he dissatisfied with his own paintings, but most of these works remain only in his portfolio unappreciated. The fact that he did not use his brush to record the post-war desolation and the

²⁰⁴ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 298.

plight of society is an escape, just as he uses alcohol to escape his own sorrows. Because of this, he is never satisfied with his paintings until he finishes his self-portraits.

In the self-portraits, Klingsor finally confronts himself, examines his past experiences, and issues a cry for reality and a hope for a future rebirth after the collapse of Europe. Those who admire this work recognize the final emaciation of his life: his hair resembles leaves and tree bark and his eye sockets resemble rock fissures. Although this is a self-portrait, he did more than just recording the last moments of his life. There are thousands of other faces in the painting, “Kindergesichter süß und erstaunt, Jünglingsschläfen voll Traum und Glut, spöttische Trinkeraugen, Lippen eines Dürstenden, eines Verfolgten, eines Leidenden, eines Suchenden, eines Wüstlings, eines enfant perdu” [Children’s faces sweet and amazed, youthful sleep full of dream and glow, taunting drunkard’s eyes, lips of a thirsty, a persecuted, a suffering, a searching, a desolate, an enfant perdu].²⁰⁵ In one painting, Klingsor painted the suffering of an entire era. He still misses the classical era in Europe. He sighs at the hopelessness of the current period. European civilization is dying, and so is humanity. The whole world is “voll von Kinderangst vor dem Tode und voll von müder Bereitschaft” [full of children’s fear of death and full of tired readiness], waiting for death.²⁰⁶ Once, Klingsor felt fearful and helpless in the face of an irresistible fate, and wanted to run away. Now, he sees it as his mission to paint human beings in order to reveal their fate. He says “Nun gab es nicht Angst noch Flucht mehr, nur noch Vorwärts, nur noch Hieb und Stich, Sieg und Untergang. Er siegte, und er ging unter und litt und lachte und biß sich durch, tötete und starb, gebar und wurde geboren.” [Now there was no more fear nor flight, only forward, only slash and thrust, victory and downfall. He conquered and he perished

²⁰⁵ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 348.

²⁰⁶ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 349.

and suffered and laughed and bit his way through, killed and died, gave birth and was born.]"²⁰⁷

Klingsor thus completes his transformation from a pessimist who found escape in avoiding reality to a mission bearer who directly confronts destruction. He found his poetic truth which is to show the reality and future of fate through painting.

After completing this painting, Klingsor's summer comes to an end. He is no longer in pain and has stopped painting because he has completed his artistic pursuit. Klingsor was able to complete his transformation and find the direction of his art because he has found the path to his inner self. The self-portrait represents his focus of observation on the inside of himself, in comparison to his previous naturalistic style of painting. In this work Hesse portrays a character who recognizes the crisis and constantly finds a breakthrough for himself, while raising this breakthrough to his own mission for the future of Europe. For this reason, Hesse can be counted as a one of those what Nina Berman calls the *fortschrittsgläubige Beobachter*, progressive-minded observers, of Europe in the post-World War I period. The progressive observer to whom melancholy, stagnation and decay are repugnant in accordance with his own attitude to life, "enthüllt hier seine eigenen Ängste in der Kritik des Fatalismus. Der Orient wird somit erneut zur Vorlage für die Diskussion der eigenen Probleme" [here reveals his own fears in the critique of fatalism. The Orient thus once again becomes a template for the discussion of one's own problems].²⁰⁸ Aside from the fact that drinking is their common habit, one reason why Hesse makes his protagonist refer to himself as Li Bai is his nostalgia for the classical period in times of emotional crisis. Chinese poetry, as well as art, as many Orientalists have said, is not very different from the ancient and the present. "Wenn man die Kreise des Gefühls und der

²⁰⁷ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 351.

²⁰⁸ Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, 216-217.

Anschauung der alten chinesischen Dichter mit denen der neuen vergleicht, wird man einen großen Unterschied kaum erkennen” [If one compares the circles of feeling and outlook of the ancient Chinese poets with those of the new ones, one will hardly notice a great difference].²⁰⁹ The stereotypical view on the development of Chinese civilization - stagnation - can be seen as a positive term in the field of art, especially in the crisis of personal identity and social development, as well as in the age of nostalgia, in Europe. Another reason is Li Bai’s melancholy. His melancholy is a one that transcends personal suffering and tied to the fate of the era. Inside of Li Bai, “hämmer das unbegriffene Schicksal der Welt” [hammers the incomprehensible fate of the world].²¹⁰ He expressed this melancholy through his poems. Li Bai’s art is “irdisch und überirdisch zugleich” [earthly and supernatural at the same time].²¹¹ Although Klingsor has called himself Li Bai from the very beginning, for him, who has not yet completed his transformation, becoming like Li Bai is a goal that needs to be reached. Klingsor wanted to respond to the destiny of the era through his paintings, just as Hesse through his words. Using Li Bai as a model and Taoist idea of transcending the seemingly contradictory opposites and finding the truth of *Tao* from within as a solution, Hesse explores the issues of Europe after the war.

In addition to the melancholic problems of individuals in the face of social change, this work of Hesse also offers a new perspective for dealing with the contradictions between art and reality. The discussion of aesthetics was an important topic in the period of Modernism. German writers expressed their different views on aesthetics and modern life. For example, Thomas Mann’s *Tristan*, Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s *Das Märchen der 672. Nacht*. Both Mann and

²⁰⁹ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 104.

²¹⁰ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 104.

²¹¹ Bethge, *Die Chinesische Flöte*, 104.

Hofmannsthal express a conscious anti-social aestheticism, where one distances oneself from reality, while Hesse adapts the figure of Klingsor, which offers a different interpretation of the aesthetic problem.

Thomas Mann and Hesse were contemporaries of German modernist writers. His *Tristan*, like Hesse's adaptation of Klingsor figure, is adapted from the medieval story of Tristan and Isolde. *Tristan* tells the story happened at a sanatorium. Spinell, the main character of the story, claims to be an artist, but he has accomplished little work. The only work by him was not published or known to the public. Even his letters to his friends often go unanswered. The other main character is Gabriele, the wife of a businessman Klöterjahn, who is sent to the sanatorium by her husband because of respiratory problems. During conversations with Mrs. Klöterjahn, Spinell leads her step by step on the path of art, which is detached from reality. In the end, Gabriele's condition deteriorates and she dies in the sanatorium. Spinell is an artist who hates life, and in contrast to Klöterjahn he is a man who lacks vitality and masculinity. He lives in a sanatorium, creates unpopular and uninspiring works, and is a useless person to society. Spinell not only has a peculiar name, which means a crystal-like stone, symbolizing a fanciful artistic attitude, but also has a strange appearance. His hair "an den Schläfen schon merklich zu ergrauen beginnt, dessen rundes, weißes, ein wenig gedunsenes Gesicht aber nicht die Spur irgendeines Bartwuchses zeigt. Es war nicht rasiert..." [at the temples already begins to gray noticeably, whose round, white, a little bloated face but does not show the trace of any beard growth. It was not shaved...]²¹² He is a grotesque of the society. In contrast, the businessman Klötjahn is full of vitality, robust, rich and with a healthy son. His name "Klöter" means testicle and symbolizes his masculinity. While the father and son are healthy, but they cannot accept and understand art.

²¹² Thomas Mann, *Tristan* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), 10.

Spinell, a patient living in a nursing home, is an artist. The combination and conflict of these two characterizations can be traced back to Nietzsche's ideas, "daß Erkenntnis das Leben schwächt, daß Glück und Gesundheit nur bei den Naiven sind, daß Krankheit sensibel macht, daß Erkenntnis Einsamkeit und Distanz von der Masse voraussetzt" [that knowledge weakens life, that happiness and health are only with the naive, that illness makes sensitive, that knowledge presupposes loneliness and distance from the masses].²¹³ Klöterjahn and Spinell represent the two extremes of life and art, with Gabriele stands in between. Spinell's manipulation of Gabriele is his revenge on life as an artist. When Gabriele begins to believe that the crown is in her hair, she starts losing interest in her bourgeois life. She finds happiness in Wagner's music and at the same time moves steps closer to her death. If Spinell has accomplished any noticeable artwork in his life, it is the transformation of Gabriele. Although he completes his transformation or reinvention of Gabriele, life ultimately triumphs over art: the loudly laughing Klöterjahn's son leaves Spinell in the lurch at the end of the story. In this work, art cannot be reconciled with modern life. A person who chooses modern life will not be able to understand art. On the contrary, if he chooses art, then he will be killed by art.

Hofmannsthal's *Das Märchen der 672. Nacht* expresses a similar attitude towards modern life and art. This story describes a young bourgeois merchant's son. At home he is served by servants and could have enjoyed a peaceful and rich life, but he felt uncomfortable in this way of living. He does not like social life and always locks himself up in a room full of oriental objects, where he contemplates his life, accompanied by the inescapable thought of death. One day he leaves his home and goes to the city. At night he sees the face of a girl in the

²¹³ Thomas Mann and Hermann Kurzke, "Nachwort," in *Tristan* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), 51-63, 54.

leaves. The girl looks like the daughter of the old servant of his house. The girl makes an evil face at him, which terrifies him. He hurriedly flees to a barracks yard. After an inadvertent fall, he is kicked by a horse and dies tragically. The protagonist of this story keeps himself away from the cultural and political events of society and lives in a stylized artistic world. This world, as experienced by the merchant's son, is not lifeless. He is terrified by his empty, lonely and limited social life. Despite his lack of any illness, the thought of death never leaves him. Facing the inevitable thought of death, retreating into the contemplation of art is his way of escaping the threat. The merchant's son eventually dies in the big city, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for modern life. In the big city he does not have the protection offered by the artistic life he has created for himself.

If in Mann's story art and life are parallel in opposition to each other, in Hofmannsthal's work the relation between art and modern life is linear. Art is depicted as something that has been and lost, and life as something that is ongoing. Hofmannsthal's protagonist avoids confrontation with the modern process by *retreating into* artistic life and escaping reality. Whether art and life are linear or parallel, the point is that the two are opposite and irreconcilable. It is noteworthy that Hofmannsthal uses elements of the orient in describing modern aesthetic issues. The name of the story brings to mind the fairy tale of the *Thousand and One Nights*. The artistic space that the merchant's son creates for himself is then his own fairy tale world. The objects in this world are from the East, which in the European orientalist tradition has always been exotic and fantasy-inducing. The fairy tale world of the protagonist not only provides protection for himself, but these oriental objects also imply the past, as European Orientalist scholars have positioned oriental society and art: traditional, past, unchanging, etc., and thus correspond to the author's linear definition of aesthetics and life.

These two works express a pessimistic relationship between art and life, and an insoluble problem. Commenting on what is a “Dichter” [poet] for him, Mann said:

Ein Dichter ist ein auf allen Gebieten ernsthafter Tätigkeit unbedingt unbrauchbarer, einzig auf Allotria bedachter, dem Staate nicht nur nicht nützlicher, sonder sogar aufsässig gesinnter Kumpan... ein innerlich kindischer, zur Ausschweifung gezeigter und in jedem Betracht anrühiger Scharlatan, der von der Gesellschaft nichts anderes sollte zu gewärtigen haben — und im Grunde auch nichts anderes gewärtigt — als stille Verachtung.

A poet is a companion who is absolutely useless in all fields of serious activity, who is only concerned with skylarking, who is not only not useful to the state, but is even rebellious... an inwardly childish charlatan, inclined to debauchery and disreputable in every respect, who should not expect anything else from society - and in fact does not expect anything else - than silent contempt.

Mann’s view of the poet is like that of Spinell, the protagonist of his *Tristan*: useless to society and totally detached from it. Contrasting this opinion with Hesse’s view of the poet, one can see his attitude toward art and reality. Hesse wrote:

Mir zum Beispiel, dem vom Krieg degradierten und vergewaltigten, jetzt wieder ins Privatleben entlassen Dichter, wollten zuweilen die unwahrscheinlichsten Dinge möglich scheinen, etwa eine Rückkehr der Welt zu Vernunft und Brüderlichkeit, ein Wiederentdecken der Seele, ein Wiedergelassen des Schönen, ein Wiederangerufenwerden von den Göttern, an die wir bis zum Zusammenbruch unsrer einstigen Welt geglaubt hatten.²¹⁴

For me, for example, a poet who had been degraded and raped by the war and was now released into private life again, sometimes the most improbable things seemed possible, such as a return of the world to reason and brotherhood, a rediscovery of the soul, a reintroduction of beauty, a recall of the gods in whom we had believed until the collapse of our former world.

For Hesse, the poet is not only not useless to society, but on the contrary, he has a great mission for society. Likewise there is no irreconcilable tension between art and social life. In *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, Klingsor and Louis represents art and reality respectively. Klingsor is

²¹⁴ Hesse, *Erinnerung an Klingsors Sommer*, 44-45.

a painter who is in constant search of the true meaning of art, fully implementing Hesse's idea of the poet's mission, i.e. rediscovering the soul, reintroducing the beauty and recalling the God.

Louis doesn't want to work and loves to travel with his female friends, "plötzlich aber würde er ihm den gepackten Koffer zeigen und abreisen, um lange Zeit nicht wieder zu kommen." [but suddenly he (Louis) would show him (Klingsor) the packed suitcase and leave, not to return for a long time.]²¹⁵ About painting, Louis says to Klingsor:

Ob diese ganze Malerei eigentlich einen Wert hat?...Man malt doch bloß faute de mieux, mein Lieber. Hättest du immer das Mädchen auf dem Schoß, das dir gerade fällt, und die Suppe im Teller, nach der heute dein Sinn steht, du würdest dich nicht mit dem wahnsinnigen Kinderspiel plagen. Die Natur hat zehntausend Farben, und wir haben uns in den Kopf gesetzt, die Skala auf zwanzig zu reduzieren. Das ist die Malerei. Zufrieden ist man nie, und muß noch die Kritiker ernähren helfen. Hingegen eine gute Marseiller Fischsuppe, Caro mio, und ein kleiner lauer Burgunder dazu, und nachher ein Mailänder Schnitzel, zum Dessert Birnen und einen Gorgonzola, und ein türkischer Kaffee — das sind Realitäten, mein Herr, das sind Werte!²¹⁶

Whether all this painting actually has a value?...One paints only faute de mieux, my dear. If you always had the girl on your lap, whom you just like, and the soup in your plate, after which your mind is today, you wouldn't bother yourself with the insane child's play. Nature has ten thousand colors, and we have taken it into our heads to reduce the scale to twenty. That is painting. One is never satisfied, and still has to help feed the critics. On the other hand, a good fish soup from Marseilles, my dear, and a small Burgundy wine with it, and afterwards a Milanese schnitzel, pears and a Gorgonzola for dessert, and a Turkish coffee - these are realities, sir, these are values!

Louis doubts the value of painting, considering it at best a child's game. This is similar to Thomas Mann's description of the poet as an inwardly childish charlatan. For Louis, the truly valuable things are women, food, wine, and other things that bring material pleasure. In contrast to Louis' opinion, the meaning of painting, according to Klingsor, is:

Malen war schön, Malen war ein schönes, ein liebes Spiel für brave Kinder. Anders war es, größer und wuchtiger, die Sterne zu dirigieren, Takt des eigenen Blutes, Farbenkreise

²¹⁵ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 305.

²¹⁶ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 302.

der eigenen Netzhaut in die Welt hinein fortzusetzen, Schwebungen der eigenen Seele ausschwingen zu lassen im Wind der Nacht.²¹⁷

Painting was beautiful, painting was a lovely game for good children. It was different, bigger and more powerful, to direct the stars, the beat of one's own blood, to continue the color circles of one's own retina into the world, to let the floats of one's own soul swing out in the wind of the night.

The meaning of painting is not merely a child's play. For the true painter, the personal emotion and soul connects with the outside world through painting. It is a way for the individual to communicate with the world. The difference between Klingsor's and Louis' approach to art is like that between Spinell and Klöterjahn. But Klingsor and Louis are still close friends. On the one hand, Klingsor does not isolate himself from his circle of friends and society because of his insistence on art, and on the other hand, Louis is not hostile to Klingsor's identity as a painter because of his different views on art. Hesse expresses the view that the contradiction between art and reality is not irreconcilable. In his self-portraits, Klingsor uses his artistic means to reveal the harsh reality that Europe experienced after World War I, which indicates that the contradiction is finally transcended in Klingsor's final self-portrait.

Conclusion

Taoist philosophy wielded an exceptionally profound influence on Hesse's personal life and literary creations, even integrating itself into his belief system. In contrast to the majority of Oriental scholars who rely on materials dispatched from China by missionaries as their primary information source for studying the nation, Hesse resembled more a Chinese literatus. He delved into the classics of diverse Chinese schools, the verses of renowned poets, and folk narratives. Although Hesse never physically journeyed to China nor possessed the capability to read Chinese, his access to authentic Chinese concepts owes gratitude to Richard Wilhelm. This

²¹⁷ Hesse, *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*, 321.

sinologist played a pivotal role in propagating Chinese culture in Germany and in refining and augmenting the translations of classical Chinese texts that his predecessors had undertaken.

Through Wilhelm's contributions, Hesse was empowered to extract the true essence of Chinese ideas from these texts, sidestepping subjective, biased, or narrow-minded interpretations and commentaries often presented by missionaries or Orientalist scholars.

In a time of turmoil and transformation, wars, changes in social structures, and technological innovations all brought many problems to Europe at the turn of the century. It was also the time when Hesse himself was diagnosed and suffered from mental disorders. Taoist thought became one of the most important solutions for Hesse to discuss and attempt to solve the social and personal problems that he was facing. One of the most important concepts is to deal with seemingly contradictory opposites from a dialectical point of view, and to seek the transcendence of opposites within oneself in order to achieve a harmonious and unified balance.

With such a view Hesse discussed about war and peace after World War I and expressed his views on German De-nationalism after World War II. In *Innen und Außen* he reproduces in literature the personal psychological problems arising from the seemingly antagonistic contradiction between Western science and Eastern spirituality, as proposed by C. G. Jung, if not dealt with in the right way. Jung's solution to this crisis is influenced by Taoist thought, i.e., detachment from the external, and Hesse also gives the same solution, i.e., the way towards the inside. This solution also became the solution to Klingsor's personal crisis in *Klingsors Letzter Sommer*. His crisis was not due to paranoia about scientific thinking, but to the melancholy that many Europeans of that era experienced due to war, social changes, and other factors. The Armenian Magician in the story conveys to Klingsor, as an Oriental, that the solution to his problems is not to avoid them but to recognize from within, namely free from external

distraction, so that contradictions can be transcended. Beyond the issue of melancholy, this work offers a new perspective on the irreconcilable contradictions between art and real life that have long been discussed in the discourse of German literature. As Hugo Ball has stated that “Die Chinesen scheinen für Hesse eine besondere Beziehung zum Zauber, zum Märchen, zur Poesie zu haben...Die Chinesen sind wohl für Hesse die nüchternsten Beobachter, aber auch die geduldigsten; und darum gerade sind sie die besten Verfasser von Märchen und Zauberbüchern.” [For Hesse, the Chinese seem to have a special relationship to magic, to fairy tales, to poetry...For Hesse, the Chinese are probably the most sober observers, but also the most patient; and that is precisely why they are the best authors of fairy tales and magic books.]²¹⁸ Thus in the chaotic years after the war, Chinese thought and poetry became a natural choice for Hesse as he observed and reflected on social issues, aesthetic truths, and the poet’s identity and responsibilities.

The influence of Taoism on Hesse is by no means limited to the letters and works of Hesse studied in this chapter. In his letters to many different people, Hesse expressed his approval and appreciation of Taoism. In addition, the application of Taoism can also be found in some other works to a greater or lesser extent, for example, his famous *Siddhartha*. In describing this work with the background and theme of Indian Buddhist culture and wisdom, despite the absence of any Taoist terminology throughout the text, Hesse said “der Schluß des *Siddhartha* ist beinahe mehr taoistisch als indisch” [the ending of *Siddhartha* is almost more Taoist than Indian].²¹⁹

In a letter to Wilhelm Gundert in February 1920, Hesse wrote:

²¹⁸ Ball, *Hermann Hesse*, 204.

²¹⁹ Hermann Hesse, “An Helene Welti,” in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Briefe: Zweiter Band 1922-1935* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979), 27-29, 28.

Schließlich führte das alles zu einer Unerträglichkeit des Lebens, die mich nötigte, mich selber ganz neu zu betrachten und erst einmal den Weg zu meinem eigentlichen Ich zu suchen.²²⁰

In the end, all of this led to an intolerability of life that forced me to take a completely new look at myself and first seek the path to my real self.

Seeking the path to his real self was achieved in large part through the help of Taoist thought, and this path is the one that leads to the inner self. This path is not only an important part of Hesse's literature, but also an important part of Hesse's own life.

²²⁰ Hermann Hesse, "An Wilhelm Gundert," in *Hermann Hesse Gesammelte Briefe: Erster Band 1895-1921* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 446-447, 446.

Chapter 4 Alfred Döblin and Bertolt Brecht—Taoism associated with China-Metaphor

In the cultural exchanges between China and Europe, following the early interactions with Jesuits and missionaries, European philosophers and Orientalist scholars delved into numerous aspects of Chinese culture. Whether their attitudes toward China leaned towards sinophobia or sinophilia, one thing became evident – China was no longer an intellectually inaccessible and unknown territory for Europeans. Not surprisingly, metaphors of China appear in abundance in German literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some examples in the nineteenth century are: Heinrich Heine's poem *Der Kaiser von China* (The Emperor of China, 1844); Hugo von Hofmannsthal's one-act play, partially written prose, partially verse, *Der Weisse Fächer* (The White Fan, 1897); Otto Julius Bierbaum's novel *Das schöne Mädchen von Pao* (The beautiful maiden from Pao, 1899). In the twentieth century, as more writers turned their attention to China, Chinese metaphors became increasingly common in German literature. Both Alfred Döblin and Bertolt Brecht have also written works inspired by Chinese metaphors. Döblin's *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* [The three leaps of Wang-lun] is a historical novel first published in 1916. Brecht wrote his play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [The Good Person of Szechwan] in 1940 and *Me-ti* (mid-1930s-1955), a collection of texts that reflects Brecht's social and political views, over the course of several decades between 1930 and 1955.

Most of these literary works that use Chinese metaphors have one thing in common: the setting of the work is in China, where the main characters and the names of places are Chinese. Some authors call their works "Ein Chinesischer Roman" [A Chinese Novel], such as Bierbaum and Döblin. Nonetheless, much of what the author wants to depict or discuss in these stories has little to do with China. The author uses Chinese metaphors to discuss issues about Europe itself. For instance, some liberal writers use Chinese metaphors as a political weapon so that they "in ihren Werken China als ein Land mangelhafter individueller Freiheit schildern, attackieren sie

indirekt die politischen Zustände im eigenen Land.” [in their works portray China as a country with a lack of individual freedom and indirectly attack the political conditions in their own country.]²²¹

This chapter analyzes three works by two authors: Döblin’s *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* and Brecht’s *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Me-ti*. Within these literary works, Chinese metaphors are deftly employed to shed light on Europe’s internal political and societal quandaries. In conjunction with these metaphors, Taoist concepts are also interwoven. One of the chapter’s focal points lies in examining how two writers, both deeply engaged with German societal concerns, incorporate Chinese elements within their literary works. Döblin employs an extensive amount of detail, investing considerable effort in meticulously reconstructing realistic scenes of Chinese society, an approach that is relatively uncommon. This writing technique gives the reader the feeling as if they are truly experiencing a real China. In contrast, Brecht takes an opposing stance to Döblin. Despite also infusing his works with a plethora of Chinese elements, he endeavors to cloak these influences. Brecht intentionally omits any mention of the actual Chinese societal reality. Brecht’s writing approach is closely tied to the alienation effect as proposed in his Epic Theater theory.

Through my analysis, I argue that Döblin, via his depiction of the uprising among the marginalized strata of Chinese society, employs an intricate mapping of his pessimistic perspective regarding the prospects of the German workers’ movement. Brecht displayed indifference towards the connection of scenes in his plays or other works with the reality of China. All Chinese elements, including the concepts of Taoism, were deployed to serve the

²²¹ Zhonghua Luo, *Alfred Döblins “Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun” : Ein Chinesischer Roman?* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 28.

“socialness” of his works. If, during his writing process, elements from other cultures could more effectively exemplify the societal concerns he sought to address, he would have had no hesitation in substituting them.

4.1 Alfred Döblin and *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun*

Döblin was born in 1878 in Stettin an der Oder into a family of Jewish merchants. In 1900 he began his medical studies in Berlin. The absence of a literary tradition in his family and the fact that his education seemed far removed from literature did not prevent Döblin from achieving great success in German literature. From the very beginning of his medical studies, his goal was different from that of an ordinary medical student who would save lives or have a high social status or wealth upon completion of his studies. Choosing medical studies as his major, Döblin wanted to counter the inner affinity to the irrational in religion, metaphysics, and art, which he himself was aware of, with a corrective that was both rational and, above all, sanctioned by society, which would open the way to bourgeois normality for him.²²² Thus the activities of a doctor and writer were not in conflict for him, and in the *Epilog* of 1948 he “betonte tiefe Unversöhnlichkeit und gleichzeitige Unaufhebbarkeit als fragloses Nebeneinander von Arzt und Dichter.” [emphasized deep irreconcilability and simultaneous irrevocability as unquestionable coexistence of doctor and poet.]²²³ His literary works are also often studied with regard to the pathology related to his specialty, for example, Qinna Shen’s study of *The Ambiguity of Revolution: Wu-wei, Pathology, and Criminality in Alfred Döblin’s “Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun. Chinesischer Roman”*.

