

THE DAO OF ECOLOGY

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It has become a commonplace of environmental discourse to attribute to religion a special, even unique, responsibility for the current environmental crisis. For example, Ken Coghill in the Introduction to the book he edited, *Greenhouse: what is to be done?*, states boldly:

A number of major religions grant humans absolute mastery over Nature, implying a right to use natural resources without regard to any effects this might have and overlooking the possibility of indirect adverse impacts on humans themselves. For such belief systems the concept of humans as an integral part of the ecosystem is not just foreign but anathema¹

Coghill does not specify which major religions he has in mind. Yet, any variant of theism seems to entail that God not man is the absolute master, and that man's role must be at most one of stewardship, or responsibility for the natural world, not 'absolute mastery'. Furthermore non overtly theistic religious systems, such as the Chinese, usually, perhaps invariably, do see humans as an integral part of the ecosystem, as