²²² Matthias Prangel, *Alfred Döblin* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), 18.

²²³ Prangel, *Alfred Döblin*, 18.

Döblin completed *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* between 1912 and 1913, and it was published in 1916. This novel won him the Fontane Prize. Döblin's inspiration to write a novel based on China came from an article about the Chinese gold miners' uprising in Siberia and their bloody suppression by the Czarist troops.²²⁴ Döblin later began collecting and researching information about China, and eventually wrote this novel on the model of the 1774 Wang Lun Rebellion of the Qing Dynasty. The novel consists of four books that chronologically depict Wun-lun's organization and leadership of the underclass against the Manchu rule over the Han Chinese. The title of the first book is "Wang-lun". It describes the family and social background of Wang-lun, the main character from Shandong Province, in his early childhood. Wang-lun himself comes from the bottom of the society and has not received any education. He was born in a poor fishing village where his father makes his living by fishing. He has a bad character and has been stealing since he was young. After leaving his hometown, he comes to Chih-li and continues to steal for a living. There he witnesses the murder of a Muslim friend of his, Su-Koh, by a government official. In revenge, he kills a government official. Later, unable to overcome the memory of his friend's murder and his killing, he decides to adopt the Taoist ideology of *wu-wei* to resist the government's prosecution and pursuit. At the same time, he calls other dregs of society to join his group with this ideology. Wang-lun says to the group:

Man hat nicht gut an uns getan: das ist das Schicksal. Man wird nicht gut an uns tun: das ist das Schicksal. Ich habe es auf allen Wegen, auf den Äckern, Straßen, Bergen, von den alten Leuten gehört, daß nur eins hilft gegen das Schicksal: nicht widerstreben.²²⁵

²²⁴ David Dollenmayer, "The Advent of Döblinism: Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun and Wadzeks Kampf Mit Der Dampfturbine," in *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*, ed. Wulf Koepke, Heidi Thomann Tewarson, and Roland Dollinger (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), 55-74, 63.

²²⁵ Alfred Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun: Chinesischer Roman* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1917), 84.

They have not done us any good: that is fate. They will not do good to us: that is fate. I have heard it from the old people on all roads, in the fields, on the streets, in the mountains, that only one thing helps against fate: not to resist.

In order to strengthen his group, he goes on a journey to find *die Weiße Wasserlilie*, the White Lotus, a secret religious sect that spans multiple dynasties in Chinese history.

The second book is titled “Die Gebrochene Melone” [The Broken Melon]. Wang-lun is absent from the reader’s view for most of the second book. The people of the sect call themselves *Wahrhaft Schwachen*, the True Weak. Besides the highest principle of *wu-wei*, based on Wang-lun’s teaching, the group has “drei kostbaren Regeln” [three precious rules] for the people who join in, namely “die Armut, Keuschheit, Gleichmut” [poverty, chastity, equanimity].²²⁶ Faced with government prosecution, the group elects Ma-noh, a former monk of who had escaped from Pu-to-shan, one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China, as its leader. It is because of this identity of his that Ma-noh added Buddhist concepts to Wang-lun’s Taoist principles. He desires to lead the crowd to final goal that “man bald das Westliche Paradies auf dem Kun-lun nannte, bald den fünften Maitreya, bald das Kin-tan pulver, welches ewiges Leben gewährt.” [sometimes called the Western Paradise on Kun-lun, sometimes called the fifth Maitreya, sometimes called the Kin-tan powder that grants eternal life.]²²⁷ Although he advocates *wu-wei* in principle, he differs from Wang-lun in many ways. He attempts to persuade people to abandon chastity, one of the three principles of the sect, and leads members in the rape of women. Afterwards, he calls those women “Gebrochenen Melonen” and said “Was ihr Gebrochenen Melonen uns geschenkt habt, nehmen wir an. Wir danken euch, wir danken euch. Ich nenne mich mit euch Gebrochene Melone.” [What you Broken Melons have given us, we

²²⁶ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 88.

²²⁷ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 127.

accept. We thank you, we thank you. I call myself Broken Melon with you.]²²⁸ He makes these women join his sect and officially changes the name of the sect to the Broken Melon. To fight against the government forces, Ma-noh leads the sect to establish their own kingdom, *Insel der Gebrochenen Melone* [Island of the Broken Melon], modeled on Tibet, calling himself *Priesterkönig* [Priest King]. At the same time, they renounce *wu-wei* in practice and starts armed confrontation with the government's army. After returning from his journey to find the White Lotus, Wang-lun discovers the change in the sect. He mediates with government forces, hoping thereby to resolve the conflict peacefully. He persuades Ma-noh to dismiss the sect as it has departed from the principles on which it was founded. After being rejected by Ma-noh again, Wang-lun secretly poisons the city's drinking water system, killing Ma-noh and his followers.

As the title of the third book, "Der Herr der Gelben Erde" [The Lord of the Yellow Land], foreshadows, the focus of the narrative shifts from the sect to the ruler of the country, Emperor Khien-lung. When news of the True Weak reaches the court, Khien-lung and his ministers discuss their possible strategies but are unable to make a final decision. Khien-lung invites Lobsang Paldan Jische, the Buddhist religious leader from Tibet, to ask for his advice. Paldan Jische advises Khien-lung to provide tolerance to the sect and not to use force to suppress it. Before Paldan Jische fully succeeds in persuading the emperor to abandon force, he contracts smallpox and dies. Khien-lung's son, Kia-king, recruits soldiers and sends them to secretly join the True Weak and commit atrocities, thus persuading the emperor to suppress them by force. Eventually Khien-lung agrees to send troops to suppress them. Meanwhile, Wang-lun retreats to the countryside alone after the poisoning incident and changes his name to Tai. He marries a

²²⁸ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 158.

wife and lives a quiet life as a fisherman. He no longer cares about the True Weak's activities at this point.

The last book, "Das Westliche Paradies" [The Western Paradise], describes how the True Weak was suppressed by the government forces. With Wang-lun's departure, the group is left without a leader and is unable to defend itself against the government's army. The True Weak sends people for Wang-lun and asks him to return. Upon his return, Wang-lun stops promoting *wu-wei* and leads the sect, supported by the White Lotus, to attack the government forces. However, their attack fails. They are surrounded. At this point Wang-lun recalls the various events along the way and undergoes another final transformation. He decides that he wants "nicht Verbrecher sein, kein Mord, kein Mord!" [Not be a criminal, no murder, no murder!]²²⁹ He makes the *wu-wei* claim one last time and says "für sie und mich ist das Wu-wei gestiftet, und ich will uns untergehen lassen." [for them and me the *wu-wei* is established, and I will let us perish.]²³⁰ The government forces finally defeat the True Weak and Wang-lun.

Döblin is unique in his approach towards the "Chineseness" in literature. Among other German literary works that use Chinese metaphors, no one has used such a large number of realistic and accurate details in their works as he has. And these details concern almost all aspects of a foreign country: food, dress, rituals, customs, history, politics, and even language habits. Other works about China are, as Luo says, based "oft nur auf Äußerlichkeiten wie Namen, Stoffen und Motiven, in wenigen Fällen auch auf einem wirklichen Verständnis chinesischen Geistes" [often only on externals such as names, materials and motifs, in a few cases also on a real understanding of Chinese spirit].²³¹ For example, discussed in the previous

²²⁹ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 489.

²³⁰ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 491.

²³¹ Zhonghua Luo, *Alfred Döblins "Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun"*, 31.

chapter, Hesse's work about China simply uses the principles of Taoism and the translation of Chinese poetry. Its overall background, character settings, etc. are still German. Another example is Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, which will be studied next. From the play's title, it seems to be a story about China, but Brecht does not present any Chinese socio-anthropological knowledge.

Döblin does not explain anything to readers about the *Jamen* (the administrative office in imperial China), *Tao-tai* (local official in China during the Ming and Qing dynasties), *Kwei* (ghost), etc. that appear in the novel, as if they were expected to know them in the first place. If European readers can still guess the general meaning of the above examples through the context, there are other details that perhaps only a Chinese or a Sinologist can really understand their meaning. For example, in one of Wang-lun's dialogues he uses this expression "der Sohn einer Schildkröte" [Son of a turtle].²³² For readers who do not know Chinese, they may only know from the context that the phrase is used to curse. The phrase, in Chinese 王八蛋 (Wangba Dan), is a curse word that does not exist either in English or in German language. This example shows that Döblin is committed to creating an extremely realistic portrayal of the Chinese figure of Wang-lun. He could have used other curse words instead of *der Sohn einer Schildkröte* and it would not have had any effect on European readers. Another example is when Wang-lun enters a temple to steal money, there is this depiction: "Erst als er das weiche Tuch des Achtgenientisches verzog, klirrte etwas"[only when he pulled the soft cloth of the eight-immortal table, something rattled].²³³ Similarly, he could have used the simple word *Tisch* instead of *Achtgenientisch*, since no European ordinary reader would have known what such a table looked like and was

²³² Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 32.

²³³ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 28.

commonly used in temples to place offerings, not to mention the story of the Eight Immortals.

The appearance of Chung-li-küan (汉钟离), Herr Lü (吕洞宾), and Tsao-kuo-kiu (曹国舅) in the later text proves that Döblin not only knew the use of *Achtgenientisch*, but also the story of the eight immortals in Taoism. There are a number of similar examples throughout the story.

However, the knowledge about China is not completely correct in Döblin's story. The only rather obvious error is about the title of Emperor Kia-king. Both Khien-lung and Kia-king were real emperors in the history of the Qing Dynasty, and Kia-king was indeed the son and successor of Emperor Khien-lung. However, "Khien-lung" and "Kia-king" are not the names of the two emperors, but their era names. This means that only after they became emperors would they be known as the Khien-lung or Kia-king Emperor. Khien-lung would never refer to his son as Kia-king. However, one such mistake does not invalidate Döblin's other efforts to present a genuine image of China for this story.

In addition to the socio-anthropological facts about China, Döblin also endeavors to maintain authenticity in his handling of historical events. Historically, Lobsang Palden Yeshe, the 6th Panchen Lama, visited the Qianlong Emperor in Beijing in June 1779 and died of smallpox a year later in Beijing, which is consistent with the plot of the novel. In the novel, Khien-lung writes a letter when he invites Paldan Jische to visit him. The letter "in einer großen Hoheit geschrieben, bemüht keine Hilflosigkeit durchscheinen zu lassen, wies erst politisch auf die Freundschaft, die der Taschi-Lama dem Georg Bowle bei dessen Besuch in Taschi-Lunpo erwiesen hatte" [written in a great highness, trying not to let helplessness show through, first politically pointed out the friendship the Tashi Lama had shown to Georg Bowle during his visit to Tashi-Lunpo].²³⁴ Döblin not only adds to the story the historical events of George Bogle, the

²³⁴ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 314.

Scottish diplomat who visited Tibet and Palden Yeshe, stayed at Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse from 1774-1775, but also comments on Emperor Qianlong's attitude towards this event from the Chinese perception and perspective:

Khien-lung billige diese Freundschaft, denn er erkenne daran, wie weit sich der Einfluß lamaischen Wissens erstreckte und daß auch barbarische Völker durch den Papst Anschluß an das beschützende Reich der blumigen Mitte suchten.²³⁵

Khien-lung approved of this friendship, because he recognized from it how far the influence of Lamaic knowledge extended and that also barbarian peoples sought connection to the protective realm of the flowery center through the pope.²³⁶

From the perspective of imperial rulers who promote Confucianism, peoples who do not practice Confucian culture and rituals are often called barbarians. When foreign delegations visit, the emperors of the Middle Kingdom usually treat them as coming to pay tribute and seek protection. This reflects the arrogance and closed-mindedness of the Qing dynasty during the Qianlong period. Döblin's portrayal of his Khien-lung figure is well documented. In the mandates that Qianlong wrote to King George III after the reception of Earl Macartney. It reads:

...In consideration of the fact that your Ambassador and his deputy have come a long way with your memorial and tribute, I have shown them high favour and have allowed them to be introduced into my presence...our ceremonies and code of laws differ so completely from your own that, even if your Envoy were able to acquire the rudiments of our civilisation, you could not possibly transplant our manners and customs to your alien soil...The distinction between Chinese and barbarian is most strict, and your Ambassador's request that barbarians shall be given full liberty to disseminate their religion is utterly unreasonable...²³⁷

²³⁵ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 314.

²³⁶ "the realm of the flowery center" refers to China. The Chinese not only name their country "Zhong Guo", the middle Kingdom, but also call it "Hua Xia". One interpretation of *Hua*, 华, equates it with flowers, 花, *hua*.

²³⁷ E. Backhouse and J.O.P. Bland, *Annals & Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 322, 324, 330.

Regarding the authenticity of the details in a work, Döblin once drew on Flaubert, if the color is not uniform, if the details dissonate, if the customs do not follow from religion, if the facts do not follow from the passions, adapted to the customs and the architecture to the small, there is no harmony, and Döblin said “Dies liegt mir mehr und ist mir noch nicht genug” [This is more for me and is not yet enough for me].²³⁸ Hence, it is evident that Döblin’s depiction of China is not merely a product of imagination, but rather, it appears to have been shaped through extensive research and the study of relevant materials. Döblin talks about his process of gathering information for the novel:

Als ich einen «chinesischen» Roman schrieb, ging ich einige Male in das Berliner Völkerkundemuseum, las eine Anzahl chinesischer Reisebeschreibungen und Sittenschilderungen...Burlesk kam es mir vor, daß einer der ersten ausführlichen Hinweise auf das Buch von einem Sinologen von Fach stammte, der - sogar meine Hauptfigur echt fand.²³⁹

When I was writing a “Chinese” novel, I went to the Berlin Ethnological Museum a few times, read a number of Chinese travelogues and descriptions of customs...Burlesque it seemed to me that one of the first detailed references to the book came from a sinologist of some expertise, who - even found my main character genuine.

Why does Döblin find it burlesque that the sinologist approves of the authenticity of his novel? He writes:

So wenig habe ich mich aufnehmend, beobachtend mit dem wirklichen China befaßt, daß man nach Niederschrift des Buches vergeblich in meinem Gedächtnis nach den wichtigsten Daten Chinas, ja nach den Realien meines Romans gesucht hätte: diese Realien - historische, ethnologische, geographische - waren von mir ja gar nicht als Tatsachen angenommen, überhaupt gesehen worden, sondern im Rahmen eines ganzen flutenden psychischen Prozesses, als seine weiteren Vehikel, Beförderungsmittel, Anregungsmittel, - so daß nach Erlöschen des Gesamt Ablaufs nur eine düstere Erinnerung an die einzelnen Wegsteine verblieb, an denen die Erregung vorbeifloß.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Alfred Döblin, “Der Epiker, Sein Stoff und Die Kritik,” in *Aufsätze zur Literatur* (Olten: Walter-Verlag, 1963), 335-345. 338.

²³⁹ Döblin, *Der Epiker*, 338.

²⁴⁰ Döblin, *Der Epiker*, 338-339.

So little did I deal with the real China in an absorbing, observing way that after writing the book one would have searched in vain in my memory for the most important data of China, even for the realities of my novel: These realities - historical, ethnological, geographical - had not been accepted by me as facts at all, had not been seen at all, but within the framework of a whole flooding psychological process, as its further vehicles, means of transportation, means of stimulation, - so that after the extinction of the overall process only a dim memory of the individual milestones remained, at which the excitement flowed past.

On the one hand he claims that he has never cared about the various realities of China, but on the other hand he presents in his novel a level of detail and realities that is unique and beyond the reach of other German writers in dealing with Chineseness. The reason why he feels burlesque is that his intention to use such realities in his work is misunderstood. He does not intend to restore and present the historical situation in China to readers through a great deal of realities. To deal with the historical significance of religion in China, or the social status of women, or other issues of similar kinds, are not his concerns in this novel. In another essay, Döblin discusses the meaning of the psychological process, to which the realities belong. He writes that there are “den ganzen großen physiologischen Apparat und auch unseren breiten psychischen Unterbau. Wir nehmen sie einfach hin, wie wir den Horizont und die Tageszeiten hinnehmen.” [the whole big physiological apparatus and also our broad psychological substructure. We simply accept them as we accept the horizon and the times of day.]²⁴¹ He further explains this psychological process using the example of a baby breastfeeding: A child knows without any education to get nutrition from the mother’s milk; similarly, a mother who knows to feed her child with it without any knowledge of her glands, of the proper composition of milk, of its nutrients and hormones, etc. This psychological process never rises to a deliberate

²⁴¹ Alfred Döblin, “Die Dichtung, Ihre Natur und Ihre Rolle,” in *Schriften zu Ästhetik, Poetik und Literatur* (Olten: Walter-Verlag, 1989), 487-547, 489.

consciousness, because it is the natural state.²⁴² Thus, when Döblin classifies reality as part of the psychological process as a whole, it can also be said that reality is part of the natural process for him. In 1913, Döblin claimed in his *Offenen Brief an F. T. Marinett*: “Was nicht direkt, nicht unmittelbar, nicht gesättigt von Sachlichkeit ist, lehnen wir gemeinsam ab.” [What is not direct, not immediate, not saturated with objectivity, we reject together.]²⁴³ In 1950, he expressed a similar view that “Dichtung verlangt Klarheit und Deutlichkeit, Wissen um die Wirklichkeit” [Poetry demands clarity and distinctness, knowledge of reality].²⁴⁴ Objectivity and authenticity are important criteria of Döblin’s aesthetics. The reality constructed in the novel is thus the *natural* process by which Döblin upholds and realizes his literary standards.

Moreover, Döblin understands the essence of reality as a spiritual nature that is integrated with the material world and rejects the absolute separation of appearance and essence.²⁴⁵ Thus, reality as the direct appearance and expression of our perception of the material world has the same importance as essence. This explains what he says about realities as further vehicles, means of transportation, means of stimulation. Döblin says “ob ich von China, Indien und Grönland sprach, ich habe immer von Berlin gesprochen” [whether I was talking about China, India and Greenland, I was always talking about Berlin].²⁴⁶ In this case, the reality about China is the vehicle, means of transportation and stimulation, by which he discusses the essence of German social problems through Taoist ideas and rituals.

²⁴² Döblin, *Die Dichtung*, 490.

²⁴³ Weijian Liu, *Die Daoistische Philosophie Im Werk von Hesse, Döblin Und Brecht* (Bochum: Norbert Brockmeyer, 1991), 174-175.

²⁴⁴ Döblin, *Die Dichtung*, 510.

²⁴⁵ Liu, *Die Daoistische Philosophie*, 173.

²⁴⁶ Döblin, *Schriften zu Leben und Werk*, 183.

Before Wang-lun's story begins, Döblin writes a *Dedication* for this novel, where he describes a scene in the first person for the only time throughout the whole story. This scene seems to be a record of the streets the author saw from his window while writing this novel: "Ein sanfter Pfiff" [A soft whistle], "Metallisches Anlaufen" [Metallic tarnishing], "Ein Rost ist unter die Steine gespannt" [A rust is stretched under the stones], "Motorkeuchende Wagen segeln" [Engine-smoking carriages sail], etc.²⁴⁷ Such an environment is depressing. The narrator is unable to find himself in this environment or settle in. He says "Nur finde ich mich nicht zurecht. Ich weiß nicht, wessen Stimmen das sind, wessen Seele solch tausendtöniges Gewölbe von Resonanz braucht." [Only I do not find my way. I don't know whose voices these are, whose soul needs such thousand-tone vault of resonance.]²⁴⁸ Whose soul needs this industrial-age noise? This question brings out Döblin's critical attitude towards technology and industry. In his book on his natural philosophy *Das Ich über der Natur*, he states that his task is to overcome the "Prostitution des Denkens in der technisch-industriellen-militärischen Zeit" [Prostitution of thinking in the technical-industrial-military time].²⁴⁹ At the end of the Dedication, he dedicates his book to Liä Dsi, yet another important representative of Taoism after Laozi and Zhuangzi:

Ich will ihm opfern hinter meinem Fenster, dem weisen alten Manne,
Liä Dsi
mit diesem ohnmächtigen Buch.²⁵⁰

I will sacrifice to him behind my window, the wise old man,
Liä Dsi
with this fainting book.

²⁴⁷ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 7.

²⁴⁸ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 7.

²⁴⁹ Alfred Döblin, *Das Ich Über Der Natur* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1927), 220.

²⁵⁰ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 8.

Because of the Taoist idea of returning to nature and acting with respect for its laws, combined with the fact that there was little industrial development in China at the time of the Qianlong era, Döblin's choice to use Chinese metaphors and Taoist thought as the setting for his story appears to be the naturally best choice.

The practice and ideas of Taoism are realized in the novel through the character Wang-lun. Given that he has never had any education or practiced in any Taoist temple, his superficial understanding of Taoism must have come from the influence of his father, Wang-schen. Wang-schen is originally a fisherman and has never been exposed to Taoism until a magician gives him some bamboo pieces with religious texts. Wang-schen reads aloud:

... Zwei regiert das Paar. Durch Paar vereinigt man das Unpaar. Das Unpaar regiert den Zodiak. Der Zodiak beherrscht den Mond. Der Mond beherrscht die Haare. Daher wachsen die Haare in zwölf Monaten...Sieben mal neun gleich dreiundsechzig. Drei beherrscht den Polarstern. Dieser die Hunde. Daher werden die Hunde in drei Monaten geboren.²⁵¹

... Two rules the pair. Through pair one unites the unpair. The unpair rules the zodiac. The zodiac rules the moon. The moon rules the hair. Therefore, hair grows in twelve months...Seven times nine equals sixty-three. Three rules the pole star. This one rules the dogs. Therefore, the dogs are born in three months.

The Taoist origin of this passage is implicitly evident. In the 42nd Chapter of *Tao Te Ching* it states that *Tao* creates the One, the One creates the Two, the Two creates the Three, and the Three creates everything. The passage seems to draw inspiration from Taoist principles but presents its own interpretation. The key steps, namely the abstract and philosophical concepts of *Tao*, the One, the Two and the Three, of the progression of the creation and existence are replaced by the symbolic and mythical terms of such as pairs, unpair, zodiac, moon, hair, pole star, and dogs. The novel's passage and the actual Taoist text share a similar structure of progression, however the underlying meaning expressed in the passage in no way represents the

²⁵¹ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 19-20.

philosophical ideas in the original Taoist text. Simply because Wang-schen read a short passage adapted from the principles of Taoism, the opinion is established in the village that “er wahrhaft das Zeug zu einem taoistischen Doktor habe, dieser ehemalige Clown des Dorfes” [he truly had what it takes to be a Taoist doctor, this former clown of the village].²⁵² With his father’s knowledge of Taoism coming from such a short passage, one can only imagine how little Wang-lun understands about *Tao*.

After founding his sect, The True Weak, Wang-lun establishes the principle of *nicht widerstreben*. This corresponds to the Taoist idea of *Wu Wei*. This ideological claim of Wang-lun seems to be a sudden awakening. He does not explain in detail what exactly *nicht widerstreben* means, and the members of the sect do not question it in any way but readily accept it. Wang-lun does not understand the essence of *Wu Wei* as advocated by Laozi, which should be understood in a dialectical framework as the mean for searching for a balance between action and non-action in accordance with the rules of nature, to realize a state of effortless harmony between man and the outside world and the awakening of the self to recognize *Tao* from within. Wang-lun simply takes it as its literal meaning, i.e., to do nothing to resist.

The explicitly stated relevance to Taoism is almost limited to the slogan of *Wu Wei* as the intermittent principle of the sect. Other than this, the development of Wang-lun character constitutes the implied principle of *Tao*. Near the end of the novel, when Wang-lun’s rebellion against the Manchu Dynasty is about to fail, a scene is described in which Wang-lun jumps from one side of a stream to the other, back and forth for a total of three times. This is Wang-lun’s revelation time when he recalls everything that happened before and his own changes. The three leaps in the title of the novel represent his three major changes. His first change occurs after he

²⁵² Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 20.

kills a government official in revenge for Su-koh and decides to abandon violence and adopt a non-resistance strategy. The second change comes when he returns to the True Weak after Manoh's death and decides to fight the government's siege by force. The last time is when the rebellion is about to fail, he gives up the leadership of the sect and finally returns to the principle of non-resistance. Wang-lun's change is an evolving process and always oscillates between the sides of violence and non-violence. This process is like the continuous movement and development of things in Taoist theory. In this process, the poles of *Yin* and *Yang* are in motion in opposition and unity, eventually taking on a higher form of being. His violent side can be seen as *Yang*, while the non-violent side is *Yin*. One of the most basic laws of motion of *Yin-Yang* is that when *Yin* increases, *Yang* recedes, and vice versa. This is reflected in Wang-lun when he faces people who are stronger or more violent than him, he becomes weak. For example, when the sect is first formed, he advocates non-resistance to government attacks but leads his followers to loot local villages.

Unlike other authors who employ the ideas of Taoism and focus on the concepts and theories related to philosophical Taoism, Döblin brings the social aspect of the religious Taoism in his novels. Philosophical Taoism refers to the theory and methodology of understanding the world based on the classics of the founders, successors, and developers of Taoism, such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Liezi. The religion of Taoism, while dedicated to Laozi as its founder and drawing on some concepts from philosophical Taoism to develop its doctrines, is more concerned with worshipping the gods, spiritual practices, and alchemy to achieve immortality. The distinction between the two is made because they are inherently contradictory. Taking one of the important concepts in Taoist thought, relativity, as an example, the philosophical Taoism does not claim to distinguish the differences between things. Good and evil, long and short, etc. are all relative.

Schipper emphasizes the significance of the theme of the relativity of time in Zhuangzi's book, illustrating it through the example of P'eng-tsu and a fly: How long does a fly live? A lifetime. And P'eng-tsu, the oldest man in the world? Also a lifetime. It is all the same and it is no use to make any distinctions.²⁵³ The desire in religious Taoism to alter the natural laws by human means to achieve immortality directly contradicts the principle of relativity.

The Taoism that Döblin presents to the reader is more of a religious Taoism. Although Wang-lun and his sect are not trying to achieve immortality, it is also clear that they are not trying to understand the world in a philosophical way. As early as the word *Tao* first appears in the novel, which is when Wang-lun's father is believed by the villagers to be a Taoist doctor, *Tao* is associated with mystery, superstition, and religious ritual:

Da er mit jedem im Dorf und in der Nachbarschaft bekannt war, nahmen die Leute viel seine eigentümlichen Dienste in Anspruch, seine Kunst, den „Teufelssprung“ zu üben, besonders aber, die „Schwangerschaft zu brechen“. So nannten die Bewohner dieses Teils von Schan-tung eine sonderbare Sitte. Man fürchtete, wenn sich in der Nähe einer schwangeren Frau alte Männer oder kränkliche Kinder fänden, daß sie in den Leib der Schwangeren einziehen könnten, vielleicht um sich so gesund und wieder jung zu machen.²⁵⁴

Since he was known to everyone in the village and in the neighborhood, people made much use of his peculiar services, his art of practicing the “devil's leap”, and especially of “breaking the pregnancy”. This is what the inhabitants of this part of Schan-tung called a peculiar custom. They feared that if old men or sickly children were found near a pregnant woman, they might enter the womb of the pregnant woman, perhaps in order to make themselves healthy and young again.

Wang-shen has never provided such services to the villagers until he studies the so-called Taoist texts given to him by the magician. These services, which he performs with his identity as a Taoist doctor, reflect the fact that Taoism among uneducated villagers is merely superstitious

²⁵³ Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 201.

²⁵⁴ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 20-21.

belief to dispel misfortune through mystical rituals that has nothing to do with philosophy.

Another scene illustrates that the picture of religious Taoism that Döblin portrays in his novel is not an accident. After Wang-lun established his secret sect and embarked on a journey to find the White Lotus, the members of the society share this view of Wang-lun:

Er sei nach Schan-tung gewandert, um das Goldwasser und die Perlen des ewigen Lebens zu holen. Diese Meinung erhielt sich am längsten. Man entwarf nach den Erzählungen der älteren ein sonderbares Bild von ihm. Man stellte ihn sich vor als einen sanftmütigen Mann, der mit ungeheurer Körperkraft begabt war, mit der er nichts anzufangen wußte. Von Zeit zu Zeit befahlen ihn starke Dämonen, die er zu bezwingen gelernt hatte, da er eine furchtbare Zaubersformel brauchte. Er hatte ein gutes Herz für die armen Ching-yin, sie sollten alle an seinen fabelhaften Gaben teilhaben.²⁵⁵

He had gone to Shan-tung to get the gold water and the pearls of eternal life. This opinion remained the longest. According to the stories of the older ones, a strange image of him was created. They imagined him as a gentle man, gifted with enormous physical strength, which he did not know what to do with. From time to time strong demons attacked him, which he had learned to conquer, as he needed a terrible magic formula. He had a good heart for the poor Ching-yin, they should all share in his fabulous gifts.

Gold water and the pearls of eternal life directly represent the alchemy of religious Taoism. In addition, his people wanting to “all share in his fabulous gifts” is indicative of the fact that the image of Wang-lun created by his followers is a deification of him. The deification of Wang-lun by the sect may be compared with the deification of Laozi in religious Taoism, as an incarnation of Taishang Laojun, the legendary lord and supreme deity of religious Taoism.

Döblin’s portrayal of religious Taoism is shown neither through the ruling class at the state level nor through the leaders of the sect, but the people at the bottom of society. This generally reflects the historical situation of religious Taoism in imperial China. While Taoism was occasionally acknowledged by individual emperors, it had significantly less influence within the ruling class when compared to Confucianism. Confucianism, which rose to prominence

²⁵⁵ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 110.

during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States eras, enjoyed the favor of rulers for over two thousand years. Furthermore, with the establishment of the imperial examination system in the Sui Dynasty (581-618), the Confucian classics took precedence as the primary criteria for selecting talents within the state. Consequently, the educated class focused their attention on Confucian teachings, leaving philosophical Taoism with less recognition among the literati. As for the uneducated class, they often encountered difficulties in comprehending the complexities of Taoist philosophy. The original philosophy of Taoism founded by Laozi gradually survived and developed among the lower classes in another form, namely, the religious Taoism. Such Taoism is widely influential among the Chinese people, with its wide distribution, 2000 years of continuous tradition, various rituals, a large number of temples, etc., so much so that Schipper refers to it as China's indigenous "Religion of the People".²⁵⁶

Early Christian missionaries used the concept of superstition to describe the religion Taoism. An important aspect of superstition is the blind recognition and reverence of believers for the ideas they have been indoctrinated to believe, and the attempt to use this blind faith to achieve what they perceive to be their purpose. Such goals are typically not to achieve the goals of salvation for oneself and others as in a true religion, or simply the worship of the gods, but rather personal and utilitarian purposes, such as the goal of immortality in religious Taoism. The so-called followers of *wu-wei* in the novel are the blind believers. In the constant vacillation of Wang-lun, they never question the principles assigned to them by their sect leader. Like Wang-lun, they act differently at different periods, in the contradiction between resistance and non-resistance. The difference is that they do not undergo the same transformation as Wang-lun in hesitation. In addition, beyond the main story of Wang-lun, the backstories about the individuals

²⁵⁶ Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, 20.

before they join the sect reveal their true purposes in following Wang-lun. They are bandits, beggars, murderers, thieves, widows, and so on. Some are trying to avoid being prosecuted, some are trying to have food, and some are homeless and have nowhere to go. In short, each person joins the group in order to free themselves from the reality of their plight, and no one is truly for the purpose of *Tao*.

Döblin's approach from a religious Taoist perspective allows him to focus his narrative on the real struggles of the underclass people. Such a perspective facilitates conveying the social realities of the German underclass that he seeks to reveal through the use of Chinese metaphors.

The novel was completed at a time when the German Empire was under the rule of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who supported imperialism and militarism (Emperor Khien-lung is referred in the novel as *Kriegskaiser* [War Emperor]²⁵⁷). During this time, a series of socio-political events of a similar nature to those in Wang-lun's story took place in Germany, including the workers' activities led by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD was previously known as the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP). The SDAP favored a revolutionary approach against the monarchy, targeting the ruling Bismarck and the Hohenzollern dynasty. The "Anti-Socialist Law" (*Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie*), introduced by Bismarck in 1878, outlawed the party and began to suppress it. At the same time, the Reich Field Marshal Alfred von Waldsee also repeatedly called for violent repression of social democrats. As a result of the government suppression, the party structure rapidly changed and evolved. In 1890, the SDAP changed its name to the SPD and resumed its activities. The similarities between the activities and historical

²⁵⁷ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 35.

situations of SDAP and SPD, leading underclass uprisings, being suppressed, and reorganizing, relate well to the activities and sect of Wang-lun.

Döblin highlights the political nature of the Wang-lun uprising in the novel, including the immediate trigger of the uprising and the ideological opposition between the group and the imperial court, thus making the story of Wang-lun relevant to German workers' activities. The impetus for Wang-lun to create his sect and adopt *wu-wei* as his principle is the Su-koh incident that he experienced. Su-koh lives in Tsi-nan-fu, and is "ein angesehener würdevoller Mann, der den untersten literarischen Grad erreicht hatte" [a distinguished dignified man who had reached the lowest literary grade].²⁵⁸ Even if the person only reaches the lowest level of the literary grade, in imperial China, he belongs at the top of his social class and enjoys many privileges. With hardly any anticipation Su-koh is arrested by the officials of Jamen and imprisoned, only because he is a Muslim and his nephew "in Kan-suh zuerst laut aus einem alten Buche vorgelesen hatte" [in Kan-suh had first read aloud from an old book]. His nephew is thus labeled as an *Auführer* [rebel].²⁵⁹ Gansu is to this day one of the provinces with a large Muslim population in China, and that ancient book is most likely the Koran. As to the Su-koh case, the novel refers to it as *politischen Prozesse* [political trials], and Su-koh, as well as his family, are called *politischen Gefangenen* [political prisoners].²⁶⁰ After Su-koh's murder, Wang-lun is frightened and helpless that he "trottete zitternd in die Kammer Toh-tsins" [he trotted trembling into the chamber of Toh-tsin].²⁶¹ This description reveals "Wangs Angst vor dem Tod...Der Tod Su-kohs versetzt Wang in Unruhe und Angst, bedroht sein Leben, das Leben überhaupt." [Wang's fear of

²⁵⁸ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 35.

²⁵⁹ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 36.

²⁶⁰ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 37, 38.

²⁶¹ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 41.

death...The death of Su-koh puts Wang in turmoil and fear, threatens his life, life in general.]²⁶²

Wang-lun's reaction after the Su-koh incident reflects the general public's concern about political events, and the state's use of violence to deal with political crises. Wang-lun's formation of his sect to seek resistance against the government was a direct result of the government's political repression of the people.

Döblin not only points out that the Wang-lun uprising is the result of political events, but he also highlights the ideological differences between the Wang-lun group and the Manchurian government in the novel. These differences are reflected in political advocacy of Taoism by Wang-lun and Confucianism by the Court. In a conversation between Khien-lung and Paldan Jische, Qianlong states why he wants to suppress the sect:

Sie hatten eine verlogene Art, das heilige Wu-wei, das Nichtwiderstreben des Lao-tse in die Praxis überzuführen. Sie streiften, statt die Felder zu bestellen und Kinder zu erzeugen, in den Distrikten einher; bettelten, beteten wenig, hofften auf das Westliche Paradies. Da sie sich rühmten, durch Vereinigung mit dem Schicksal in den Besitz übernatürlicher Kräfte zu gelangen, strömten ihnen tausende tüchtige Männer, auch zahllose Frauen aus allen Gegenden zu. Es ging nicht an, daß meine Beamten da zusahen... Die Äcker müssen gepflügt, besät werden; die Steuern zur Erhaltung des Gesamtreiches müssen aufgebracht werden.²⁶³

They had a mendacious way of putting into practice the holy Wu-wei, the non-resistance of Lao-tse. Instead of cultivating the fields and producing children, they roamed the districts; begged, prayed little, hoped for the Western Paradise. Since they boasted that by uniting with destiny they had supernatural powers, thousands of capable men and countless women from all regions flocked to them. It was not acceptable that my officials stood by... The fields must be plowed, sown; the taxes for the preservation of the entire empire must be raised.

²⁶² Zheng Fee, *Alfred Döblins Roman "Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun": Eine Untersuchung Den Quellen Und Zum Geistigen Gehalt* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 22.

²⁶³ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 330-331.

Before Wang-lun's final battle with government forces, members of the group discuss why they are fighting and who the real enemy is. They reach a consensus view:

„Wißt ihr, wer unsere giftigsten Feinde sind? Ganz und gar unsere und eure? Wie unser Feind heißt? Der Stein, der Baumstrunk, die zerbrochene Laute? Kung-tse!“

„Wer ist Kung-tse, was will er? Das dritte Übel! Er hat gelehrt den Mund ausspülen, die Haare kämmen, vor Fürsten buckeln, vieles Gute, vieles Schlechte. Für uns armen Leute ist er schon lange tot und sagt kein Wort mehr. Mandschus, Lamas und Mandarinern beten ihn an, darum können wir ihn nicht anbeten, sie haben ihn uns weggeschnappt, haben weggenommen, was gut an ihm war für uns.“²⁶⁴

“Do you know who our most poisonous enemies are? Totally ours and yours? What is the name of our enemy? The stone, the tree stump, the broken lute? Kung-tse!”

“Who is Kung-tse, what does he want? The third evil! He has taught to rinse the mouth, to comb the hair, to bow before princes, many good things, many bad things. For us poor people, he has been dead for a long time and no longer says a word. Manchus, lamas and mandarins worship him, that's why we can't worship him, they snatched him away from us, took away what was good about him for us.”

Confucianism was founded as a set of ideologies concerning personal cultivation and social order. Later this set of ideas was used by rulers as the core values for governing society. Through refinement by later generations of Confucian scholars, it gradually evolved politically towards emphasizing titles, establishing strict hierarchies, and determining the supremacy of the emperor's authority and his absolute power to rule the country. At the same time, Confucianism establishes a strict moral system whereby the people were bound and controlled. In Taoist thought, absolute authority and hierarchy do not exist. For *Tao*, as the principle by which all things in the world operate, naturally undermines the supreme power and status of the emperor. At the same time, the Taoist philosophy explicitly opposes the notion of good and evil in the Confucian moral system, which poses a potential threat to the Confucian ritual system. Thus, from the emperor's point of view, the Taoist sect that advocated *wu-wei* threatens the state

²⁶⁴ Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 417.

economy as well as Confucian rituals and hierarchy. For sect members, the political claims of Confucianism are a suppression of their individuality. The Confucianism supported by the imperial monarchy in the novel can be compared to the feudalism attempted to be preserved by Bismarck and the Hohenzollern dynasty, which had its aim to maintain the aristocratic hierarchy. Similarly, Wang-lun's Taoist-influenced uprising can be compared to Marxist-influenced workers' revolutionary activities.

In the novel *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, Döblin does not present the reader with the direct or obvious relevance of the story to German society. If his purpose of using Taoism and Chinese metaphors to explore German social issues is to be found in secondary literature or in Döblin's other political or literary texts, then *Der Rechte Weg* [The Right Way] is a proper demonstration of Döblin's attitude towards Taoism on social issues. *Der Rechte Weg* is a political criticism he wrote in 1921 under the pseudonym Linke Poot included in *Der Deutsche Maskenball*. The first half of the article records *Blutbad vor dem Reichstag*, Reichstag Bloodbath, incident, a political conflict that occurred on January 13, 1920. Döblin expressed his views regarding both sides of the participants in the conflict. For the government, the repression of the demonstrations is natural. He writes:

Strafbar sind alle Pläne zum Sturz der Regierung, denn die Regierung — ist die Regierung...Strafbar sind diese Pläne, weil es sich hier um Familienväter handelt, die man nicht ohne weiteres brotlos machen kann. Es ist eine Ruchlosigkeit, Leute aus dem Amt zu bringen, die keine Möglichkeit haben, später ihr Fortkommen zu finden das einfache Gefühl der Humanität sollte gebieten, sie in Ruhe zu lassen. Und wenn dies so ist, so muß die Verhetzung mit allen erdenklichen Mitteln niedergeschlagen werden, zerschmettert, zertrümmert.²⁶⁵

Punishable are all plans to overthrow the government, because the government - is the government...Punishable are these plans, because we are dealing here with family fathers, who cannot be made breadless without further ado. It is nefarious to remove from office people who have no possibility of finding their livelihood later - the simple feeling of

²⁶⁵ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 96.

humanity should dictate that they be left alone. And if this is so, then the incitement must be put down, crushed, shattered by all possible means.

He argues in a sarcastic tone the “legitimacy” of government repression of demonstrations as a natural reaction by ridiculing government officials who are not capable of doing anything but sitting in their offices. “Weiß man nicht, daß man in Deutschland ist?” [Don’t you know that you are in Germany?]²⁶⁶ This rhetorical question implies that it is a consistent practice of the German government. When a person participates in an uprising against the government, one should not be surprised by the government’s suppression.

The radical workers organize the uprising because they see “in einem Gesetz eine Beeinträchtigung ihrer Rechte, einen Schlag gegen ihre Bedürfnisse” [in a law an encroachment on their rights, a strike against their needs].²⁶⁷ Here, the workers are described as the same people as the sect members of the Wang-lun story. They oppose the government because their right to survive is threatened. They are organized to participate in political struggle, but they have little idea of the specific goals, plans, and methods of implementation of their activities. The entire protest group “ist offenbar blödsinnig arrangiert; die Leute stehen, stehen, es erfolgt nichts, sie wissen nicht woher, wohin keiner zieht weiter” [is obviously stupidly arranged; people stand, stand, nothing takes place, they do not know where from, where to no one moves on].²⁶⁸ They blindly followed the organizers into the struggle, and some of them eventually became casualties of the campaign. “Darauf, - dreiundzwanzig Demonstranten erschossen, - geschieht in Deutschland-Preußen was?” [Then, - twenty-three demonstrators shot, - what happens in Germany-Prussia?]²⁶⁹ Döblin has no positive view of either the government or the protesting

²⁶⁶ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 96.

²⁶⁷ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 97.

²⁶⁸ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 97.

²⁶⁹ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 97.

workers. Despite the end of the political events, neither the government's repression nor the workers' demonstrations have brought about much change in the actual problems of German society: the workers' threat to the government remains and the workers' needs are not addressed. His question, what will happen next in Germany, expresses his view that neither is on the right path when it comes to dealing with social problems.

After expounding on the social problems of Germany, he shifts the focus briefly to

Taoism:

Einundachtzig Sprüche, einige nur vier bis sechs Zeilen lang, hat Laotse's Taoteking, die Bahn und der rechte Weg. Neben diesem Buch kann sich keins halten, denn es nimmt sie alle auf. Es überwindet sie im Hegelschen Sinne, in dem es sie nicht beseitigt oder widerlegt, sondern ihnen Ihren Platz anweist...Der Archivar Li Pejjang war noch weiser als der alte Goethe...Dies Buch müßte klein bequem gebunden sein. Es wird so gebunden werden; wird von vielen Europäern der folgenden Jahrzehnte in den Taschen getragen werden.²⁷⁰

Eighty-one sayings, some only four to six lines long, has Laotse's Taoteking, the Path and the Right Way. Next to this book, none can sustain itself, for it absorbs them all. It overcomes them in the Hegelian sense, in that it does not eliminate or refute them, but gives them their place...The archivist Li Pejjang (Laozi's courtesy name) was even wiser than the old Goethe...This book should be bound small comfortably. It will be so bound; will be carried in the pockets of many Europeans of the following decades.

Döblin does not specify in his article what the right path is to solve these problems. "Wer Weiß, wie alles ist?" [Who knows how everything is?], he writes.²⁷¹ But from his positive assessment of Taoism, his wish that every European studies Taoism, and his use of the German translation of the *Tao Te Ching* (der Rechte Weg, the Right Way) as the title of his article hints that Taoism may be the right way in his mind to solve the discussed problems. It is important to

²⁷⁰ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 105.

²⁷¹ Poot, *Der Rechte Weg*, 106.

note that Döblin's reference to Taoism here explicitly refers to philosophical Taoism and not the religious Taoism he draws in Wang-lun's story.

Which specific ideas in Taoism, and in what way Taoism could positively influence social issues in Germany, are not indicated. Combined with Döblin's concern of the German workers' movement in this essay, the similarities between the uprising in the Wang-lun story and the social reality of Germany, *Die Drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* can be seen as a literary experiment in which he explores the application of Taoism in social reality. The uprising of Wang-lun, which is based on the principles of Taoist *wu-wei* ideology, appears to be a tragedy. Members of the sect were killed by the government, and the group eventually disbanded. Their end is almost exactly the same as that of the workers' movement depicted by Döblin in *Der Rechte Weg*. Nothing changed after the uprising. How is it then that the Taoist ideology is the right path? The right path implied by Döblin is the philosophical Taoism, while Wang-lun's uprising shows a religious Taoism that contradicts it. This brings up an important aspect of the political program or manifesto in its practical application. A political goal that seems perfect in theory may end in failure in practical implementation due to the blind obedience of followers, the inconsistency of their respective personal goals, the capriciousness of leaders, the repression of the reactionary government beyond expectations, and other factors.

The failure of the Wang-lun uprising may seem like an expression of Döblin's pessimistic attitude toward Taoist thought as a possible solution to real social problems. But the novel doesn't stop right after Wang-lun's defeat; its end shows the opposite attitude:

Da war ihr, als ob die Mönche schon wieder zurückkehrten. Es rauschte. Ein Licht floß über den Boden. In dem Schein des eben vortretenden Mondes schritt schmalhüftig Kuan-yin, die Perlmutterweiße, an ihr vorbei. Das Diadem auf dem geringelten Haar blitzte grasgrün bei der Drehung des schräggelegten Kopfes. Sie lächelte, sah Hai-tang

an, sagte: „Hai-tang, laß deine Brust. Deine Kinder schlafen bei mir. Stille sein, nicht widerstreben, oh, nicht widerstreben.“

Hai-tang blickte weiter in den grünschleppenden Mondschein. Sie setzte sich auf, schob die Schaufeln ihrer Hände über das kalte Gesicht: „Stille sein, nicht widerstreben, kann ich es denn?“

Ende.²⁷²

Then she felt as if the monks had already returned. There was a rustling. A light flowed over the ground. In the glow of the moon that had just come forward, Kuan-yin, the mother-of-pearl white, strode slenderly past her. The tiara on the ringed hair flashed grass-green at the turn of the slanting head. She smiled, looked at Hai-tang, said, “Hai-tang, leave your chest. Your children sleep with me. Be still, do not resist, oh, do not resist.”

Hai-tang continued to gaze into the green-dragging moonlight. She sat up, sliding the scoops of her hands over her cold face, “Be still, do not resist, can I?”

The End.

Hai-tang is the wife of government general Chao-hoei, whose two children are killed by the rebels during the battle to suppress the sect. After the battle, she cannot continue to live in her old home and decides to leave Chao-hoei and the house. Traumatized by the death of her children, she makes a visit to a temple to worship and pray for her inner peace. Kuan-yin suggests that the best approach for her is to practice the Taoist principle of *wu-wei*. Although Wang-lun and his sect are defeated, the novel ends with the principal of *wu-wei* suggested by Kwan-yin to Hai-tang as a solution to overcome the dilemma, implying that *Tao* may be perpetuated in another form in others. That is to say, Wang-lun’s defeat is not the defeat of *Tao*. Hai-tang’s final question, “Be still, do not resist, can I?”, indicates an uncertainty, i.e., it is neither a denial nor an affirmation of *Tao* as the solution to her problems. Instead, *Tao* is

²⁷² Döblin, *Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun*, 511.

portrayed as a hope that represents the possibility of solving society's problems as Döblin sees it in Taoist thought.

The failure of the Wang-lun Taoist sect and the hope of Taoist thought as a solution to social problems reflects Döblin's ambivalence about Taoism. On the one hand, Wang-lun's uprising represented a bottom-up attempt to change the status quo of society. Because Taoist ideas were misinterpreted by activist leaders and blindly followed by believers in their social practices, the failure of Wang-lun cannot be equated to the failure of Taoism. It expresses Döblin's distrust of social problems being solved by the underclass people through Taoist ideas. On the other hand, he does not give up the hope of Taoism as a solution to the problem. This hope is carried on by Hai-tang at the end of the novel. Hai-tang, as the general's wife, is of a different social class than Wang-lun. Meanwhile the *Tao* that Hai-tang will be carrying comes from the advice of the immortal Kuan-yin, which means that *Tao* in this case is different from the *Tao* that the underclass blindly follows and misinterprets; it is the *Tao* of philosophy in the true sense of the words of Laozi. Hai-tang's role as Döblin's voice of hope for Taoism in political crises perhaps expresses his attitude toward how Taoism might resolve political crises, i.e., a top-down reform initiated by the ruling class that implements the meaning of true *Tao* might be feasible.

Döblin's ambivalent attitude toward Taoism is consistent with his ambiguity of viewing the revolution as argued by Qinna Shen. Shen points out that "[t]here is an apparent contradiction between Döblin's intent in this novel to convey his professed solidarity with the socially underprivileged, represented by the Wu-wei followers, and his actual presentation of the Wu-wei

movement as a pathological and criminal phenomenon”.²⁷³ While supporting and sympathizing with the revolution of the oppressed underclass, on the one hand, Döblin disapproves of their actions in the course of the revolution. Shen quoted Helmut Kiesel’s study on Döblin’s *November 1918* to support her argument as well as to demonstrate Döblin’s political attitude towards German revolutions outside the picture of the Wang-lun novel:

Remarks in letters and essays from the time of the revolution, which lasted through the winter of 1918-19, indicated that Döblin sympathized with the revolution in principle and considered not only the democratization of Germany but also a change in property relationships to be necessary. At the same time, he had doubts about the spiritual foundations of the revolution and was disappointed by the paucity of revolutionary will among the masses and by the incapability of the leading men surrounding Liebknecht and Luxemburg.²⁷⁴

Kiesel’s observation of Döblin’s attitude towards the German revolution perfectly matches the portrayal of the revolting groups in Wang-lun’s novel. Because the uprising lacks a “spiritual foundation”, Taoism fails miserably in practice, but at the same time Döblin does not deny the possibility that Taoism as a philosophical wisdom could be a solution to social or political problems. Such an attitude expresses Döblin’s pessimism about the spiritual renewal of the masses.

Döblin’s attitude towards Taoism is in stark contrast to Hesse’s belief in the positive role of *Tao* in social reality. In the face of the distress caused by personal and social problems, although Hesse, like a Taoist priest, relocated and retreated, for example to the small Swiss village of Montagnola in 1919, he did not shun social problems. He remained socially and politically involved, for example by publishing his views on how the new Germany needed to

²⁷³ Qinna Shen, “The Ambiguity of Revolution: Wu-Wei, Pathology, and Criminality in Alfred Döblin’s ‘Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun. Chinesischer Roman.’” *German Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (2011): 613–32, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41303801>, 615.

²⁷⁴ Shen, *The Ambiguity of Revolution*, 616.

change on *Vivos Voco*.²⁷⁵ After World War II, Hesse “reminded the Germans that defeat could be a new beginning, an opportune historical moment for a moral regeneration, and an intellectual awakening.”²⁷⁶ In face of continued the militarism he argued the merits of individual self-scrutiny.²⁷⁷ When it comes to *Tao*, he believed that through it, society at large can be spiritually and morally renewed. Everyone can understand *Tao* and find it from within, so that political problems such as de-nationalization could be solved. Although *Tao* isn’t the whole answer to the problems, Hesse is optimistic that *Tao* can be understood and have a positive effect on the masses. Perhaps it was because of Döblin’s pessimism and his distrust of the masses that he suggested that the book of *Tao Te Ching* should be bound into pamphlets and carried in people’s pockets for the next few decades. Perhaps only then, when the wisdom of Taoist philosophy is truly understood by the masses, will some of the problems be solved from the bottom up.

4.2 Bertolt Brecht

Bertolt Brecht was born on February 10, 1898 in Augsburg to a middle-class family. The family did not have any literary tradition. His father, Berthold Friedrich Brecht, was employed by G. Haindl’schen paper mill Augsburg at the end of the 19th century. His mother’s father, Josef Friedrich, was a railroad worker for the Royal Württemberg State Railways. From October 2, 1917, Brecht studied philosophy, medicine, and literature at the University of Munich, but had to discontinue his studies in 1918. Although Brecht’s studies were brief, this did not prevent him from achieving great success in the field of literature, especially in theater. Brecht experimented in theory and practice with *Episches Theater*, the epic theatre. He proposed the theory of

²⁷⁵ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 134.

²⁷⁶ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 347.

²⁷⁷ Mileck, *Hermann Hesse*, 347.

alienation effect and developed a unique approach to playwriting and performance. Many of his works focus on social conflicts and the hardships of the underclass.

Alfred Döblin's *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun* was influential on several German writers of his time, including Bertolt Brecht. One of the most obvious proofs is that a plot in Brecht's play *Mann ist Mann* [Man Equals Man], first performed in 1926, comes from Döblin's novel. In the first scene of the play four soldiers are drunkenly robbing the Old Yellowlord Pagoda [*die Alte Gelbherrpagode*]. The pagoda sets traps and Jeriah Jip, one of the four, loses his hair when he gets caught in a window coated with glue. In Döblin's novel, before Wang-lun has established his sect, he often steals. Once he attempts to steal from *Tempel des Musikantengottes* [Temple of the musician god] and Toh-tsin, the priest of the temple, sets a trap and glues his hair to the wall. To escape he loses a lot of hair in pain. In addition, the Wang-lun story was for Brecht "ein Anschauungsfeld für die Entwicklung des epischen Theaters" [a demonstration field for the development of epic theater].²⁷⁸

According to Döblin, the poet should represent reality as it is, so that it appears unaffected.²⁷⁹ Also a disorganized style that does not capture the essence is rejected by Döblin. He clearly declares that one wants no decoration, no ornamentation, no style, no externality.²⁸⁰ There is a close similarity to the theory presented by Brecht in his explanation of epic theater using the example of the street scene. According to Brecht one of the main characteristics of ordinary theater that should be excluded from the street scene is the creation of illusion.²⁸¹ An

²⁷⁸ Wilfried F. Schoeller, "Wang-Lung Erscheint," in *Alfred Döblin: Eine Biographie* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2011), 159-160, 160.

²⁷⁹ Liu, *Die Daoistische Philosophie*, 174.

²⁸⁰ Liu, *Die Daoistische Philosophie*, 175.

²⁸¹ Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 121-129, 122.

essential element of street scenes lies in the naturalistic attitude adopted by the demonstrator, which results in a realistic and objective reproduction of events.²⁸²

In terms of the influence of Chinese culture or elements on the author's writing, Brecht seems to have been more influenced than Döblin. Regardless of the wealth of knowledge of Chinese society and culture that Döblin presents in his Wang-lun story, the relevance to Chinese culture does not appear in his other works. By contrast, the influence of Chinese artistic, cultural or philosophical thought can be seen in many of Brecht's works. For example, he uses Chinese Peking Opera performance techniques to explain the alienation effect, which is an important part of his epic theater theory; the Chinese setting used in the play *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan*; the Taoist ideas presented in the play *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* [Schweik in the Second World War]; his translation of Chinese poetry; and so on.

Unlike Hesse, Brecht does not directly express his approval of Taoist thought or see it, like Döblin, as a potential hope for solving European social problems. At the same time, he does not focus on the reproduction of Chinese social reality in his works as Döblin does. He almost deliberately obscures the Chineseness in his works, and in most cases, when Brecht uses Taoist ideas, or Chinese poetry in his works, it is difficult for the reader to notice their relevance to China at the first glance, since he does not use the names of concepts like *Tao* or *Wu Wei*. Despite the use of Chinese elements, metaphors, and philosophical ideas in many of his works and he "wrote much in his lifetime about China", Brecht "never wrote about what it meant to be

²⁸² Brecht, *The Street Scene*, 125.

interested in China”.²⁸³ In order to know what Chinese philosophy and culture meant to Brecht and his work, one must examine his theories and works to search for insight and clarity.

4.2.1 Epic Theater and *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan*

Episches Theater, epic theater, is a theory of theater proposed and developed by Brecht. It is an experimental approach to composition and performance that addresses and differentiates it from traditional Aristotelian theater. This new form of theater is characterized by clear descriptions and reports and the use of choruses and projections as a method of commentary.²⁸⁴ The main difference between the actors of epic theater and of traditional theater is that they make the audience observe their performances objectively through their epic theater techniques rather than being emotionally brought into the actors and identify themselves with them, thus becoming the subject of criticism.

Brecht uses street scenes that can happen around everyone every day to present the basic models and principles of epic theater. When an eyewitness presents an account of an accident, he or she should try as much as possible to restore the event without adding his or her own emotions, or in Brecht’s words that he “He must not ‘cast a spell’ over anyone”, so that people can exercise their own rational, rather than emotional, judgment based on the objective circumstances.²⁸⁵ Such a performance or presentation avoids the engendering of illusion, which is one of the main characteristics of traditional Aristotelian theater.

²⁸³ Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 54.

²⁸⁴ Brecht, *The Street Scene*, 121.

²⁸⁵ Brecht, *The Street Scene*, 122.

Such a performance technique alone is not enough to qualify a street scene as epic theater. To qualify, “the demonstration should have a socially practical significance”.²⁸⁶ The purpose of the presenter determines how far he goes in detail to perform. He has many opportunities to present different types of people, but any form of presentation must justify his social purpose. To meet such performance requirements and to serve the social purpose of the play, epic theater requires a performance and creative technique called the alienation effect, or the so-called A-effect, which is a peculiar to epic theater element. The A-effect is a “technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural. The object of this ‘effect’ is to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view.”²⁸⁷ The A-effect has both a subject and an object. Its subject is the play itself and the performance of the epic theater actors. Its object is the audience. The description and presentation of the subject should awaken the object to a critique of the social issues presented. The A-effect addresses the problem that the audience is easily led to identify themselves with the characters presented by the performance in Aristotle’s plays, and thus the purpose of the A-effect is directing the play “in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play”.²⁸⁸ For the live performance of an epic theater, it is the audience that is hindered, and for the reading of a literary work, where the reader is naturally the object, such principles and purposes still apply.

²⁸⁶ Brecht, *The Street Scene*, 122.

²⁸⁷ Brecht, *The Street Scene*, 125.

²⁸⁸ Bertolt Brecht, “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting,” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 91-99, 91.

In 1935 Brecht watched a live performance by Chinese Peking Opera performer Mei Lanfang in Moscow. In the essay *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting* he elaborated on his theory of A-effect in epic theater using the performance technique of Chinese Peking Opera actors. The difference between Peking Opera performance and European theater is that for Chinese actors, a fourth wall does not exist around them. This means that they can observe the audience's reaction to their performance and thus examine their own performance, rather than being immersed in their own role as European actors are. In addition, the stage movements of the actors, or the props used on stage "appear to be strange or even surprising".²⁸⁹ For example, when an actor performs a scene of rowing a boat in a river, he just uses two oars to show it without any other staging, such as imitation of the current or the setup of the boat itself. The actor shows the rapidity of the current by the speed of paddling. The reason he doesn't need to show every detail of the scene is because he only needs to show the audience that the event happened, unless the details are decisive for the social purpose of his performance. This means that there are a lot of symbols or symbolic movements used in such performances, which Brecht refers as "outer signs".²⁹⁰ The concept that is the counterpart of outer signs is the inner mood and emotion of the character of the play. The reason why actors and plays use outer signs is also to prevent the audience from empathizing with the characters and thus influencing the judgment of the social issues presented in the play, i.e. "the alienation effect intervenes...in the form of emotions which need not correspond to those of the character portrayed."²⁹¹ After explaining the basic elements and principles of alienation effect using Chinese performance, Brecht once again emphasizes the decisive role of sociality in epic theater that "all incidents between men must be

²⁸⁹ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 92.

²⁹⁰ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 94.

²⁹¹ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 94

noted, and everything must be seen from a social point of view”.²⁹² The A-effect is a necessary tool to achieve this. The actor’s performance must ultimately “hand it over to the audience for criticism”.²⁹³

The fact that Brecht distinguishes Chinese theater from German Aristotelian theater and primarily uses Chinese performance as his example in his elaboration of the A-effect makes it seem that the A-effect is specific to Chinese theatrical performances and needed to be introduced into the German theater. However, at the very beginning of his essay, Brecht notes that the effort of creating the A-effect exists in German performance “in a primitive form in the theatrical and pictorial displays at the old popular fairs”, even though “mediocre”.²⁹⁴ After his using Chinese performance as an example, he writes “[t]he experiments conducted by modern German theatre led to a wholly, independent development of the A-effect. So far Asiatic acting has exerted no influence.”²⁹⁵ Brecht essentially “turns his back on the Chinese A-effect”, and as Eric Hayot continues to argue, “Brecht repeats the assertion he had made as he opened the essay, namely that the German development of the A-effect has had historically nothing to do with the Chinese one.”²⁹⁶ As will be argued in the following analysis of his play, Brecht’s focus was not so much on China or Chinese theater, but rather on anything that could help him achieve A-effect and thus better illustrate the social issues addressed by him. In this case, Chinese theater performance, because of its radical difference from German Aristotelian theater, is a perfect example for Brecht to articulate the A-effect, and nothing more.

²⁹² Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 98.

²⁹³ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 98.

²⁹⁴ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 91.

²⁹⁵ Brecht, *Alienation Effects*, 96.

²⁹⁶ Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 83.

Although Brecht's focus in these two essays is on the theoretical account of the theatrical performance of epic theater, which is, after all, an art form primarily for the audience, this new form of theater necessarily requires the author to apply the basic principles and important concepts of epic theater to the writing of the play. In his plays, Brecht incorporates the alienation effect and writes for social purposes.

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan is an epic theater work by Brecht. It was written in the years 1938 to 1940 during his emigration with collaborators Ruth Berlau and Margarete Steffin and was first performed in Zurich on April 2, 1943.²⁹⁷ The parable is about three immortals who came from heaven to earth in the era of social unrest to look for good people. After repeatedly searching in vain, they finally find Shen Te, a kind-hearted prostitute in Sezuan. For the only good person in the world to survive in a decent way, the immortals give her a thousand silver dollars. Shen Te uses the money to open a cigarette store and wants to help more people by giving her profit away. Soon enough, she is on the verge of bankruptcy for doing so. To save the store, Shen Te has to disguise herself as a man and appears in front of everyone as her cold and ruthless cousin Shui Ta. Shui Ta turns the store into a profitable tobacco factory by brutally exploiting the workers and stops helping others. As a result, everyone misses the disappeared good person of Sezuan. Finally, when the immortals interrogate Shui Ta and question the whereabouts of Shen Te, she eventually must take off her male clothes and reveal a shocking fact to the world: society is in such a depraved state that the good man can no longer survive.

Döblin labeled his novel of Wang Lun as *chinesisches Roman*, while Brecht did not refer to his play of the good man of Sezuan as "chinesisches Drama" [Chinese drama]. Chinese readers

²⁹⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan: Parabelstück* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 2.

or those who have knowledge of Chinese culture will find many familiar depictions of various aspects of China in the Wang-lun story, whereas in Brecht's play, readers would be disappointed if they had the same expectations. From the title of the play readers might expect a parable that takes place in or about China. But when they start reading, they will find the scenes both familiar and strange. On the one hand the parable contains Chinese place names such as Sezuan, Peking and Chinese surnames such as Wang and Sun. On the other hand, the clues about China seem to stop at this point, and there are no other descriptions of any aspect of China. The prelude of the play starts "Eine Straße in der Hauptstadt von Sezuan" [A street in the capital of Sezuan].²⁹⁸ When did the parable happen? What is the capital city of Sezuan? Is Sezuan a province or a country? Brecht didn't even make clear that Sezuan is in China. In fact, the word "China" is not mentioned even once throughout the play and readers can only conjecture the location by hints appear here and there. For European readers who don't know much about China are left in a vague background of the play. They only know that the parable happened in a foreign country, not Germany or any other western countries with which they are familiar. This is in line with Brecht's setting of most of his plays in foreign countries, such as the Indian setting of *Mann ist Mann*, or *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* in Prague.

Before the prelude, after the list of persons, stands:

Schauplatz

Die Hauptstadt von Sezuan, welche halb europäisiert ist ²⁹⁹

Setting

The capital of Sezuan, which is half Europeanized

²⁹⁸ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 7.

²⁹⁹ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 6.

This half sentence, the quasi-realistic depiction, is the only information that Brecht gives to his reader regarding the background of the play. The sentence contains no informative knowledge about the location, but the name of the foreign city evokes the reader's expectation of an exotic story. Meanwhile, the description of the capital of Sezuan as half Europeanized emphasizes both the connection to and a distinction from Europe.³⁰⁰ Readers thus may expect to find ties between the story and their own social realities, while at the same time being alienated by the exotic settings. In fact, Brecht tells the readers right after the "Introduction" that "die Provinz Sezuan der Parabel, die für alle Orte Stand an denen Menschen von Menschen ausgebeutet werden gehört heute nicht mehr zu diesen Orten." [the province of Sezuan of the parable, which stands for all places where people are exploited by people no longer belongs to these places.]³⁰¹ With this statement, Brecht is informing his readers that the actual location/setting is insignificant in the play as it doesn't serve as the carrier of the parable anymore. The truth revealed in this play represents any place where applicable and that means the location is substitutable by any place where people are exploited by others.

The way Brecht introduces "Sezuan" makes it as a background setting for the whole parable seems insignificant to the reader and to the author himself, but at the same time "Sezuan" is crucial, at least for Brecht. Chiann Tsui argues that "Brecht's notes and journal entries indicate that his use of Sichuan as the location for the drama was far from arbitrary. The amount of revision he undertook to create a Chinese veneer refutes any understanding of the Chinese setting as interchangeable or inconsequential."³⁰² Brecht was conscious of the continuing changes in the

³⁰⁰ Chiann Karen Tsui, "Brecht's 'Guter Mensch' in Sichuan: Recontextualizing China," *The German Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (2015): 355–77, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24756624>, 360.

³⁰¹ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 6.

³⁰² Tsui, *Brecht's "Guter Mensch" in Sichuan*, 356.

political situation in China during the composition and revision of this work. Sichuan had been an important strategic location during the Anti-Japanese War and the civil war that followed. This also made the place go through years of turmoil. During the Anti-Japanese War Sichuan was the Nationalist Party's primary base in the hinterland of the country and a key area of focus for Japanese bombing raids. In the course of the civil war, the seizure of Sichuan by the Communist forces was an important point in the Communist victory.³⁰³ The statement that "die Provinz Sezuan der Parabel, die für alle Orte Stand an denen Menschen von Menschen ausgebeutet werden gehört heute nicht mehr zu diesen Orten" [the province of Sezuan of the parable, which stands for all places where people are exploited by people no longer belongs to these places] did not exist in the initial version, but appeared in 1953, four years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, which "appears to refer directly to the transition to communism in China".³⁰⁴ Although at this point Brecht did not know what was going to happen in the Communist China in a little over a decade, the Marxist idealistic vision and Brecht's belief in communism was enough for him to include the sentence in his work.

It can be asserted that Sichuan, a region marred by perpetual warfare, served as a crucial backdrop for the *creation* of Brecht's play, or in other words it inspired Brecht's writing of the play. Within this work, he endeavors to illuminate the societal issue of exploitation, wherein certain individuals subjugate others. Simultaneously, he presents the communization of China as the remedy for these societal woes. However, during the era, how many European readers could glean the intricate political landscape of China from the mere mention of a vaguely detailed place of "Sezuan" within the play? Even the scholar of Brecht does not directly conclude that

³⁰³ Tsui, *Brecht's "Guter Mensch" in Sichuan*, 358.

³⁰⁴ Tsui, *Brecht's "Guter Mensch" in Sichuan*, 358.

there is a *definite* connection between that statement and the establishment of Communist China, but postulates that it *appears* to refer directly to the transition to communism in China. On one hand, it can be inferred that the setting, whether it's Sezuan or China, doesn't bear relevance to the play's readers or audience, thus negating the need for an intricately realistic portrayal. On the other hand, if Chiann Tsui's reasoning is completely in line with Brecht's thinking at the time, then Brecht violated his own Epic Theater theory because it interfered with the reader's independent reflection on the social problems and provided, or implied, solutions to the social problems for the reader. Fortunately, Tsui's interpretation isn't immediately discernible to the average reader. One of the reasons is because Brecht did not depict the historical and political situation in China, and his attitude towards Nationalist and Communist China is nowhere to be found in this work. To uphold his theoretical principles, it consequently became imperative to abstain from depicting China's social reality.

Given that a realistic portrayal of Chinese society isn't a primary concern within Brecht's play, the presence of factual inaccuracies alone isn't sufficient to dismiss the impact of Chinese elements on Brecht or his awareness of China. To put it differently, scrutinizing the Chinese imagery in Brecht's plays from a historical or ethnological angle, and assessing their factual accuracy, might not be an appropriate approach. For Brecht, the correctness or incorrectness of these scenes isn't grounded in factual absolutes; rather, their significance lies in how effectively they contribute to his Epic Theater concept. Or as Hayot argues that "Brecht's China does not lend itself to the kind of analysis one normally accords the cross-cultural reference: Is it culturally accurate? What is its relation to history, to geopolitics?"³⁰⁵ For example, in the prelude Wang says to the three immortals that everyone knows that the province Kwan has been haunted

³⁰⁵ Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 74.

by flooding for decades.³⁰⁶ The Province Kwan is never a province in China, neither in history nor at present. The arbitrary name given by Brecht has the same function as the names of the protagonists: they have no semantic meaning or does not relate to any real person or location. The phonetically foreign sound of the names is a part of the alienation effect.

Shortly before Brecht finished writing this play, he translated six Chinese poems into German, based on the Arthur Waley's English translation of Chinese poems in *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* and Brecht's poems first appeared in a 1938 issue of the Moscow-based journal *Das Wort*.³⁰⁷ One of the six poems is:

Der Gouverneur, von mir befragt, was nötig wäre
Den Frierenden in unsrer Stadt zu helfen
Antwortete: Eine Decke, zehntausend Fuß lang
Die die ganzen Vorstädte einfach zudeckt.

The governor, when I asked what was needed
To help those freezing in our city
Answered: A blanket, ten thousand feet long,
To simply cover over the slums.³⁰⁸

This poem is used by Brecht in this play with minor changes. The poem in the play reads:

Der Gouverneur, von mir befragt, was nötig wäre
Den Frierenden der Stadt zu helfen, antwortete:
Eine zehntausend Fuß lange Decke
Welche die ganzen Vorstädte einfach zudeckt.³⁰⁹

The prepositional phrase "in unserer Stadt" [in our city] is changed to a genitive phrase "der Stadt" [of the city]. "Zehntausend Fuß lang" [ten thousand feet long] that describes the blanket is changed to an attributive adjective phrase. And the relative pronoun "die" is changed

³⁰⁶ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 9.

³⁰⁷ Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 56.

³⁰⁸ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 58.

³⁰⁹ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 34.

to “welche”, both of them mean “that”. None of these changes has any impact on the meaning of this poem. The original Chinese version is written by the famous poet Bai Juyi, who lived in Tang Dynasty (618-907). The Chinese poem contains 14 verses. Brecht only translated 4 of them. Brecht certainly has not read the original, and he is not the one to blame for an incomplete representation of the original, because Waley’s version only contains 4 verses. Brecht’s translation is in no way a direct translation of the Waley’s version, which is close to the literal meaning of the original. It reads:

That so many of the poor should suffer from the cold
what can we do to prevent
To bring warmth to a single body is not much use.
I wish I had a big rug ten thousand feet long,
Which at one time would cover up every inch of the city.³¹⁰

The title of Bai Juyi’s original poem is “新制绫袄成感而有咏” and its literal meaning is “a poem for the feelings of looking at the newly made quilt”. This poem was written in the winter of 831 or 832, when the Tang Dynasty was in decline due to the wars between warlords and corruption at the court. While Bai Juyi was holding his new silk quilt and feeling its warmth, he thought about the severe situation of his people. He sighed that one single quilt did not do any good to the people who were starving and wished he could have a ten-thousand-foot-long rug to cover the East Capital of Luo Yang. The poem is solely his own monologue and does not contain any conversation with anyone else. While Waley’s English version literally represents the four verses of the original, Brecht invented the figure of a local governor who talks to the figurative “I”. By adding the new governor figure, Brecht inserted more social significance in this poem. “Brecht replaces the awkwardness of Waley’s ‘what can we do to prevent’ with a dynamic speech act, in which the question asked of the governor takes on a distinctly dialogic and social

³¹⁰ Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 59.

tone. As Tatlow points out, the governor's response can be read as either sympathetic or cynical, giving the poem a social and political dimension appropriate to Brecht's general interests."³¹¹ People's suffer from hunger and cold is not limited to Bai Juyi's own poetic lament anymore, it becomes a social problem that has drawn local official's attention, and it is a problem that has to be solved by the government. But the answer of the governor suggests the severity of the problem, indicating that this problem is impossible to solve. Having a ten-thousand-foot-long blanket is merely a wishful thinking and there is no other solution. In *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, this poem is delivered by the figure Shui Ta who is lamenting the miserable social situations and says:

Das Unglück besteht darin, daß die Not in dieser Stadt zu groß ist, als das ein einzelner Mensch ihr steuern könnte. Darin hat sich betrüblicherweise nichts geändert in den elfhundert Jahren, seit jemand den Vierzeiler verfaßte:³¹²

The misfortune is that the hardship in this city is too great for a single person to control. Sadly, nothing has changed in the eleven hundred years since someone wrote the four-line verse:

Brecht's adaptation of Bai Juyi's poem not only elevates the plight of the people to a social issue, but also makes a subtle change that makes the poem better suited to the needs of the play's plot. The words of Shui Ta, before quoting the poem, state the reality that a single person cannot control the hardship in the city. The governor that Brecht creates for this poem and his helpless lament echoes what Shui Ta refers to as a single person and his inability to solve problems. From the plot of the whole story, this also echoes Shen Te, the only good person in the city, and her helplessness.

³¹¹ Hayot, *Chinese Dreams*, 59.

³¹² Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 33-34.

If one is not a scholar of Brecht, it is difficult to observe from the play that the poem Brecht used in composing this scene was adapted from the original version by Bai Juyi. None of the many Chinese translations of the *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan* provide notes for it. Based on the semantics of Brecht's German poem, the translators present it to the reader in the form of Chinese poetry, such as meeting the requirements of number of words and rhyming couplets. But they still refer to it as a four-line poem without reference to Baiju Yi's original. Brecht was wrong on the poem, by calling it a "four-line poem", since these four lines are excerpted discontinuously from the original 14 lines. However, as the socio-anthropological reality of China plays no role in Brecht's play, what significant to him is how he can present social problems to his audience.

The effect of Brecht adaptation of Baiju Yi's poem is that even readers with a fair knowledge of Chinese poetry will find it difficult to connect the text to the original on the first reading. Brecht's adaptation allows readers who are not familiar with Chinese culture to read it without being troubled by unrelated questions: Who is Bai Juyi? What era did he live in? What did he experience? What does he have to do with the story? And so on. For readers who know Chinese poetry, they do not bring to Brecht's work the emotions expressed and issues of the time in Bai Juyi's poem if they cannot identify the original work. In short, Brecht has deliberately adapted the poem so that readers are not distracted by irrelevant details that would interfere with their ability to judge the issues raised by the play itself. Although Brecht did not distinguish in his theater theory the role that the cultural background of the reader or audience plays in A-effect, or epic theater, this example is a demonstration of the validity of his theory for all audiences in the creation and practice of theater.

Besides the use of Chinese poetry, Brecht also used Taoist thought in the creation of this play. As with his treatment of Bai Juyi's poetry, the reader is likely not able to immediately recognize the actual source of his Taoist reference. In one scene, Wang, the water seller, and the three immortals carry on a dialogue. Wang says:

In der zerfallenen Hütte eines Priesters, der weggezogen und Hilfsarbeiter in der Zementfabrik geworden ist, fand ich ein Buch, und darin entdeckte ich eine merkwürdige Stelle. Ich möchte sie unbedingt vorlesen. Hier ist sie.
“In Sung ist ein Platz names Dornhain. Dort gedeihen Katalpen, Zypressen und Maulbeerbäume. Die Bäume nun, die ein oder zwei Spannen im Umfang haben, die werden abgehauen von den Leuten, die Stäbe für ihre Hundekäfige wollen. Die drei, vier Fuß im Umfang haben, werden abgehauen von den vornehmen und reichen Familien, die Bretter suchen für ihre Särge. Die mit sieben, acht Fuß Umfang werden abgehauen von denen, die nach Balken suchen für ihre Luxusvillen. So erreichen sie alle nicht ihrer Jahre Zahl, sondern gehen auf halbem Wege zugrunde durch Säge und Axt. Das ist das Leiden der Brauchbarkeit.”³¹³

In the broken down hut of a priest who moved away and became an unskilled worker in the cement factory, I found a book, and in it I discovered a strange passage. I really want to read it out. Here it is.
“In Sung there is a place called Dornhain. Catalpas, cypresses and mulberry trees thrive there. Now the trees that are one or two spans in circumference are cut down by the people who want sticks for their dog cages. The ones that are three or four feet in circumference are cut down by the noble and rich families who are looking for boards for their coffins. Those with seven, eight feet in circumference are cut down by those seeking beams for their luxury mansions. Thus they all do not reach their years' number, but perish halfway through by saw and axe. This is the suffering of usefulness.”

Brecht does not tell the reader or the audience that the book found by Wang the water seller is *Zhuangzi*. He quotes this parable almost verbatim from Richard Wilhelm's *Dschuang Dis: Das Wahre Buch vom Südlichen Blütenland*. Changes made by Brecht in the Wilhelm's version are: trees that have one or two spans are cut for monkey cages, three or four foot long are used for *prächtige Häuser*, splendid houses, and seven or eight foot long are used for coffin.³¹⁴

³¹³ Brecht, *Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan*, 93.

³¹⁴ Zhuangzi and Richard Wilhelm, *Dschuang Dis: Das Wahre Buch Vom Südlichen Blütenland-Nan Hua Dschen Ging* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1912), 35.

These changes have little or no effect on the dialectic of usefulness and uselessness expressed in the story and could be essentially discounted.

This is the parable mentioned in Chapter 2. By using examples from daily life, the parable is an elaboration of the dialectical principal transformation of the two sides of things in the *Tao Te Ching* and the reasoning of non-action, corresponding to the *Wu Wei* concept in Laozi's teaching, and the related idea of value judgment. There is more than one story about trees in *Zhuangzi*, and they all express the similar Taoist dialectical view of usefulness and uselessness.

Brecht's choice of this parable fits well into the need for plot development of the play and satisfies the requirements of epic theater. The story is conveyed to the reader from the mouth of the water seller Wang, not Shui Ta or Shen Te. Wang appears throughout the play as a third person observer. He mostly appears in the *Zwischenspiel*, interlude, with the three immortals. The three immortals act as observers of the human world, in which Wang plays a parallel and similar role to the three immortals. Through the third-person narration and the temporary interruption of the main plot, readers can temporarily withdraw from the experience of Shen Te or Shui Ta, and thus take a new perspective on the encounters of the two individuals at the same time and on the philosophical truths evoked by the parable. Moreover, Zhuangzi lived in the middle of the Warring States, a time of war and turmoil, when the value of survival was an innate value of every species in nature, more important than other values assigned by the standards of human social norms. Brecht's lifetime witnessed the turmoil of World War I and World War II. The election of Hitler in 1933 led to the rise of the Nazis to power. The Nazi party then began to suppress people who advocated communism. Two weeks after Hitler came to power, "the police started proceedings for high treason against those involved in a production of Brecht's 'learning play', *The Measures Taken*", the Reichstag burnt down after another two

weeks, and Brecht fled Germany into exile.³¹⁵ During his exile, Brecht wrote *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan*. The circumstances in which Zhuangzi lived can be compared to those experienced by Shen Te, whose unreserved help to others seemed to be of great value, but in fact took away the necessary conditions for her own survival.

Another point worth noting is how Wang discovers the story. He was not inadvertently looking through *Zhuangzi* or remembering that someone had told him the story. He finds the book in the broken-down hut of a priest who moved away and became an unskilled worker in the cement factory. In a simple yet evocative scene, Wang's finding of the book symbolizes the shifts from tradition to modernity, from spiritual reverence to material pursuits.

A simple one-sentence description gives a social meaning to the philosophical dialectic of usefulness and uselessness, echoing the tenets of Taoism in a contemporary context. In a time of turmoil, where temples once stood as bastions of spiritual contemplation, now lay destroyed or demolished, reflecting the upheavals in societal values and the erosion of cultural heritage. These actions not only mirror the Taoist principle of change but also draw parallels to the broader transmutations in societal norms.

Moreover, in an era when modern industry continues to prosper, economic interests progressively replace spiritual pursuits. Brecht's astute adaptation brings into focus a compelling juxtaposition: the ancient wisdom of Taoism, rooted in simplicity and detachment, confronts the burgeoning materialism of the industrial age. Brecht, driven by the imperative of epic theater, ingeniously interweaves these disparate threads into a cohesive narrative fabric.

³¹⁵ Bertolt Brecht and Antony Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti: Book of Interventions in the Flow of Things*, ed. and trans. Antony Tatlow (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), 2.

Brecht is completely different from other German authors in his use of Taoist ideas. He does not give any explanation of Taoism, nor does he use some Taoist terms or concepts, such as *Tao*, *Te*, or *Wu Wei*, in his works. The additional interpretation of these concepts has little relevance to the play itself or to the social issues Brecht wants the reader to contemplate. In this case, the additional introduction of concepts that are mostly unfamiliar to the reader only hinders the reader from observing or reflecting on the event itself.

In contrast to the previous adaptations of the poem, Brecht uses the story of *Zhuangzi* almost unchanged. The two distinct approaches to the Chinese elements illustrate that Brecht's focus is on the "elements", not on "Chinese". These elements can be used as they are or adapted, depending on how well they meet the needs of the play and his epic theater experiment. That is, although Brecht uses Taoist ideas in some of his works, it does not take a central role in them as it does in the works of other authors. Brecht uses them only because in the development of the story it can lead to the social questions Brecht wants his readers to consider.

4.2.2 *Me-Ti*

If Brecht's plays are his way of leading readers to reflect on social issues and expressing his views on them indirectly, then *Me-ti* is a direct manifesto of his views on social issues. Compared to Brecht's epic theater, his *Me-Ti* is much less well known. According to Antony Tatlow, who translated and edited his *Me-Ti* texts, "this 638-page example of detailed forensic sinological scholarship, otherwise of interest only to specialists, was an unusual acquisition".³¹⁶ The texts in *Me-ti* were written by Brecht between 1934 and 1955. But various versions are published by different editors and translators who organize the texts according to their own systems. Different editions reorder and integrate his texts in different methods of categorization.

³¹⁶ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti*, 1.

The reason why editors can integrate these texts in different systems is that there is no intrinsic plot relevance between them. The text is “a unique combination of tersely formulated, often witty aphorisms on human behaviour, of advice offered in the course of conversations on how best to conduct human affairs, of systematic, critical descriptions of cultural values and related social dangers, and of obscure, sometimes incomprehensible arguments over logical problems formulated over two millennia ago.”³¹⁷

The title of Tatlow’s version, “Me-ti: Book of Interventions in the Flow of Things”, is not the name Brecht gave to his text. The titles of books vary from editor to editor. Tatlow’s English version has a Chinese name on the cover, 墨子, Mozi, which takes up a third of the page. Mozi lived in the late Spring and Autumn Period and early Warring States period, and was a famous thinker, scientist, politician, and military strategist of his time. His political and ideological ideas are known as the Moist school, which originated in the same period as Confucianism and Taoism. 墨翟, Mo Di, the original name of Mozi, is the person referred to in the book title “Me-Ti”. But Brecht’s text has almost nothing to do with Mozi, as it is mainly a reflection of Brecht’s Marxist dialectics, and the people discussed in the book are not Chinese philosophers but people who had a significant influence on the political and economic landscape of Europe at the time, such as Lenin, Hitler, and Stalin.

Although his text is named after Mozi, it is mainly Taoism that can be seen in *Me-Ti* as an influence on Brecht’s view of social issues as well as his philosophical views, rather than Moism. Because of Brecht’s particular concern with social issues, the Taoist views that appear in the text are, without exception, given special social significance. For instance, in the section of

³¹⁷ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht’s Me-Ti*, 1.

“Er sollte in einem Lande keine besondere Sittlichkeit brauchen” [No country should need to be especially moral], it states that:

Brot und Milch sind teuer, und die Arbeit bringt wenig ein oder ist nicht vorhanden. Da sollen die Armen besondere Sittlichkeit zeigen und nicht stehlen. In solchen Lagen hört man, daß die Begüterten für die Sittlichkeit sind und nicht stehlen und sogar solche in ihren eigenen Kreisen verfolgen, die offenkundig gestohlen haben. Sind sie also nicht für die Sittlichkeit? Wenn sie doch die verfolgen, die gestohlen haben? Man soll nicht sagen, daß sie für die Sittlichkeit sind; denn jede Lage hat ihre besonderen sittlichen Gebote, die vor allem beachtet werden müssen und zu ihrer Beachtung alle jene sonst geltenden Gebote außer Kurs setzen dürfen, die jetzt hindern würden. Und in einer Lage, wie wir sie geschildert haben, kann nur der sagen, er sei für die Sittlichkeit, der dafür sorgt, daß keine besondere Sittlichkeit nötig ist — indem die Lebensmittel erschwinglich sind. Ganz allgemein sollte gelten, da jedes Land, in dem besondere Sittlichkeit nötig ist, schlecht verwaltet ist.³¹⁸

Bread and milk are dear and work is not well paid or not available. The poor are then expected to be especially moral and not steal. Under such conditions we hear that the better off are all for morality and don't steal and even pursue their own kind, who obviously have stolen. Aren't they therefore in favour of morality, if they do pursue those who have stolen? We shouldn't say they're in favour of morality, because every situation has its special moral precepts, which must above all be respected and may supplant all otherwise valid precepts that would stand in their way. And in a situation such as we have described only he can say he's for morality who ensures that there's no need to be specially moral – since food is affordable.³¹⁹

As a general rule, every country that needs to be specially moral is badly administered.

On the issue of morality, both Laozi and Zhuangzi have repeatedly discussed and rejected man-made moral standards. They primarily discussed the issue from the perspective of the dialectical relationship between good and evil, i.e., that there is no definite, unchanging standard between the two, and the laws of nature. Taoism opposes morality because it is not part of the norms by which nature operates, and emphasizing morality only brings chaos to the development of things. When people follow the laws of *Tao*, morality is not needed. In *Zhuangzi* it says that “Lust an

³¹⁸ Bertolt Brecht, *Me-ti, Buch der Wanderungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965), 47

³¹⁹ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti*, 62-63.

der Menschenliebe führt zur Verwirrung des wahren LEBENS; Lust an der Gerechtigkeit führt zur Beeinträchtigung der Vernunft; Lust an den Umgangsformen fördert trügerischen Schein” [desire for love of man leads to confusion of true LIFE; desire for justice leads to impairment of reason; desire for manners promotes deceptive appearances].³²⁰ Desire for love of man, justice and manners are all specifically different forms of moral standards that Taoist philosophers reject. Brecht’s comparison of the poor who do not abide by so-called morality with the rulers who create moral norms in opposition such moral standards is comparable to Zhuangzi’s statement that “Solange die Heiligen nicht aussterben, hören die großen Räuber nicht auf.” [As long as the Saints do not die out, the great robbers will not stop.]³²¹ The Saints referred to by Zhuangzi are people who establish various moral standards and hold others to them. Although their claims are very similar, the social properties that Brecht emphasized are not present in Zhuangzi’s statement. The hierarchical nature of moral standards is demonstrated by contrasting the poor, who cannot afford bread and do not have jobs, with the rich, who govern society. Unlike Zhuangzi’s claim, Brecht does not reject moral standards altogether, as the Taoist philosophers do, but adds a certain condition to his rejection of moral standards, i.e., in badly administered societies. This suggests that morality is not the main problem, but rather a variety of other social problems caused by a badly administered government. Instead of proposing solutions to these social problems and addressing them for improvement, choosing instead to set moral standards that are inconsequential to the interests of the upper classes is essentially a cover-up of these problems.

³²⁰ Zhuangzi and R. Wilhelm, *Dschuang Dis*, 75. Original Chinese text: 說仁邪？是亂於德也；說義邪？是悖於理也；說禮邪？是相於技也。

³²¹ Zhuangzi and R. Wilhelm, *Dschuang Dis*, 70. Original Chinese text: 聖人不死，大盜不止。

Brecht's reflections on the relationship between morality and social governance are inextricably linked to the economic and political circumstances he experienced. The worldwide economic depression that began in 1929 made life miserable for the German population. The crisis led to the unemployment of some six million people in Germany.³²² Lea Langer Grundig, a German Jewish communist, describes the situation:

The misery of years of unemployment had colored everyone the same shade of gray. Work qualifications, special abilities, skills and knowledge based on experience – these were all as outmoded as vanished snow... Unemployment became a tragedy for many. Not only because of the poverty that mutely sat at their table at all times. Not working, doing nothing, producing nothing—work that not only provided food, but also, despite all the harassment and drudgery, was satisfying, developed skills, and stimulated thinking; work, a human need – it was not available; and wherever it was lacking, decay, malaise, and despair set in... Coal was expensive; people slept constantly. It was warm in bed and it was easier to sleep away the hunger... The grim poverty, the hopelessness, the laws governing the crisis that were incomprehensible for many, all these made people ripe for “miracles”.³²³

Grundig mentioned that the solution to these social problems was revolution and the establishment of socialism: “We must put an end to the exploitation, to labor for profit. And that is called socialism.”³²⁴ However, before German Communism could achieve significant success, the German Nazi Party came to power against the social backdrop of the Great Depression. Hitler granted himself emergency powers in the name of “protecting the German people” and began his dictatorship.³²⁵ Instead of improving the economic environment and increasing productivity Hitler's method of covering up social problems was to shift the conflicts to the Jews and communism and to launch anti-Semitic, anti-Communist campaigns. In opposing communism, before Hitler came to power, conservative powers in Germany responded to

³²² Lea Grundig, “Visions and History,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 97-98. 97.

³²³ Grundig, *Visions and History*, 97-98.

³²⁴ Grundig, *Visions and History*, 98.

³²⁵ Stephen Parker, *Bertolt Brecht: A Literary Life* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 306.

socialists' demands for higher wages for workers and better working and living conditions with traditional moral standards. Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909), Chaplain to Kaiser Wilhelm's Court, in a speech to social questions wrote:

With respect to Social Democracy two different kinds of erroneous conceptions are prevalent. One group of economists see Social Democracy as something quite harmless, as a system of social reforms aimed at achieving the welfare of one's neighbors. They forget the immoral tendencies connected with it and the war against Christianity that is bound up with it, and – attracted by the intellectual energy of the Social Democratic Party, by its dedication, and by its willingness to make sacrifices – they have almost nothing but good things to say of the movement. This conception is certainly wrong. Social Democracy is not just a movement for social reforms; as it portrays itself in Germany and as it has portrayed itself for decades in pamphlets, books, and assemblies it is a new conception of the world – a conception which once it has taken hold of people pries them away from Christianity, patriotism, and German morality, separates them from the ethical foundations of our life and directs them down a road which, in my opinion, can and will lead only to an abyss.³²⁶

Stoecker's speech "offers a typical example of how moralistic appeals could be used to serve conservative political ends."³²⁷ Stoecker's use of traditional morality as an excuse to reject social reform and Hitler's practice of covering up social problems by deflecting social conflicts through his opposition to communism are the kinds of concerns that Brecht reflects on and criticizes in his text.

Examples of references to Taoist thought similar to the above to illustrate Brecht's views on social issues are many more in *Me-ti*. In this regard, Antony Tatlow's English translation gives detailed notes to inform the reader of the sources of these ideas as well as their explanations. Thus, it will not be recounted in the dissertation. It is important to note that

³²⁶ Adolf Stoecker, "Speech on the Social Question," in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 5-8. 5-6.

³²⁷ Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

Brecht's use of Chinese philosophical ideas in *Me-ti* follows his treatment of them in his theatrical works. He does not use Chinese philosophical concepts unfamiliar to European readers, nor does he indicate the sources of these ideas. More specific to his social viewpoint, these ideas are altered or used directly. In general, he does not give any direct credit to Chinese ideas.

Me-Ti also has a unique characteristic that no other work of his, not even that of other writers, possesses. It is the form of its writing, imitating the style of Chinese classics. As previously mentioned, *Me-ti* was organized and categorized by different editors according to their own system at the time of publication. The editors have this freedom because *Me-ti*, as Brecht's social criticism, comments and observations, also contains some of his philosophical views, personal matters, and even romantic experiences. The *Me-ti* collection is made up of texts that are not interconnected with each other: some are arguments, some are fables, and some are even individual sections consisting of a single sentence. These characteristics are the same as the writing style of Chinese classics in the time of Laozi and Confucius. The discrete paragraphs, composed of aphoristic sentences, fragments of dialogue of characters, and stories pieces, each contain their respective topics.

The people and places discussed in *Me-ti* are given a pseudo-Chinese sounding name by Brecht. For example Bi-leh is Berlin, Ka-meh is Karl Marx.³²⁸ Commenting on Brecht's *Me-ti* Ruth Berlau said that in *Me-ti* "[e]very thing was clothed in a Chinese kind of wisdom".³²⁹ In the text there are five pseudonyms including Ken-jeh when it comes to Brecht. Since Brecht chose to clothe his *Me-ti* in Chinese wisdom, it became a rather natural choice to replace the original

³²⁸ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti*, 41.

³²⁹ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti*, 10.

European names of people and places in the passage with names similar to their Chinese pronunciation. Doing so eliminates the abruptness of the pronunciation of European words in the framework of “Chinese wisdom”, while the similarity between the “Chinese” names given by Brecht and the pronunciation of the referred words allows the reader to associate them with or conjecture their specific references. Additionally, even though *Me-ti* is not a theater work, and then Epic Theater’s theories should not be applied here, Brecht’s writing style of using alienation techniques when dealing with the social issues he talks about is still heavily represented in this work. In *Me-ti*, Tatlow notes, “Brecht estranges many concepts and institutions, thereby inviting us to reconsider what they stand for and what they conceal.”³³⁰ It is possible that the method of Chineseizing European names may also have been his technique of estrangement.

Tatlow’s list of “Attributable names” gives an almost comprehensive account of the names that appear in the text, but one name that does not appear in the list is “Me-ti”. “Me-ti” here is not the title “Me-ti” of the book or Mo Di, the founder of Mohism, whom Brecht studied. I argue that the name Me-ti in the text is Brecht himself. This is because in most cases the themes addressed by the texts or the views expressed have little to do with Mo Di’s concerns of more than two thousand years ago, but rather are articulations of Brecht’s views. For example, in one of the texts it says:

Me-ti sagte: Der Satz des Hu-ih „Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz“ sieht aus wie Ordnung. Er deutet aber auf die größte Unordnung. Ein Staatswesen, in dem was dem Staatswesen nutzt dem einzelnen nicht nutzt und was dem einzelnen nutzt dem Staatswesen nicht nutzt, nutzt selber nichts. Nach Ansicht des Hu-ih verkörpert er den Staat. So heißt also sein Satz einfach: Der Nutzen des Hu-ih geht vor dem Nutzen jedes einzelnen Bürgers.³³¹

Me-ti said: Hu-ih’s saying, *Help the Community before Yourself*, sounds like a recipe for order. But it betokens the greatest disorder. A state in which whatever helps the state does not help the individual, and whatever helps the individual does not help the state, is no

³³⁰ Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht’s Me-Ti*, 37.

³³¹ Brecht, *Me-ti, Buch der Wandungeng*, 90.

help to anybody. Hu-ih think she embodies the state. Hence his saying simply means: whatever helps Hu-ih precedes what helps every single citizen.³³²

Hu-ih in the text refers to Hitler. The so-called Me-ti's words are actually Brecht's rebuttal to Hitler's view of "Help the Community before Yourself", originally put forward in 1920's *Das 25-Punkte-Programm der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei* [The Program of the NSDAP, or "Twenty-Five Points"].³³³

In the many texts in which "Me-ti" appears, the vast majority of them lead to the text that follows in the style of "Me-ti sagte: ..." [Me-ti said...]. Such an expression is identical to the expression in the Chinese classics, such as "子曰:..." [Confucius said:...]. Because Confucius is revered as the paragon of Chinese sages, the statements after "Confucius said" in the Analects are the foundation and general principle of Confucian ideology. When later Confucian scholars studied or cited the text, they did not reformulate it, but at most interpreted it on the basis of these texts. Brecht writes in this style of expression, in the tone of a sage, as if a Master is imparting unquestionable social truth.

Although the social issues discussed in *Me-ti* are all about Europe itself, and there is no explicit reference to Chinese society or thought, this work is certainly unique in its use of Chinese metaphors. Brecht not only uses the ideas of several Chinese schools, mainly Taoism, but also combines them with classical Chinese forms of writing. Because Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* is composed of different short, less coherent passages, the reader can pick up a few texts at any time for a quick read and reflection. Therefore, Döblin says that *Tao Te Ching* should be printed in comfortable pamphlets and carried in the pockets of Europeans for the next few decades. Then

³³² Brecht and Tatlow, *Bertolt Brecht's Me-Ti*, 59.

³³³ Leila J. Rupp, *Nazi Ideology before 1933: A Documentation*, trans. Barbara Miller Lane (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 40.

those who agree with Brecht's views on social issues can compile *Me-ti* in comfortable pamphlets and carry it in their pockets.

Conclusion

Compared to Hesse's work, the works of Döblin and Brecht are much more relevant to the overall concept of China, or as I have been using in my dissertation, the concept of Chineseness. This Chineseness includes social customs, religious traditions, art forms, and other aspects of Chinese elements in addition to Taoism and other schools of philosophy. Döblin refers to his Wang-lun story as a Chinese novel and spares no effort to recreate an almost realistic Chinese scenario for the reader in terms of setting, plot, etc. Unlike other writers interested in Taoist thought, who focus almost exclusively on philosophical Taoism and the teachings it brings, Döblin is unique in using a large number of religious Taoist traditions in his work. However, his approach to Taoism does not imply that Döblin lacks awareness of Confucianism or philosophical Taoism, with which other scholars of China are concerned. Within his novels, Döblin skillfully portrays Confucianism as a representative of conservative ideology, juxtaposed with the often-misinterpreted philosophical Taoism (religious Taoism) in the context of revolutionary practice. He achieves this by shifting perspectives between the description of the imperial court and the underclass.

Since religious Taoism was practiced on a large scale throughout Chinese history by the uneducated lower classes of society for their superstitious purposes, Döblin's use of religious Taoism provides a unique perspective for his portrayal of this social group. Although Döblin goes to great lengths to reproduce Chinese scenes in his novels, under the guise of so-called Chinese novel, he presents the problems of survival of the underclass in German society. In Döblin's account, *Wu Wei*, as advocated by Taoist thought, is construed literally as the non-

resistance of the oppressed masses in the face of oppression by a dictatorial authority. Against the backdrop of the continuing failure of European workers' revolutions against their governments, non-resistance becomes, in Döblin's literature, an experiment in the prospects for European workers' movements. As Ritchie Robertson puts it, his novel is both an aesthetic construction and a political exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of non-resistance.³³⁴

Like Döblin, Brecht's works, whether theatrical or theoretical, or his social commentaries, feature extensive use of Chinese metaphors. But Brecht's approach to Chineseness is substantially different from that of other writers who have focused on China. The supposedly Chinese setting of his play *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan* is an illusion, with only a few place names being Chinese and no other realistic depiction of Chinese society or culture. Whether it was Chinese poetry or the ideas of the Taoist school that appeared in his work, Brecht never made any intellectual presentation to his readers. He incorporates these elements, adapted or unadapted, all depending on their readiness to achieve the social purpose required by his work without giving any acknowledgement, into his work. Whether it is "Chineseness", "Indianness", "Europeanness", or any other kind of "-ness", it is not as important to Brecht as "socialness".

In addition to its uniqueness in dealing with Chineseness, another distinctive aspect that must be noted is Brecht's use of classical Chinese writing style in his writing of *Me-ti*. Other writers interested in China write with an exclusive focus on Chinese thought and find a corresponding use for it in their respective works. Brecht not only touches on the classical Chinese schools of thought, including Taoism, in his *Me-ti*, but also presents his social

³³⁴ Ritchie Robertson, "Alfred Döblin as Pacifist and Chauvinist: Die Drei Sprünge Des Wang-Lun and Wartime Propaganda," in *Pacifist and Anti-Militarist Writing in German, 1889-1928: From Bertha Von Suttner to Erich Maria Remarque*, ed. Andreas Kramer and Ritchie Robertson (München: Iudicium, 2018), 199-210, 202.

commentary to the reader in the same writing style as the Chinese classics. Although Brecht never acknowledged what Taoist thought or other elements of Chinese culture meant to him personally, nor did he ever directly refer to the sources of these elements in his plays, understanding Chinese culture is an essential part of the process of studying Brecht.

Chapter 5 Willy Tonn—Taoism and Jewish Identity

Willy Tonn, a Jewish refugee who lived in Shanghai for ten years during the Nazi era, left behind a rich legacy in the fields of politics, literature, religion, and Orientalism. However, he has not received much scholarly attention, despite his remarkable contributions. Existing research on Tonn has been limited to brief references to his membership in the Jewish community in exile, such as in Alice I. Reichman's "Community in Exile: German Jewish Identity Development in Wartime Shanghai, 1938-1945," or in studies of Martin Buber in relation to Chinese philosophy, where Tonn is credited for collaborating with Buber on Taoism, as in Irene Eber's "Martin Buber and Taoism."

The most recent research, Li Weijia's "Synthesis and Transtextuality —The Jewish Re-invention of Chinese Mythical Stories in 'Shanghai Ghetto,'" focuses on the aesthetic apparatus of Tonn's short story "The Lucky Fisherman," without exploring the story, or any of his other works, in relation to Tonn's political, religious, and philosophical views.

This chapter examines Tonn's perspectives on Jewish identity and the relationship between Asian culture, particularly Chinese and Jewish historical culture, and how these views are reflected in his literary works. The chapter argues that Tonn's theoretical works presents a complete identification with Chinese culture in his theory of Jewish renewal, particularly through his unique interpretation of the concept of *Tao*. In his literary works, *Tao* is a symbolic concept that represents the Jewish faith and is used directly or indirectly as a sign of survival strategies. The analysis is based on Tonn's archival materials and personal experiences, particularly his activities during his ten years in Shanghai.

5.1 Willy Tonn's life and experiences

Willy Tonn, the name on his resume and on his credentials, or Will Y. Tonn or Willy Y. Tonn, the names used in some newspaper articles, was born in Berlin in 1902. His father, Georg Tonn, passed away in 1930 before the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. However, his mother, Dora Tonn, was sent to the Riga ghetto in Latvia by the Nazis in 1942, and her fate remains unknown. In 1920, Tonn began his studies at Friedrich Wilhelm Universität in Berlin, where he initially pursued medicine and philosophy. The study of medicine lasted only one year. Starting in 1921, he attended the *Seminar Für Orientalische Sprachen* [Seminar for Oriental Languages] at the same university to study oriental languages and cultures, including Chinese, Manchurian, Tibetan and Indian. Although some referred to him as “Dr. Tonn” in correspondence, and the Leo Baeck Institute, where his archives are kept, also claims that he received his doctorate in 1924, there is no conclusive evidence to support this claim. Tonn himself never mentioned receiving a doctorate in his biography when he sought work in Shanghai, nor in his “Career of Life” attached to this biography. In another biography, written after his return to Israel from Shanghai, however, it shows “Seminar f. Orientalische Sprachen: Chinesisch 21/4 Dr. ph” [Seminar f. Oriental Languages: Chinese 21/4 Dr. ph].³³⁵

After completing his education, Tonn worked as a manager at D. Franz Steiner & Co GmbH, a chemical and pharmaceutical company in Berlin until 1939, after which he went into exile in Shanghai. During this period, he also had various part-time jobs, such as writing for newspapers and magazines like *Ostasiatische Rundschau* [East Asian Review], *Durch alle Welt* [Throughout the world], *Indian Economic Affairs*. Furthermore, Tonn worked as a lecturer in

³³⁵ Willy Tonn, “Prof. W.Y. Tonn, Orientalist, 18 Hadar Yosef,” in Personal Papers, ca. 1917-1920s, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119239

academic and semi-academic organizations, such as *Humbolt Akademie* [Humbolt Academy], *Klub Chinesischer Studenten* [Chinese Students Club], teaching English, German, Chinese and Hebrew languages and literatures from 1928 until 1938.³³⁶

In March 1939, Tonn arrived in Shanghai after traveling from Hamburg via Norway, marking the beginning of his ten-year exile in China. It was in Shanghai, where Tonn first started teaching as a professor at various different universities. From 1939 to 1943, he worked as a Professor of Literature at *Tung Te Univerisität* [Tung Te University]. In 1943 he joined *Chinan Staats Universität* [Chinan State University] as a Professor of Chinese Linguistics and Comparative Philosophy. In the meantime, Tonn founded the Asian Seminar, the American Seminar, and the Israeli Seminar, where he was a long-time lecturer. Tonn continued to contribute to Chinese, English, and German newspapers and magazines in Shanghai while also teaching.³³⁷

In 1949, Tonn left China and returned to Tel Aviv. He applied to the American Embassy in Tel Aviv to immigrate to the United States.³³⁸ In fact, just a year after Tonn's arrival in Shanghai, his friend Harold Berstein in New York sponsored his application to the consulate in Shanghai.³³⁹ It is unknown if the two applications were the same, or if his application was

³³⁶ Willy Tonn, "Lebenslauf" and "Career of Life" in Personal Papers, ca. 1917-1920s, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119239

³³⁷ Tonn, *Lebenslauf*.

³³⁸ American Embassy, "Please present this notice when you appear for your appointment" in Personal Papers, ca. 1917-1920s, Box: 1, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119239

³³⁹ Harold Berstein, "In the Matter of The Application of Willy Tonn for Admission to the United States of America" in Addendum, ca. 1938-1941, Box: 5, Folder: 8. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119311

approved, but Tonn did not travel to the United States to start his new life. Instead, he attempted to bring his Shanghai legacy, the Asian Seminar, back to Israel by applying for a position as a university lecturer. Unfortunately, his application to Bar-Ilan University in 1955 was rejected.³⁴⁰ Tonn's career took a shift. He stopped teaching and published fewer articles in newspapers than before. After 1949, Tonn worked in three museums as a document keeper and organizer of lectures and exhibitions.³⁴¹ He edited Victor von Strauss's *Lao Tse Tao Te King* for a new edition, which was published in Zurich in 1951. He contributed a foreword and an introduction to this edition. In 1957 Tonn passed away in a Swiss sanatorium.

5.2 Taoism in the theoretical construction

In terms of theoretical construction, *Tao* needs to be analyzed from three perspectives: *Tao* as the most fundamental philosophical concept, *Tao* as expressed in different aspects of Chinese culture, and *Tao* in social reality under the influence of Confucianism as well as Buddhism. First, unlike the other writers studied in this thesis, Tonn's use of Taoist philosophical ideas in his theory contains only a single expression of the numerous discourses on *Tao* in Laozi's *Tao Te Ching*. This expression corresponds directly to the concept of God in Judaism. Secondly, in addition to his theory, as an extension of his theory, or rather as an enrichment of his theory on a social level, Tonn examines different areas of Chinese culture. Tonn takes the pursuit of the expression of the *Tao* in Chinese art as the basis of his research. These studies were able to be carried out in the curriculum of his Asian Seminar. Finally, as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have long shared a mutual cultural influence in Chinese

³⁴⁰ Samuel Gordon, "Letter to Willy Tonn in Correspondence," in Box: 1, Folder: 3. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119241

³⁴¹ Willy Tonn, *Prof. W.Y. Tonn*.

society, resulting in a social reality known as the unity of the three religions, Tonn also observes this keenly and incorporates into his theory the unique connotations of the *Tao* that have emerged from this reality. At the same time, he further develops and refines his theory by drawing analogies between the ethics of Confucianism and the teachings of Judaism.

5.2.1 *Tao* and JHWH

Willy Tonn's interest in Taoism is closely tied to his perception of Jewish identity, or rather, his construction of a new perception. To do so, Tonn conducted a necessary study of Jewish history and religious beliefs. In an unpublished, undated article (it can be assumed that the article was completed after 1945 and sometime before 1949 based on the notes after the paper and some article reviews published in a Shanghai local newspaper) "The First Jews in China and Lao-Tse", Tonn examines the history of early Jewish immigration to China. Tonn claims that in the study of Chinese Jews, "Chinese sources are not much investigated up to now".³⁴² Most European studies of Chinese Jews have only recorded the history of Jewish merchants living in coastal port cities, and those Jewish merchants who came to China by sea with the Arabs date as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-908).³⁴³ Tonn believed that these were by no means the first Jews to come to China. By studying three stone inscriptions in China dated 1489, 1512, and 1663, Tonn concludes that "the first Jews entered China between the sixth and third centuries B.C., and the first immigration of Jews into China took place at the end of the fourth century B.C."³⁴⁴ His study moves the time when the first Jews came to China back by at

³⁴² Willy Tonn, "The First Jews in China and Lao-Tse," in Typescripts: The First Jews in China and Lao-Tse; The Fighting Scholar of Shanghai; List of Manuscripts by Willy Tonn, Box: 3, Folder: Addenda 5. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119276

³⁴³ Tonn, *The First Jews in China*.

³⁴⁴ Tonn, *The First Jews in China*, 3.

least a thousand years. This research finding then provides the basis for his association of Taoism with the Jewish religion as a historical fact.

Laozi's formulation of *Tao* in *Tao Te Ching* is the most important concept in Tonn's reconstruction of Jewish identity. In the fourteenth Chapter of *Tao Te Ching*, it reads "Man Schaut nach ihm und sieht es nicht: Sein Name ist Keim. Man horcht nach ihm und hört es nicht: sein Name ist Fein. Man faßt nach ihm und fühlt es nicht: Sein Name ist Klein. Diese drei kann man nicht trennen, darum bilden sie vermisch't Eines." [One looks for it and does not see it: its name is Seed. One listens for it and does not hear it: its name is Subtle. One grasps it and does not feel it: its name is Small. These three cannot be separated, therefore they form the One mixed together.]³⁴⁵ The pronoun "es", it, in the first three sentences, refers to the One, or it could be translated as the Unity. Regardless of the translation, the ultimate concept under discussion here is *Tao*. The nature of *Tao*'s imperceptibility is elucidated in this passage. However, this is where the meaning of any translation of the original text ends. Without some knowledge of Chinese and an interpretation of the Chinese text, it would be impossible to recognize the additional implications that Tonn asserts. The Chinese text is "視而不見，名曰夷；聽之不聞，名曰希；搏之不得，名曰微。此三者不可致詰，故混而爲一。" The key factor is how the three aspects of the One are named, i.e. "夷" [Yi], "希" [Xi], and "微" [Wei]. Tonn translated the this passage as:

"Looking at It, (it is) not seen, (its) name is ji (equal),
Listening to It, (it is) not heard, (its) name is hi (thin)
Grasping It, (it is) not seized, (its) name is we (small)
these three cannot be analysed, therefore combined (they)
form one (or it)."³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 54.

³⁴⁶ Tonn, *The First Jews in China*, 11.

Tonn used the romanization of “夷”, “希”, and “微” as the primary translation to point out the similarity in pronunciation between Ji-hi-we and the four-letter Hebrew theonym יהוה, the name of God in the Hebrew Bible, transliterated as JHWH. Tonn was not the first person to discover the connection between the two. Abel Rémusat pointed this out first in his *Mémoire sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-tseu* [The Life and Opinions of Lao-tzu] in 1823. Although more than a hundred years have passed since this idea was first proposed, “nearly all sinologues refused to adopt this theory”, because “the scholars who studied Lao-tse, did not know anything of the immigration of the Jews in Chou time (1122-255 B.C.) and, on the other hand, the scholars who studied the Jewish immigration, did not know anything of the lifetime of Lao-tse in the 4th cent. B.C.”³⁴⁷

Tonn argues that since the first Jews came to China in the Zhou dynasty, which is also the time of Laozi’s life as recorded in Sima Qian’s *Shi Ji* [Records of the Grand Historian], it is likely that Laozi learned about the concept of the Jewish God from the Jews before he wrote *Tao Te Ching*. Additionally, he suggests that there are many others words in Chinese, such as 無色 [wu se, colorless] , 無聲 [wu sheng, soundless] , and 無形 [wu xing, shapeless], that can express the concepts of *Yi*, *Xi* and *Wei*, and yet the consonants in the pronunciation of the three words in the *Tao Te Ching* are exactly the same as JHW in JHWH. Combined with the fact that Laozi’s concept of the One or *Tao* as the basis for the creation and operation of all things in the world, which is consistent with the concept of God as the Creator, this cannot be a mere coincidence. Furthermore, Tonn argues that because JHWH contains only consonants and no vowels, its real, or original, pronunciation is unclear. But because there is no fourth word for

³⁴⁷ Tonn, *The First Jews in China*, 11, 15.

JHWH in the Chinese text, it can be said that the last “h” is not pronounced. Thus the European pronunciation of JHWH as Jahowah or Jahweh “may perhaps be corrected by the Chinese according to II Mose 3,14 (ehejeh) to ‘Jiheweh’”.³⁴⁸

It is important to note that Tonn’s study of Taoism seemingly reflects a return to the approach adopted in the early days when Taoism was introduced to Europe, i.e., linking Taoism to European religions, as in the case of Franz Hartmann and Julius Grill, already discussed in *Chapter 2*. But the essential difference is that in Tonn’s case he did not interpret Taoism through the lens of Jewish teachings. Taoism is still Taoism, and Judaism is still Judaism. Moreover, the conclusions he reached are based on an in-depth study of Chinese history and language, which is also very different from a study that understands Taoist thought through translations and Christianizes it for the convenience of the audience. The long history of Jewish arrival in China allowed Tonn to see the inextricable historical ties between Jewish and Chinese cultures. The articulation of the One in *Tao Te Ching* simultaneously established Taoism as a key element in Tonn’s development of a theory of future Jewish identity and cultural recognition.

In chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation, each of the writers employs Taoism to explore and attempt to solve the problems encountered in their respective situations. It is worth noting that Tonn’s use of Taoism is different from the others. With the exception of Tonn, the previously studied writers use various principles and concepts from Taoist philosophical thought, such as concepts of *Tao*, dialectical unity, and *Wu Wei*, in dealing with their respective problems. These diverse concepts help them analyze the problems from different perspectives, allowing for a systematic expression of their views under the philosophical framework of Taoism. Taoist philosophy is not just a way to understand the world, but also, according to

³⁴⁸ Tonn, *The First Jews in China*, 13.

Laozi's design, a system of principles that people should follow to live a life in the world. By understanding the world through the concepts of *Tao*, one should also address the problems encountered with the rules of *Tao*. For those writers who advocate Taoism and use Taoist principles to understand their problems, there are readily available methodologies in Taoism to provide them with ideas to solve these problems. For example, Hesse's discussion on the dissonance between the conscious and unconscious minds, which can result in personal psychological issues, is based on the Taoist dialectic in *Innen und Außen*. The solution to this problem also comes from the Taoist principle of recognizing oneself from within. However, Tonn's study of Taoism and Jewish identity, he uses only one Taoist concept, namely *Tao*, and does not refer to other concepts of Taoism, such as the Taoist way of life, governing the state, or personal discipline and development. It is not because Tonn is not concerned with or has not studied Taoist philosophy itself to a great extent. In his foreword and introduction to the reprint of von Strauß's *Lao Tse Tao Te King*, he provided a detailed account of the history and basic concepts of Taoist philosophy, just like the sinologists who introduced *Tao Te Ching* to German readers before him. He explained important concepts like *Tao*, *Te*, and *Wu Wei*, illustrating his thorough study and understanding of Taoist philosophy.

Throughout his theories, Tonn's focus on Taoism is solely on the *expression* of unity - the only concept that is directly relevant to his theory within the field of philosophical Taoism. His use of the Taoist concept in dealing with the new Jewish identity does not stem from an exclusively philosophical Taoist worldview and methodology but rather based on a historical and linguistic analysis as a fundamental point of theoretical construction. Essentially, Tonn aims to associate Jewish identity with the culture of the East, specifically Chinese culture. He is not attempting to identify Jewish culture with Taoism. The formulation of *Tao* in *Tao Te Ching*

serves as a starting point, and he borrows this concept from Taoism, reintroducing the assumption of the homology of JHWH and *Tao*. If Jewish and Chinese culture are homologous in their most fundamental religious and philosophical ideas, then this provides immediate legitimacy for his theory.

Tonn's treatment of Taoist philosophy in his theory is unique. But it is also this uniqueness that lends his theory a somewhat dubious character. First, his premise for linking Judaism and Taoism is based on his inference from his study of the history of the Jews' arrival in China that the earliest Jews who came to China may predate the time in which Laozi lived. Tonn therefore suggests that it is possible that Laozi met and spoke with Jews. If Tonn's inference about the timing of the earliest Jewish arrival in China is the result of his research on historical facts (his study of the history of the Jews as recorded in Chinese stone inscriptions), then, even if this inference is true, his suggestion of an encounter between Laozi and the Jews is still only a bold speculation. Because of the stelae inscriptions found in China, contemporary studies of the history of Jews in China generally agree that Jews came to China during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and formed local communities. In her research, Irene Eber suggests that *perhaps* Jewish traders arrived in China as early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907) by land, or with the Arabs by sea, but "there is little or no evidence to support this conclusively. Nor is there evidence for the presence of an actual Jewish community during the Tang dynasty."³⁴⁹ The possibility of a Jewish presence in China between the 7th and 10th centuries AD has not been proven, not to mention the period of Laozi around the 6th century BC.

³⁴⁹ Irene Eber, *Jews in China: Cultural Conversations, Changing Perceptions*, ed. Kathryn Hellerstein (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), 32.

Secondly, Tonn has conveniently chosen the only one expression for *Tao* that seemingly relates to JHWH. In fact, the concept of *Tao* is defined and expressed in many ways in *Tao Te Ching*. The first chapter of *Tao Te Ching* begins with the phrase “道可道，非常道”，which is accurately translated into German by Wilhelm as “Der SINN, der sich aussprechen läßt, ist nicht der ewige SINN.” [The SINN (Tao) that can be expressed is not the eternal SINN.]³⁵⁰ Laozi believes that *Tao* has the nature of indescribability, which is why the perception and pursuit of *Tao* must be realized from within the individual. However, in order to establish his philosophical theory, Laozi still made various “definitions” of *Tao* according to his understanding from different perspectives. In other words, the single definition of *Tao* in *Tao Te Ching* is not sufficient to be a definition that can fully explain *Tao*. The three aspects (*Yi*, *Xi*, and *Wei*) of *Tao* is only one of Laozi’s many expressions of *Tao*. Moreover, *Yi*, *Xi*, and *Wei* mean “can’t be seen”, “can’t be heard” and “can’t be seized”. It is essentially a repetition of the concept of indescribability, which itself does not contain any other implications for the idea of *Tao*. Many other concepts, such as the unity of being and non-being and the alternation of *Yin* and *Yang*, are all part of *Tao*’s notion. Tonn’s use of only this one concept to encapsulate *Tao* and thus lead to his view that *Tao* is homologous with JHWH is somewhat misleading or deceptive. Because Tonn does not provide a comprehensive explanation of *Tao* in his theory, for those of his readers who are not acquainted with Taoist philosophy, it is likely that their understanding stops at the mere fact that *Tao* is *Yi*, *Xi*, *Wei*, and thus equals JHWH.

Finally, if the possibility that the concept of *Tao* has any connection to Jewish beliefs cannot be readily proved, then Tonn’s philological argument that the Chinese pronunciation of the characters *Yi*, *Xi*, and *Wei* may have influenced the contemporary pronunciation of JHWH is

³⁵⁰ R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King*, 41.

also questionable. This claim is solely based on the similarity of the pronunciation of a word in two very different languages, and he does not suggest who studied or suggested the pronunciation of JHWH at what time and based on what information.

Although Tonn's argument for the possible homology of *Tao* and JHWH is questionable, it serves only as a starting point for his construction of a new perception of Jewish identity and identification with Chinese culture. To fully understand the role and influence of *Tao* and Chinese culture in his theory, other aspects need to be examined.

5.2.2 Taoism in Different Cultural Aspects

Nina Berman has mentioned that “[d]er Blick nach Osten im Moment der Krise im Westen hat eine jahrhundertealte Tradition in der deutschen Kultur.” [the look to the East at the moment of crisis in the West has a centuries-old tradition in German culture.]³⁵¹ The Jews, persecuted by the Nazis during World War II, were in an unprecedented existential crisis, and Tonn is not the first to associate Jewish culture and identity with the Orient. Contemporaries such as Martin Buber, whom Willy Tonn had written to for advice when preparing the reprint of Von Strauss' *Tao Te King*, “[i]n seinen frühen Reden zum Judentum betonte [er] die orientalische Herkunft der Juden, hob ihre Zugehörigkeit zu Asien hervor.” [in his early speeches on Judaism, he emphasized the Oriental origin of the Jews, stressed their belonging to Asia.]³⁵² In an article titled *Orient und Judentum* [Orient and Judaism], Buber emphasized the distinction between Jews and Europeans, and thus contrasts Jewish and European identities:

Unter allen Orientalen ist der Jude der offenbarste Widerpart des Abendlaenders. Der Abendlaender will die Welt bewaeltigen, der Jude will sie vollenden; fuer den Abendlaender ist sie da, fuer den Juden wird sie; der Abendlaender steht ihr gegenueber, der Jude ist ihr verbunden; der Abendlaender erkennt sie unter dem Aspekt des Masses,

³⁵¹ Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, 276.

³⁵² Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne*, 266.

der Jude unter dem des Sinns; fuer den Abendlaender ist die Tat in der Welt, fuer den Juden die Welt in der Tat.³⁵³

Among all Orientals, the Jew is the most obvious counterpart of the Occidental. The Occidental wants to master the world, the Jew wants to fulfill it; for the Occidental it is there, for the Jew it becomes; the Occidental stands opposite to it, the Jew is connected to it; the Occidental recognizes it from the aspect of measure, the Jew from that of sense; for the Occidental the deed is in the world, for the Jew the world is in the deed.

In the same year that Buber published this article, Tonn published *Gross-Asian, China und wir Juden* [Great-Asian, China and us Jews] in the same newspaper *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle* to explore the possibilities of future Jewish awareness of their own identity. In this article he pointed out Buber's *Orient und Judentum* to his readers and borrowed Leo Tolstoy's question to ask "Was sollen wir denn tun?" [What should we then do?]³⁵⁴ The answer he gave to this question was "dass wir Juden uns wieder Asien einordnen muessen und dass ganz Asien eine geistige Einheit darstellt, aelter und groesser und dauernder als die Zivilisation Europas und Amerikas" [that we Jews have to rejoin Asia and that the whole of Asia is a spiritual unity, older and greater and more enduring than the civilization of Europe and America].³⁵⁵ For Tonn himself, Chinese culture is the bond between Jews and Asia. The design of the Asia Seminar emblem epitomizes this observation:

³⁵³ Martin Buber, "Orient und Judentum," in Clippings: "Shanghai Jewish Chronicle", "Shanghai Evening Post", 1939-1945, Box: OS 32, Folder: 2. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119315

³⁵⁴ Willy Tonn, "Gross-Asian, China und wir Juden," in Clippings: "Shanghai Jewish Chronicle", "Shanghai Evening Post", 1939-1945, Box: OS 32, Folder: 2. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119315

³⁵⁵ Tonn, *Gross-Asian, China und wir Juden*.



Figure 2. Asian Seminar³⁵⁶

From the inside out, the emblem contains the Taoist symbol of *Tai Chi*, a letter “T”, a letter “S”, an equilateral triangle, and a circle. As half of the Star of David, the equilateral triangle represents Judaism. The letter “T” is located at the center, holding the Tai Chi symbol upward, connecting the triangle horizontally forming the letter “A”, and downward connecting the letter “S”. The “T”, as the initial letter of Tonn, links Taoism and Judaism on the one hand and connects the letters “A” and “S” on the other, representing his founding of the Asian Seminar. The outermost circle encasing all the elements represents the unity, the reconciliation of Judaism and Chinese culture within the framework of the Asian Seminar.

Tonn said that the Asian Seminar is about “One World” and “yearning for culture”, with the aims of “spreading of Asiatic knowledge and modern science; promotion of mutual understanding and international cooperation; preservation of cultural values”.³⁵⁷ From a more practical point of view, the Asian Seminar is dedicated to presenting Chinese culture to

³⁵⁶ Willy Tonn, “Asian Seminar,” in Shanghai, Box: 5, Folder: 7. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119310

³⁵⁷ “Ho Reviews Basic Theories of Sun At Asia Seminar Opening,” in Newspaper clippings on Asia Seminary, Box: 5, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119304

foreigners in exile in Shanghai, so that it would not be the case that to them “später die in China verbrachten Jahre als leer dunkel und zwecklos vergeudet erscheinen.” [later the years spent in China seem empty dark and wasted without purpose.], as G. Looser, another lecturer at the Asian Seminar, stated.³⁵⁸

Besides language classes at the Asian Seminar, Tonn also offered other courses and lectures on Chinese culture, philosophy, art, and social life. Taking the example of two semesters in 1945 and 1946, he taught courses such as *Chinesischer Text: Meng-tse* [Chinese text: Meng-tse], *Chinesischer Text: Mo Ti* [Chinese Text: Mo Ti], *Die Lehre vom Tao* [The teachings of Tao], *Chinesische Malerei* [Chinese painting], *Chinesische Lyrik* [Chinese poetry], *Chinesische Staatskunst* [Chinese state art], and *Der Geist chin. Poesie u. Malerei* [The spirit of chin. Poetry a. Painting].³⁵⁹ Although there is no record of the scripts for his lectures in his archives, his published and unpublished articles on most of these subjects provide insight into his understanding and introduction of Chinese culture to Europeans.

One of the distinctive features of Tonn’s approach to studying and promoting Chinese culture can be found in his articles, that is his use of the concept of *Tao* to explain the uniqueness of Chinese culture. The motivation behind this approach is easily understood, as he attempted to construct a new Jewish identity and cultural recognition through Chinese culture. Since he discovered a possible homology between Taoism and Judaism regarding the expressions of fundamental concepts in his study of Jewish history in China, increasing the visibility of *Tao* and

³⁵⁸ G. Looser, “Ausstellung im Asia-Seminar,” in Newspaper clippings on Asia Seminary, Box: 5, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119304

³⁵⁹ “Seminar-Kurse”, “Vorlesungen und Kurse des Asia Seminars”, and “Vorlesungen und Kurse,” in in Newspaper clippings on Asia Seminary, Box: 5, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119304

making it known to readers could potentially contribute to the acceptance of *Tao* and his theories. It is thus the possible motivation of his extensive use of *Tao* to explain various Chinese cultural aspects while attempting to construct a new Jewish identity and cultural recognition through Chinese culture.

In his unpublished article “Max Liebermann in der Kunstbetrachtung Oastasiens” [Max Liebermann in the Art Observation of East Asia] Tonn wrote:

Ein altes Wort sagt: “Kunst ist die Sprache des Herzens und ergreift die Sinne von innen”. Chinesische Kunst gibt daher das Tao eines Objekts wieder, d.h. seine Idee und elementare Wesenheit in vollkommener buendiger Form, wie es heisst: “Wenn man die Idee erfasst hat, kann man den Pinsel sparen” (i tao pi pu tao).

An ancient word says: “Art is the language of the heart and seizes the senses from within”. Chinese art, therefore reproduces the Tao of an object, that is, its idea and elemental essence in perfect complete form, as it is said: “When you have grasped the idea, you can save the brush” (I tao pi pu tao).³⁶⁰

Tonn took the concept of expressing *Tao* in different objects as a principle for studying Chinese culture. Whether it is music, poetry, or painting, the core artistic principle is the pursuit of the expression of *Tao*. Regarding Chinese music, he wrote, “Dies aber ist das eigenste Wesen der klassischen chinesischen Musik — die Erfuellung des Tao” [But this is the very essence of classical Chinese music - the fulfillment of the *Tao*].³⁶¹ Concerning Chinese poetry, he wrote that “everything is interwoven with the plan of the cosmos, and its idea, the Tao, is brought out by

³⁶⁰ Willy Tonn, “Max Liebermann in der Kunstbetrachtung Oastasiens,” in Typescript: “Gustav Mahler in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens”; “Max Liebermann in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens”, Box: 3, Folder: Addenda 10. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119281

³⁶¹ Willy Tonn, “Gustav Mahler in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens,” in Typescript: “Gustav Mahler in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens”; “Max Liebermann in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens”, Box: 3, Folder: Addenda 10. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119281

the artist‘ from within’.”³⁶² Even when introducing Chinese chess culture, Tonn was able to use Taoism to explain the underlying philosophical concepts of the game: “Since Chinese thoughts are principally cosmological, the Chinese also regard the universe as a great chessboard and a grand contest (game at chess) between the male and female, the clear and dark powers (yin and yang) whose productive reciprocations (moves at chess) bring to pass the annual circulation Nature.”³⁶³

If Confucianism is a system of moral theory for governing society, then similar theories as the means to ensure the proper functioning of society by establishing standards of right and wrong, good and evil, can be found in more or less every culture. Taoism, however, is a philosophy unique to China and present in various areas of social life, art, and culture. Tonn believes that the fundamental difference between China and Europe in the field of art and culture lies in how the representation of *Tao* is pursued. Taking his views on European and Chinese music as an example, he concludes:

Moderne europaeische Musik ist eine Welt fuer sich, komponiert und ausgeuebt von Kuenstlern, die nur in dieser ihrer Kunst aufgehen; sie sind Spezialisten, losgeloest von der Melodie des Lebens, und suchen lediglich Ausdruck fuer ihre individuellen Gefuehle. Sie suchen den Weg des Alls, das Tao “von aussen” und nicht “von innen”. Sie sind damit keine Universalisten und stellen ihre Musik abseits und ueber andere Kuenste wie Malerei, Dichtung oder Plastik. Ueberdies verdecken sie meist durch Vervielfaeltigung des Orchesters und der Techniken sowie durch uebertriebene polyphonische Kombination die urspruengliche, einfache und zarte Melodie und haben Mangel an Einfaellen.

Modern European music is a world of its own, composed and performed by artists who are absorbed only in their art; they are specialists, detached from the melody of life, and seek only expression for their individual feelings. They seek the way of the universe, the

³⁶² Willy Tonn, “The Conception of Chinese Poetry,” in Addendum, ca. 1938-1941, Box: 5, Folder: 8. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119311

³⁶³ Willy Tonn, “Chinese Chess,” in The China Digest, Nov 1941, Box: 4, Folder: 2. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119297

Tao “from outside” and not “from inside”. They are not universalists and place their music above other arts such as painting, poetry or sculpture. Moreover, by multiplying the orchestra and the techniques, as well as by exaggerated polyphonic combinations, they usually obscure the original, simple and delicate melody and lack uniqueness.³⁶⁴

Obviously European artists would not have pursued what Laozi called *Tao*. Thus, the word *Tao* should not be understood here in its literal sense, or in other words, as a Taoist concept. It represents the truth of art, or the highest state of art. Because Tonn was contrasting Chinese and European art, and because in his view the expression of *Tao* is the fundamental pursuit of Chinese art, Tonn conveniently uses “Tao” as a metaphor to illustrate the difference between Chinese and European art. Regarding the differences between the two kinds of art, Hegel also discussed them, saying:

Überhaupt hat dieses Volk eine ungemeine Geschicklichkeit in der Nachahmung, welche nicht bloß im täglichen Leben, sondern auch in der Kunst ausgeübt wird. Das Schöne als Schönes darzustellen ist ihm noch nicht gelungen, denn in der Malerei fehlt ihm die Perspektive und der Schatten, und wenn auch der chinesische Maler europäische Bilder wie alles überhaupt gut kopiert, wenn er auch genau weiß, wieviel Schuppen ein Karpfen hat, wieviel Einschnitte in den Blättern sind, wie die Gestalt der verschiedenen Bäume und die Biegung ihrer Zweige beschaffen ist, so ist doch das Erhabene, Ideale und Schöne nicht der Boden seiner Kunst und Geschicklichkeit. Die Chinesen sind andererseits zu stolz, um etwas von den Europäern zu lernen, obgleich sie oft deren Vorzüge anerkennen müssen.³⁶⁵

In general, this people has immense skill in imitation, which is exercised not only in daily life, but also in art. They have not yet succeeded in representing the beautiful as beautiful, for in painting they lack perspective and shadow, and even if the Chinese painter copies European pictures well, like everything else in general, even if he knows exactly how many scales a carp has, how many incisions there are in the leaves, what the shape of the various trees and the bending of their branches is like, the sublime, the ideal and the beautiful are not the ground of his art and skill. The Chinese, on the other hand, are too proud to learn anything from the Europeans, although they often have to acknowledge their merits.

³⁶⁴ Tonn, *Gustav Mahler in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens*.

³⁶⁵ Hegel, *Werke* 12, 173.

Hegel's comments on Chinese art are made in the context of his assertion that the Chinese lack a particular inwardness (*Mangel eigentümlicher Innerlichkeit*).³⁶⁶ The so-called lack of particular inwardness refers to the absence of personal freedom, a concept that occupies a central place in Hegel's observations and comments on China. Not only in art, but also in his views on other aspects of China, including its stagnant development, the absence of modern theoretical science, and lack of religious belief, etc., Hegel identifies the lack of inwardness as the most fundamental cause. It is noteworthy that right before Hegel made this comment on Chinese art, he was discussing Laozi and *Tao Te Ching*. However, due to his rejection of Taoism and *I Ching* and his Eurocentric perspective, Hegel did not understand Chinese art from the perspective of Chinese Taoist philosophy, and therefore was unable to discover the ultimate quest for Chinese art, instead characterizing it as mere imitation.

If one were to evaluate Hegel's observations on Chinese art using the words of Tonn on European music, one could say that Hegel understood Chinese art *von aussen*, from the outside, rather than *von innen*, from the inside. Hegel took a Eurocentric perspective and used European artistic standards to evaluate Chinese art, rather than situating it within the framework of Chinese culture and customs. In an article *Andere Voelker, andere Sitten* [Other peoples, other customs] Tonn wrote:

“Unter dem Himmel sind alle eine Familie” sagt ein chinesisches Sprichwort, und doch gibt es kleine Verschiedenheiten in den Getraeuchen dieser “Menschheitsfamilie”, die zu grossen Missverstaendnissen fuehren koennen.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Hegel, *Werke 12*, 168.

³⁶⁷ Willy Tonn, “Andere Voelker, andere Sitten,” in Clippings: “Shanghai Jewish Chronicle”, “Shanghai Evening Post”, 1939-1945, Box: OS 32, Folder: 2. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119315

“Under heaven, all are one family” says a Chinese proverb, and yet there are small differences in the customs of this “human family” that can lead to great misunderstandings.

On the one hand, Tonn uses the concept of Taoism to study Chinese art and analyze the differences between it and European art with the intention of promoting mutual understanding between cultures. On the other hand, his study is also inseparable from the new Jewish identity he proposes and seeks to advance. Tonn’s focus does not simply stop at distinguishing between Chinese and European painting, music, and poetry. By identifying the differences and examining the artistic styles of two Jewish artists, Gustav Mahler and Max Liebermann, Tonn’s essay concludes:

Heine, Liebermann, Mahler — ein Dichter, ein Maler, ein Musiker, das sind die drei juedischen Meister, die in Europa durch ihre Kunst das Tao verkuendeten!³⁶⁸

Heine, Liebermann, Mahler - a poet, a painter, a musician, these are the three Jewish masters who announced the Tao in Europe through their art!

Heine, Liebermann, and Mahler were the leading figures of their time in their respective fields in Europe. Tonn’s study of them aims to show that although they, as Jews, lived in Europe and had a European cultural background, the artistic essence they sought to express was not European, but more akin to Chinese. Tonn attempted to demonstrate that Jews are also culturally more similar to China than to Europe.

Combined with Tonn’s research and claims on the history of Jews in China, it can be argued that *Tao* is the key concept in Tonn’s attempt to establish a new Jewish identity. Laozi’s definition of *Tao* as *Yi*, *Xi*, and *Wei* can be historically linked to the JHWH of the Jewish religion. Meanwhile the historical ties have not died out over time. In contemporary times, in the field of art and culture, Jewish masters have pursued art in the same way that the Chinese have

³⁶⁸ Tonn, *Gustav Mahler in der Kunstbetrachtung Ostasiens*.

pursued the expression of *Tao* from inside in art rather than the expression of individuality from outside by European artists.

5.2.3 Three Teachings in One and The Inclusion of Confucianism

In China, the cultural reality of Taoism is represented by the concept of “三教合一” (Sanjiao Heyi), which means Three Teachings Harmonious as One. This idea highlights the interdependence and integration of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism in Chinese society, where no single school of thought was sufficient to explain the philosophical and cultural phenomenon of China at that time. Tonn’s understanding of Chinese culture is not just limited to the Taoist aspect. The influence of Confucianism and Buddhism on Chinese culture is also included in his studies. However, Tonn’s perspective of the unity of the three teachings could lead to observations that contradict to Laozi’s original teachings. For instance, in his article *The Conception of Chinese Poetry*, he described *Tao* as:

In short, *Tao* is not only a metaphysical but also an ethical Principle. In order “to get *Tao*” (tê *Tao*), man shall be given to rite and art (lit. music). The rite (li) affect the senses “from without”, discriminate and regulate everything between heaven and earth, art (yo, lit music) affects the senses “from within” and forms their union and harmony (ho). Art is the image of heaven (yang), rite is the image of Earth (yin), and humanness (jên) is taken of art, righteousness (i) is the taken of rite.³⁶⁹

Humanness, righteousness, rites, and music are the fundamental principles of the Confucian ethical theory. On the basis of these principles, the moral system of Confucianism was formed. If there is any similarity between Taoism and Confucianism, it is certainly not to be found in these concepts. One of the most essential aspects of “to get *Tao*” according to Laozi is to exclude the disturbance of the individual by man-made moral standards. Confucianism, on the

³⁶⁹ Willy Tonn, “The Conception of Chinese Poetry,” in Addendum, ca. 1938-1941, Box: 5, Folder: 8. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. I. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119311

other hand, is to establish a set of standards of morality and make it the norm for people's daily lives.

Chinese poetry features a significant amount of graphic depictions of natural details, which Tonn attributes to the influences of Buddhism:

When Taoism and Buddhism were combined in the Chan sect (Skr. dhyâna, Jap. zen), founded by Ta-mo (Skr. Bodhidharma, Jap. Daruma Butsu) in the sixth century A.D., meditation in harmonious surroundings opened the way to love of Nature, and artists began to give touching proofs of their microcosmos of fauna and flora. They drew their thoughts from a veritable communion with nature and gave in a nutshell the harmony of the universe, the melody of life.³⁷⁰

The combined influence of Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism has had a profound impact on the style and essence of classical Chinese poetry. According to Tonn, Taoism provides overarching vision for the artistic truth pursued by Chinese poetry, while Confucian ideas of ethics enriching *Tao's* relevance in a practical way. Meanwhile Buddhism contributes a micro-level approach that enables poetry to convey "the melody of life". Tonn's approach, which incorporates multiple perspectives rather than relying solely on Taoism, offers a more comprehensive analysis of Chinese art that reflects the reality of Chinese culture. Moreover, by studying other schools of thought, Tonn enriches his theory of a new Jewish identity, particularly in relation to Confucianism.

Tonn gave himself the Chinese name, 唐維禮 [Tang Weili]. In *Figure 2*, to the right of the Asian Seminar emblem is the seal of his Chinese name, 唐維禮印 [Seal of Tang Weili]. The Chinese pronunciation of this name is very similar to his first name, Willy, and at the same time it is a very "Confucian" name purposefully chosen by him, meaning "maintaining the ritual".

³⁷⁰ Tonn, *The Conception of Chinese Poetry*, II.

The underlying reason for Tonn's endorsement of Confucianism is that he draws an analogy between Confucian and Jewish teachings and sees similarities in them.

In his essay *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, Tonn makes a much direct comparison between Chinese and Jewish civilization, rather than constructing a new Jewish identity solely from the one-sided perspective of the history of Jewish contact with Chinese civilization. First of all, he poses a question to the reader: Why have civilizations such as ancient India, Babylon, Egypt, etc. disappeared in the 4,000 years of human history, while only Chinese and Jewish civilizations have lasted? His answer is only two short words: "their ethics".³⁷¹ Chinese ethics refers to the moral and ethical system promoted by Confucianism and practiced in China for thousands of years, including the core values of the 五倫 [Wu Lun, Five Rites] and 五德 [Wu De, Five Virtues]. Jewish ethics is the Jewish doctrine written in the Torah. He then explains to the reader the specific content of the Five Rites and Five Virtues. Tonn considers these ten Confucian virtues or ethical principles to be the Jewish version of the Ten Commandments. The person who pursues and realizes the five virtues is considered by Confucians to be "an ideal man - a 'kiün tse'", and the person who lives by the Ten Commandments is likewise "an ideal man - a 'zaddik'", in the Jewish terms.³⁷² Thus he considers that "Mose corresponds to K'ung tse" and at the same time "the three patriarchs Abraham, Jizchak and Jaakob correspond to the three mythical rulers Yao, Shun and Yü whose modest and peaceable conduct exalted by grace and merit should be emulated in order to become a kiün tse resp. zaddik."³⁷³

³⁷¹ Willy Tonn, "4000 Years Chinese and Jews," in Addendum, ca. 1938-1941, Box: 5, Folder: 8. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. I.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119311

³⁷² Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, II.

³⁷³ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, III.

Tonn recognizes and appreciates the fact that Chinese society is governed by a philosophy based on Confucian ethics. The success of Confucianism is best evidenced by the continuity of Chinese culture for over 4,000 years. He wrote that “The Chinese esteem highly such practical teaching which they hold superior to the ornament of sublime morals not being possible to be used perfectly. Therefore their Way orders them to produce gentle-men whose word is their bond, for whom war is barbaric, whose piety to parents and relations is perfect, whose courtesy is as delicate and as beautiful as their painting, poems and their wisdom constitutes, to cultivate ... the duty towards their neighbor and to reverence spiritual beings while always maintaining a due reserve.”³⁷⁴ All of these ethics can be summed up into two fundamental points, namely, humanity and justice, which, according to Tonn, are also what Jewish civilization has always sought. Tonn’s approach of making comparisons between Judaism and Confucianism in parallel is also common among contemporary scholars of Jewish-Chinese studies. The two faiths have closer similarities and are more comparable, as Shalom Wald said in his study that “Judaism and Confucianism are two nonmissionary belief systems accompanied by ethical precepts and practical rituals”.³⁷⁵

In contrast to Tonn, Sinophobic scholars, such as Hegel and Herder, from the 18th and 19th centuries saw Chinese civilization’s continued adherence to Confucian ethics for thousands of years as a sign of rigidity and stagnation. Tonn, however, disagrees. Having distilled Confucian ethics down to humanity and justice, he established the legitimacy of Confucian ethics because humanity and justice are what must always be pursued. Thus, he exonerates Chinese

³⁷⁴ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XII.

³⁷⁵ Shalom Salomon Wald, “Encounters Between Chinese and Jewish Civilizations,” *Education About ASIA* 23, no. 2 (2018): 15–18, 17.

civilization from accusations from the West and directs the accusations back towards the West. He wrote “Force, blood and profit cannot regulate a country especially if humanity and justice are the fundamentals of the nation. The European rulers know that they cannot practice it because force and profit are their fundamentals.”³⁷⁶

Tonn’s identification of Confucian core values with the essence of Jewish teachings serves two purposes in establishing a new Jewish identity. First, the successful application of Confucian ethics in Chinese history proves that Jewish civilization can endure if it perseveres in its own teachings. Second, his defense of Chinese civilization against European accusations is in fact also a defense of Jewish civilization. He argues that Europeans “prefer to reproach their teachers, the Chinese and the Jews with so-called mental inefficiency and racial or any other inferiority... These reproaches are nothing but ridiculous lies of ignorant and mean people.”³⁷⁷ Such a claim completely separates the Jews from European civilization and places them in opposition to it, just as Europeans have already done.

In concluding this article, Tonn has a more ambitious vision. He stated:

With the Chinese and Jewish doctrine we repeat — that the world will be preserved by justice, truth and peace only and that solely this idea of humanity and justice of jên and i - realized by the gentle and just man, the kiün tse, the zaddik - is able to bring to the nations welfare, happiness, development and duration and to lead them to unity.³⁷⁸

His vision for the fate of human civilization is reminiscent of what Leibniz once said while seeking to construct a universal culture. Leibniz believed that if the two civilizations of Europe and China worked together, the rest of the world would be brought to a more rational life. He saw the two civilizations of China and Europe as being at opposite ends of the same

³⁷⁶ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XIII.

³⁷⁷ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XIII.

³⁷⁸ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XX.

continent, each with its own strengths in different fields. The cooperation of the two civilizations implies complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses. Tonn, in this case, advocates a complete identification with Chinese and a negation of European civilization. This approach aims to disassociate Jewish identity from Europe and identify it with China. Under the logic of this argument, the recognition of China's past is equivalent to recognizing the Jewish past. Similarly, hoping for the future of Chinese civilization is equivalent to hoping for the future of the Jewish one.

5.3 Taoism in Tonn's literary works

Tonn's literary work consists primarily of short stories published in local English and German-language newspapers in Shanghai. These works are not as numerous as Tonn's other articles on Asian cultures, political commentaries, etc. After all, he is not a full-time literary writer. His short stories include translations, adaptations as well as original stories that incorporate Asian cultural aspects. He mainly translated or adapted Chinese stories, and his creatively written stories mostly relate to some aspects of Chinese culture or use Chinese scenario settings. However, this does not mean that his stories have no relevance to European society. The issues revealed by the stories are usually hidden beneath the surface of the stories and reflect a clear selection purpose even in the translated stories.

Despite the limited number of Tonn's literary works, an overall analysis of his works is possible in terms of theme, plot, and other elements. The commonality of these stories can be summed up in short: they typically describe a person's serious setback at a certain stage of life, making it seemingly impossible to survive, and then the protagonist with the help of kind people or his own faith overcomes the situation. This storyline evokes connections to Tonn's experiences and those of his fellow Jews during the Nazi era. As one of the approximately

20,000 Jews exiled to Shanghai by the end of 1941,³⁷⁹ Tonn was both unfortunate and fortunate. The Nazi persecution made it challenging for him and other Jews to survive, and the city of Shanghai, one of the few places in the world that accepted Jews at the time, became a good Samaritan in his stories, helping him through his ordeal.

Regarding the faith that appears in his stories, Tonn often tells the reader that it is *Tao*, which is abstract, even implicit. He never explicitly defines *Tao* in his stories, as if it were a universal truth already known to readers. Sometimes the word *Tao* doesn't even appear, but its connotation is subtly woven into the story. Tonn's use of *Tao* in his Jewish identity theory sheds light on this approach. *Tao* is useful to Tonn only in relation to its possible homogeneity with the most fundamental religious concept, JHWH, of Judaism. Other concepts of Taoism, such as dialectics and the idea of perpetual movement and transformation, are not directly related to his concerns for Jewish identity. Therefore, *Tao* only plays a symbolic role in his stories set in a Chinese context, used to refer to the Jewish faith. This implies that actual Taoist philosophy is less influential in his stories compared to the authors discussed in previous chapters.

Story of The Crazy Wu Wine-Bibber And Expert at Carving, published in October 1942, is one of the stories that best represents this mode of his writing. Tonn stated that the short story is "Adapted from the Chinese", but the exact source of the story is not clear.³⁸⁰ The protagonist is Wu Tien, a man who loved to drink and was skilled in various arts and games. He was especially talented at making chopsticks out of bamboo and carving them artistically. His chopsticks were

³⁷⁹ Eber, *Jews in China*, 40.

³⁸⁰ Willy Tonn, "Story of The Crazy Wu Wine-Bibber And Expert at Carving," in Clippings: "The Shanghai Evening Post + Mercury"; "Shanghai Sunday Times"; HIAS History, Shanghai Echo; "Mitteilungen", AJ Joint DC, Shanghai, 1940-42; 1942; 7 Oct 1946; Nov 1946, Box: OS 32, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023. https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119314

famous in the region and were widely recognized by the locals. At the market, his chopsticks often sold for high prices and he indirectly accumulated some fortune. Nevertheless, Wu's purpose for making chopsticks was not to make a profit, but to enjoy the process of his artistic creation. If someone intentionally wanted him to make chopsticks "he became angry, threw back his gown and left immediately, avoiding a meeting with this person whenever he could."³⁸¹ If he met a poor person in need, he would voluntarily offer to give them his chopsticks. One day a group of bandits captured Wu's city and took him captive, forcing him to make chopsticks. Faced with the temptation of money or the threat of force from the bandits, Wu never agreed. The bandits had no choice but to release him, knowing that they needed his work in the market in the future. Since then, Wu loosened his hair and did not clean himself. When he appeared in front of people, he always sang filthy songs, leading people to believe that he had gone crazy. Shortly after, government forces took back the city from the bandits. The new mayor found Wu and asked him to make chopsticks, but Wu still did not agree, even though the mayor whipped him with a stick. Wu was released once again. Ever since, he had no place to live and no one knew where to find him. When someone recognized him and spoke to him, his words were unintelligible. "Someone would say: 'He was not sick. He was insane.' Another said 'Maybe he was one following the Tao. How else could he resist both, the allurements of wealth and honor, and the threats of death!'"³⁸²

While pretending to be crazy is the appearance that Wu presented to others, Tonn ended the story with a reference to *Tao*, highlighting that Wu's survival through the many difficulties in his life is fundamentally based on his faith in *Tao*. Tonn is not promoting a Taoist worldview or

³⁸¹ Tonn, *Story of The Crazy Wu*.

³⁸² Tonn, *Story of The Crazy Wu*.

methodology through Wu's story. If so, some Taoist philosophical ideas about *Wu Wei*, dialectic, and so forth should have been presented in the story's development, combined with the protagonist's sufferings, either from the author's third-person perspective or from Wu's point of view. Instead, the reference to *Tao* appears in an abstract, abrupt manner, arguably even without the reader's expectation or in a way that is seemingly irrelevant to the story.

It should be noted that the newspaper in which the story was published, *the Shanghai Evening Post*, is an all-English newspaper. Its readership is obviously not the local Chinese population at the time. Not everyone, even educated Chinese, may have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of Taoist philosophy, so what about foreigners who may not have heard much about *Tao* at all? The key question then arises: why did Tonn end his story in this way, given that the concept of *Tao*, presented in this specific manner, would most likely be incomprehensible to the story's readership?

Tonn's theories on Jewish history, current conditions, and future expectations provide us with answers. He suggested that despite the difficulties faced by the Jews at the time, Jewish culture and Chinese culture, as the only two cultures that were never discontinued, would continue to grow and flourish as a result of their advocacy of "justice against force and humanity against violence".³⁸³ In Tonn's view, as discussed earlier in this chapter, justice and humanity are the most fundamental values of Chinese and Jewish cultures. Behind the ethical value systems that have been established, Chinese and Jewish cultures have their respective creative principles, which are the driving force for the creation of these values. He wrote that "the symbol of the Chinese is the sign of Yin-Yang, the symbol of the Jews is the star of David, both denote the

³⁸³ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XVIII.

creative principle...Tao=I-hi-we (Jahwe)".³⁸⁴ In his article *The First Jews in China and Lao-Tse*, Tonn first argued for the possible homology of the *Tao* and the Jewish God, and here he rephrased the idea that the *Tao* equals the Jewish God. Thus, by concluding the story with Wu's faith in *Tao*, Tonn is actually asserting, or rather reaffirming, his own expectations of the Jewish people who are experiencing something similar to what happened to Wu, i.e., faith in Jewish God.

Whereas Wu's story presents *Tao's* direct association with Tonn's theory of Jewish identity in his literature, another of his short stories, *The Lucky Fisherman*, features *Tao* in an implicit manner. The story, written in English and published in *The Shanghai Evening & Mercury* in 1942, follows the protagonist is Ling Mei-ho, from Ningbo, who sets sail towards what he thinks is an island, but turns out to be the back of a giant sea-serpent, where the magnificent Palace of the Dragon-King is built. After landing, Mei-ho prays to the Dragon-King to bless him and his poor family and render the sea favorable to him. However, the Dragon-King becomes angry and accuses Mei-ho of being a robber of his subjects, announcing his death. Mei-ho is then swallowed by the sea-serpent and struggles to escape. After being thrown to the shore by waves, he hears voices from underground and is greeted by the King of the ants who promises to rescue him because the King of the ants and the Dragon-King are enemies. The ants lead him to Kin-hu-men, the Gate of the Gold Lake, and give him a pile of gold, before he is dismissed and goes. He falls asleep on the way home. When he wakes up, he finds himself lying on his fishing junk, blinking upon the infinite picture of sky and sea, staring at the horizon where distance soaring into space. None of the adventures has actually happened and they were only his dreams.

³⁸⁴ Tonn, *4000 Years Chinese and Jews*, XVI.

The story begins and ends with a description of the same scene, namely Azure Eternity:

Azure eternity of depth lost in height, sea and sky interblending through luminous haze. The day is of spring, and the hour morning.

Only sky and sea, —one wide enormity. In the fore, ripples are catching a silvery light and threads of foam are swirling. A little farther off any motion is no more visible, nor anything else but color—dim warm blue of water widening away to melt into blue of air. Horizon there is none; only distance soaring into space, infinite concavity hollowing before you and hugely arching above you, the color deepening with the height.

But far in the midway-azure there appears to hang a faint, faint, vision of an island. While palace towers and curved roofs glimmer, illumined by a soft sunshine, — the Palace of the Dragon-King Hai Long Wang.³⁸⁵

The ending of the story reads:

It was noon when the dazzling sunbeams awakened him. He found himself lying in his junk and blinking upon the infinite picture of sky and sea—on wile enormity—azure eternity of depth lost in height.

In the fore, ripples are catching a silvery light, and threads of foam are swirling. A little farther off any motion is no more visible, nor anything else but color—dim warm blue of water widening away to melt into air. Horizon there is none: only distance soaring into space, infinite concavity hollowing before you and hugely arching above you. The color deepening with the height.

Azure eternity of depth lost in height, sea and sky interblending through luminous haze. The day is of spring and the hour noon.³⁸⁶

Azure eternity represents the boundless and infinite nature, which Tonn portrays as a scene that blurs the line between reality and imagination. This description serves the purpose of creating the dream world of the protagonist. Tonn achieves a replication of Azure eternity on a structural level by repeating the phrase at the end of the story in a narrative that is almost identical. This creates a “structural Azure eternity of the text”, where the story forms a complete closed loop. It means that the beginning is the end and the end is also the beginning, without any

³⁸⁵ Willy Tonn, “The Lucky Fisherman,” in Clippings: “The Shanghai Evening Post + Mercury”; “Shanghai Sunday Times”; HIAS History, Shanghai Echo; “Mitteilungen”, AJ Joint DC, Shanghai, 1940-42; 1942; 7 Oct 1946; Nov 1946, Box: OS 32, Folder: 1. Willy Tonn Collection, AR 7259. Leo Baeck Institute. Accessed January 22, 2023.

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/archival_objects/1119314

³⁸⁶ Tonn, *The Lucky Fisherman*.

boundaries or differences. Additionally, the main plot of the story is situated in this closed loop, which corresponds to the idea that the story is meant to express on the hermeneutic level: “a life deeply embedded in the enormity of nature”.³⁸⁷ According to Li, the hermeneutic perspective of the story “suggests a Taoist observation of human beings’ fate in their interaction with infinite nature.”³⁸⁸

Indeed, nature is at the core of Taoism’s philosophical thought. Whether it is *Wu Wei*, *Yin* and *Yang*, or any other concept, the reasoning and understanding revolve around nature as the environment in which the world is situated and the principles derived from its laws. In *Zhuangzi* the relationship between an individual’s fate and nature is expressed as “I was born in the mountains and became comfortable with the life in the mountains, this is what is natural to me; I grew up near the water and felt safe with the water, this is what I was used to. I do not know why I do what I do, this is my fate.”³⁸⁹ The figurative “I” was originally born in the mountains, and his nature was not challenged or become a difficulty in his life because of his subsequent upbringing at the waterside. On the contrary, he has adapted to the changes in his environment, so that living by the water has become a habit he has acquired. The mountains and the water together shaped his life. The natural environment determines one’s fate, the truth of which cannot be perceived intellectually, but only accepted and obeyed. Accepting and submitting to nature is essentially accepting and submitting to *Tao*.

³⁸⁷ Weijia Li, “Synthesis and Transtextuality: The Jewish Reinvention of Chinese Mythical Stories in ‘Shanghai Ghetto,’” *Dimensions of Storytelling in German Literature and Beyond*, January 2018, 140-51, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787444386.011>, 143.

³⁸⁸ Li, *Synthesis and Transtextuality*, 143.

³⁸⁹ 莊子：外篇：達生 (“The Full Understanding of Life,” in *Outer Chapters of Zhuangzi*).

Original Text: 吾生於陵而安於陵，故也；長於水而安於水，性也；不知吾所以然而然，命也。

As far as the plot of the story is concerned, it is rather straightforward. The storytelling falls into the pattern discussed earlier: the experience of a person who encounters difficulties and then overcomes them. In comparison to Wu's story, in the fisherman's tale, the fate of the protagonist relates more directly to the fate of the Jews in exile in Shanghai. The evil Dragon-King's accusation against Ling Mei-Ho for robbing his subjects and the death threats allude to antisemitic accusations and threats against Jews in Nazi Germany whereas the King of the ants' help can be seen as sanctuary for the Jews provided by Shanghai. Shanghai was not the final destination for the Jews, but a transition station, or a waiting room. They were waiting for the end of the war to return to Europe or to the United States. However, the waiting time was unknown and the direction of the future journey was unclear. Like Ling Mei-Ho, who woke up at the end of the story to find himself in his junk, drifting on a sea where he could not tell what the next plan was, surrounded by the immensity and endlessness of nature.

Reading the story, one may wonder in what way is the fisherman lucky? His encounter with the Dragon-King almost cost his life and the fortune provided by the King of the ants is nothing but a dream. After waking up from the dream, the fisherman was not frightened by the threat of the Dragon-King nor did he regret for missing the wealth given by the ants. Instead, he lay quietly in his boat, "blinking upon the infinite picture of sky and sea", as if nothing had happened. One possible explanation for the luck is that as Jews in exile, although they were going through a waiting period in Shanghai or elsewhere where their future fate was uncertain, they were not in imminent danger of survival compared to Jews who had already been persecuted or were facing persecution. Another explanation is that Tonn is promoting a positive mindset in the face of an unchangeable fate: to simply to exist is to be lucky.

Although Taoism is not explicitly referenced in the story, Tonn weaves a narrative structure that explores the relationship between fate and nature and their philosophical implications, which are central to Taoist thought. Additionally, Tonn uses the allegorical story, which is set in a Chinese context, to reflect his belief that the fate of the Jewish civilization is intertwined with that of Chinese civilization. This thematic approach, as well as Tonn's theoretical writings, underscores the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate cultural and philosophical traditions.

In his article, Li Weijia argues that "Tonn's invention of Chinese tales resonates with Buber's idea of Jewish renewal and thus provides a unique case of German-Jewish writings on China, a paradigm of the German-Jewish-Chinese discourse reflected in literature".³⁹⁰ Li arrived at this conclusion by analyzing the narrative of the story, particularly the mythical elements, which are common in literature of different cultures, including European and Japanese, in addition to Chinese ones. His analysis is from a cultural synthesis as well as a transtextual perspective. While Li's literary analysis provides an insightful understanding of the story, because he only focuses on this single story by Tonn and doesn't relate it to Tonn's other texts on Jewish culture and identity, he is not able to point to a closer connection between the argument he makes and Tonn's theories on Jewish culture and identity.

The most crucial point is the key role of *Tao* in Tonn's own idea of "Jewish renewal", which is not a simple reflection or replica of Buber's idea. Although Li in his analysis briefly mentions that Tonn's story "invites a Taoist interpretation", he doesn't delve into *Tao*'s role in the story or how it relates to Tonn's perception of Jewish culture and identity.³⁹¹ Through a

³⁹⁰ Li, *Synthesis and Transtextuality*, 149.

³⁹¹ Li, *Synthesis and Transtextuality*, 143.

combination of Tonn's theory and Li's textual analysis it can be argued that the idea of *Tao* is fundamental to Tonn's view of "Jewish renewal" in both religious and philosophical dimensions. *Tao* appears either directly or indirectly in Tonn's literary works, and his cultural synthesis is the technical response of his theory in literary expression.

Conclusion

In the study of the profound religious or philosophical significance of Taoism and Judaism, or in the study of a more comprehensive theory of Jewish renewal grounded in the culture of the Orient, Martin Buber is a more prestigious name than Tonn. As a contemporary Jewish philosopher, Buber's theoretical depth and comprehensiveness regarding the relationship between Judaism and the East, or between Taoism and Judaism, and the richness of his texts are beyond Tonn's comparison. In the literary realm, Tonn's limited short stories are far less influential than those of other writers, even within a smaller circle of Jewish writers exploring the possibilities of the Orient. For example, Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945), in her work *Die Nächte der Tino von Bagdad* [The Nights of Tino from Bagdad] (1907), used the Orient as a template for reconceptualizing Jewish identity, and has received more attention and research from scholars. If the attempts of Jewish thinkers and writers to look to the East for a different cultural identity and possibilities for Jewish renewal is a strategy for survival in a time of crisis, what makes Tonn special is that he is a personal experience of the whole crisis, as a creator, a user, and a transmitter of the strategy all at once.

When Buber was studying Taoism, he relied on other texts with his philosophical thinking. Tonn's interest in Taoism and Chinese culture, on the other hand, comes from a 10-year experience of exile in addition to the texts. He saw specific expressions of *Tao* in different socio-cultural spheres and likewise the development of Taoist philosophy in social reality

influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism. In other words, as distinct from purely philosophical Taoism, Tonn's understanding of Tao is based on the social reality of the so-called *Sanjiao Heyi* in traditional Chinese society.

In the practice of Jewish identity exploration, Tonn presented an attitude of complete identification with Chinese culture. Through his research on the history of Jews in China, he believes that the earliest Jews may have come to China during the time when Laozi lived. This finding became an important basis for his claim that the concept of *Tao* is most likely derived from the influence of early Jews in China, expressing the same concept of God as in Judaism. At the same time, he suggested that the Confucian ethical system is the equivalent of Moses' teaching in Torah, both of which ultimately promote and pursue humanity and justice, where *Tao* plays the role of a creative concept, much like the symbol of the Star of David in Judaism as a creative symbol.

In his theory, Tonn refuted the Sinophobic accusations of Chinese civilization in the European Orientalist tradition. He considered China's thousands of years of unbroken civilization and cultural traditions as evidence of the important role that Chinese ethical values have played in the survival of the nation. It reflects its sustainability, not a sign of Chinese civilization's stagnation. The affirmation of Chinese civilization is, in fact, an affirmation of the Jewish culture, which Tonn argued is as incessant as Chinese civilization, ultimately because the Jewish value its teachings. Thus, the affirmation of Chinese civilization provides the legitimacy for Tonn's claim to identify with Chinese culture in order to achieve a new Jewish identity. In addition to his theoretical developments, Tonn's Asian Seminar was an important practice in advancing the recognition of Chinese culture and thought among local foreigners in Shanghai at the time.

In the literary field, Tonn's stories are mainly short stories in translation and adaptation. Most of them feature Chinese settings or elements. The main theme of the stories can usually be summarized as a person who survives through hardships with the help of faith or others, mapping the experience of Jews in exile. The concept of *Tao* often appears directly or indirectly in the stories as a symbol of faith, referring to the Jewish faith. Tonn used the concept of *Tao* to constantly reaffirm the important role that faith can play in times of hardship. It can also be said that *Tao* is a symbol of Tonn's survival strategy.

Tonn's storytelling not only involves Chinese elements, but also often incorporates European and other cultural elements. Li Weijia views this as an experiment in cultural synthesis and transtextual writing. When viewed in conjunction with Tonn's theory and the tenets he adhered to in Asian Seminar, it is a technical means of realizing the "promotion of mutual understanding and international cooperation", the "preservation of cultural values",³⁹² as well as his own theory on the Jewish renewal in literary practice.

Overall, Tonn's understanding and application of *Tao* is different from other authors studied in the previous chapter. Although his assertion that *Tao* equals JHWH is highly questionable, it is important to note that under the focus of this dissertation, it is not the concern of this dissertation to determine which religion or culture influenced the creation of Taoism, nor the exact time of the earliest Jewish arrival in China. When he attempted to establish a connection between the Jewish religion and Taoism and thus use it as a starting point for integrating other Chinese cultures and establishing a new identity for the Jews, the active influence of Taoism was already evident. Tonn identifies with *Tao* and assigns a determinative and a symbolic role to it: while *Tao* is the defining concept of the Chinese-Jewish cultural

³⁹² *Ho Reviews Basic Theories of Sun At Asia Seminar Opening.*

similarity, it also symbolizes the Jewish faith and appears in his literature as a symbol of survival strategy.

Conclusion

Due to the necessity of the early Jesuits' missionary work in China, the Confucianism, a school of thought that was used by the imperial government to rule, was the focus of their study of China, thus allowing them to introduce the Christian faith into Chinese society under the guise of Confucianism. They did not have much research on Taoism, which arose almost at the same time as Confucianism. Early Orientalists had a considerable degree of dependence on missionary reports and information, and German Orientalists knew very little about Taoism, especially philosophical Taoism. Compared to Confucianism, Taoism occupied only a relatively short time in the intellectual history of German scholars. By the time the classics of Taoism were introduced into Germany, European colonialism had already developed into imperialism and was gradually moving towards the climax of invasion, annexation, division, and colonization of most of the world. In Said's theory of Orientalism, the knowledge of the Orient acquired by Europeans, or even created based on imagination, was a tool used by Europeans to control, utilize, and exploit the Orient. Thus Europe and the East, or Europe and non-Europe, were in opposition to each other. Europe was the active dominant party, while non-Europe was passive and without agency. For example, Hegel did not take the history and tradition of Chinese culture as his starting point in his observations and commentaries on Confucianism and Taoism, but evaluated them in terms of European value judgments on philosophy and religion. His claim that "es ist das notwendige Schicksal der asiatischen Reiche, den Europäern unterworfen zu sein, und China wird auch einmal diesem Schicksale sich fügen müssen" [it is the necessary fate of the Asian empires to be subjugated to the Europeans, and China will also have to submit to this fate

one day]”,³⁹³ perfectly fits Said’s argument that Orientalism is knowledge in the service of European colonization.

However, applying Saidian Orientalism to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German scholars’ exploration of Taoism reveals its inapplicability. This challenge is not unique to the concerns addressed within this thesis. Susan Marchand’s examination of the German Orientalist tradition illustrates that scholars at various historical junctures primarily approached the study of the Orient through a religious lens. In contrast, Zhang Chunjie’s theory of Transculturality departs from the colonizer-colonized framework rooted in European-dominant perspectives within Orientalism.

Both of these theories introduce fresh viewpoints to Orientalist studies distinct from Said’s paradigm. However, neither Marchand’s nor Zhang’s theories align seamlessly with the analysis of Taoism in Germany undertaken in this thesis.

At the turn of the century, German scholars recognized the distinction between religious Taoism and philosophical Taoism. Their focus zeroed in on the latter. Although early attempts to translate the *Tao Te Ching*, such as Franz Hartmann’s *Theosophie in China: Betrachtungen über das Tao Teh King* and Julius Grill’s *Lao-tszes Buch vom höchsten Wesen und vom höchsten Gut*, initially filtered the Taoist classics through Christian traditions and concepts, subsequent scholars—alongside sinologists—corrected this Eurocentric religious perspective. Hence, the German Orientalist tradition, characterized by its engagement with resolving religious questions, as presented by Marchand, does not find relevance in the topics explored in this thesis.

Regarding Zhang’s concept of transculturality, which has to some extent provided the foundational argument for this thesis and aligns with core concepts such as agency and non-

³⁹³ Hegel, *Werke* 12, 179.

binary perspectives, her theory introduces a fresh vantage point on Orientalism through a non-European lens. In her study, she asserts that non-European cultures have had more than merely passive influences within domains like colonialism and Orientalism, but she does not explicitly define the potential new forms of influence.

Furthermore, Zhang's research offers a perspective shift in the realm of literary analysis. It reorients the pre-existing perception of non-European cultures as passive entities subjected to colonialist literature. Instead, it unveils non-European impacts on European literature during that era, thus furnishing a more holistic understanding of the literature and cultural exchanges from both sides. To draw an analogy, this approach mirrors the study of force interactions in physics: where an action force exists, a corresponding reaction force follows. Zhang's theory parallels an exploration of the often-overlooked reaction force, which has already existed when the action force exerted. Thus, the shift in perspective proposed by Zhang has an important prerequisite, which is that European culture must have a dominant influence on non-European culture.

The concept of active influence, proposed within this thesis, transcends the confines of colonialism's framework. It strives to scrutinize the impact of Chinese Taoist thought on modern German literature without the overshadowing dominance of European influence. This thesis thoroughly dissects the theories and literary works of Hesse, Döblin, Brecht, and Tonn, illuminating how these authors comprehended Taoism and employed it as a lens to contemplate the dilemmas they personally encountered.

Hesse's personal experiences and literary creations bore significant imprints from Chinese culture. His engagement with classical Chinese poetry and his grasp of both Confucianism and Taoism profoundly shaped his worldview. Throughout his theoretical articles

and correspondences with friends, Hesse consistently underscored his acknowledgment of and resonance with Chinese cultural elements.

Initially, Hesse's exploration of Taoist classics was initiated by his father's introduction. Notably, he maintained a friendship and correspondence with Richard Wilhelm, a contemporary sinologist renowned for re-translating many Taoist classics. While Hesse lacked the linguistic prowess to directly access the Chinese source texts, his study of various translations enabled him to cultivate a relatively impartial and accurate comprehension of Taoist philosophical ideas. As his familiarity with Taoism deepened, its influence on his personal life manifested in the gradual integration of its philosophical tenets into Hesse's own belief.

The influence of Taoism is also evident in Hesse's works, not only in literature but also in his articles related to political commentary. Within these works, two concepts consistently occupy a prominent position: the dialectical relationship of the dual aspects within an ever-evolving single entity, and the pursuit of solutions to conflicts by delving into the individual's inner self to avoid external disruptions. In his political commentary pieces, Hesse employs these two concepts as the foundation to expound his understanding and resolution of the post-World War I contradictions between war and peace. Similarly, after World War II, he employs these same concepts to discuss Germany's struggle with nationalism.

In his literary works, Hesse presents the personal psychological challenges arising from the seemingly opposing contradictions between Western science and Eastern spirituality, as proposed by C. G. Jung. If not dealt with properly, these contradictions lead to inner turmoil. Hesse adopts Jung's solution to this issue, which involves detaching oneself from external influences. The way towards inside is Hesse's solution. This inward journey is also a method he uses in *Klingsors Letzter Sommer* to explore aesthetics and personal crises. The aesthetic

predicament emerges from the impact of the new social reality formed during the evolution of European capitalism. This challenge appears irreconcilable, as seen in the works of Mann and Hofmannsthal. However, Hesse, drawing from Taoist principles, proposes potential resolutions to this contradiction. Hesse's personal crisis is epitomized through the protagonist Klingsor, a painter who has experienced the ravages of war. Hesse, as a poet and writer during wartime, grapples with maintaining clarity in that tumultuous era, preserving his identity, and discovering and fulfilling his societal mission. The path inward serves as a solution to this predicament.

In his novel *Die Drei Sprünge des Wang-lun*, Döblin constructs and recreates for his readers a Chinese society that is as realistic and detailed as possible in a way that is not often seen. However, this doesn't imply that he is focused on addressing China's social issues within his work, nor is he attempting to create an encyclopedic representation of Chinese society and culture through fiction. Döblin's distinct approach to representing Chineseness is closely linked to his broader literary objectives. Fundamentally, his novels employ Chinese narratives to map the workers' movement in German society.

Beyond his unique portrayal of Chineseness, Döblin's usage of Taoism in his works is also notable. In contrast to other writers who approach Taoism from a philosophical standpoint, Döblin integrates a substantial portion of religious Taoist tradition into his writing. Religious Taoism, historically directed at the underprivileged segments of Chinese society rather than the educated or ruling class, offers Döblin a distinctive lens through which to depict the marginalized individuals he wants to address. Additionally, the attributes of superstition often associated with religious Taoism can also symbolize facets of Döblin's perspective on the German workers' movement. The concept of Taoism, particularly embodied by *Wu Wei*,

becomes an experimental exploration of the potential future of European workers' movements within the context of Döblin's novel.

One of Brecht's primary concerns, evident in both his literary works and theater theories, revolved around social issues. His concept of the Epic Theater, proposed as an alternative to the traditional Aristotelian theater model, aimed to shift the focus of theater toward social matters. Simultaneously, through the distinct presentation of the Epic Theater, audiences and readers could detach from the disruptions of performance or script, thereby fostering independent contemplation of the issues portrayed in the play.

Although Brecht shared Döblin's social concerns and was influenced to a certain extent by Döblin's ideas, Brecht diverged significantly in his incorporation of Chinese elements and concepts into his works. The play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* appears, based on its title, to delve into Chinese narratives, yet it doesn't directly address any actual aspects of Chinese society. Instead, it presents the social problem of exploitation among human beings, a theme Brecht asserts is relevant everywhere. In this play, Brecht subtly integrates Chinese poetry and philosophical ideas, including Taoism and Confucianism, in ways that aren't immediately apparent. Notably, Brecht refrains from explicitly providing the origin of these elements, aligning with his Epic Theater theory which encourages independent reflection without distractions from non-social-related aspects. Brecht opts to utilize these elements only when they inherently complement the expressive content of his work, without fixating on tangential details like their origin or their context within the source culture. This approach clarifies why Brecht sometimes adapts the borrowed elements and at other times incorporates them unchanged.

Brecht's *Me-ti* serves as another exemplar of his distinctive approach to utilizing Chinese elements. While many writers interested in China tend to concentrate on Chinese philosophical

concepts that find correspondence in their works, Brecht takes a step further by infusing his writing style with a “Chinesized” essence. *Me-ti* embraces a structure encompassing various classical Chinese schools of thought, including Taoist ideas. Stylistically, it comprises an array of independent stories, aphorisms, and dialogues. This mode of writing resonates with the traditional Chinese literary style, almost as if Brecht sought to convey the “truth” of his social commentary to readers in the manner of a sage.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation delves into the utilization of Taoism and Chinese culture by Willy Tonn, a German sinologist in exile. Tonn, basing his argument on his historical research on Jews in China, and using Laozi’s expression “Yi, Xi, Wei” for *Tao* as a starting point, equates the concept of *Tao* with the Jewish notion of JHWH, thus establishing the foundation for the identification of Jewish culture with Chinese culture. This equivalence becomes pivotal for intertwining Jewish culture with Chinese cultural threads. Building upon this premise, Tonn investigates the manifestation of the *Tao* concept across various domains of Chinese culture, seeking to demonstrate parallels with Jewish culture.

While Tonn’s proposition of a connection between Judaism and Taoism, or the potential early influence of Jewish culture on Taoism, presents a daring hypothesis that invites numerous questions, it’s essential to acknowledge that Taoism actively influenced the formation and development of Tonn’s theory. The alignment Tonn proposes between *Tao* and JHWH serves as the foundational cornerstone of his theory. In addition to Taoism, he enriches and refines his theory through Confucianism. Tonn draws parallels between Confucian and moral principles and Moses’ teachings in the Torah, contending that both emphasize the pursuit of humanity and justice. Within this assertion, Tonn doesn’t overlook *Tao*, which he regards as the primordial driving force, akin to the Creator in Jewish faith, initiating all existence.

Tonn's literary *oeuvre* primarily comprises short stories published in newspapers, and they extensively incorporate Chinese elements and settings. A recurring theme in many of these stories is the protagonist's encounter with extreme adversity and the ensuing struggle for survival. Ultimately, the character overcomes these challenges, often through faith or assistance from benevolent individuals. This narrative motif alludes to the existential peril faced by European Jews during the era of Nazi Germany. Some survived due to the help extended to them, like Tonn and other Jews who found refuge in China. The faith portrayed in these stories resonates with faith in *Tao*, whether conveyed directly or indirectly in his works. Given Tonn's equation of *Tao* with JHWH, faith in *Tao* effectively represents his expression of the Jewish faith. Consequently, *Tao* becomes a symbol of survival strategy within his literary corpus.

The authors under scrutiny in this dissertation were not motivated by a desire to exploit Taoism as a means of controlling or dominating the East. Instead, their engagement with Taoism stemmed from a genuine exploration of its distinctive philosophies. They assimilated Taoist concepts into their studies with the intention of gleaning insights that could address the cultural, social, and spiritual quandaries they confronted. Hesse's example showcases the transformative potential of Taoism as a spiritual renewing force. Döblin constructs a narrative of German society in a Chinese context, exploring the plight of the underclass and the way of liberation through the concept of *Tao*. Brecht, using the Epic Theater theory, aimed to prompt the audience to independently contemplate social issues from fresh angles. In certain works, Taoist ideas seamlessly align with the societal themes embedded in his plays, becoming an integral part of the narrative. Tonn's research establishes a link between *Tao* and Jewish culture, introducing novel dimensions to Jewish identity and strategies for survival. Taoism, in each writer's endeavor,

independently of the colonial context or the Saidian theory of Orientalism, has demonstrate its active influence.

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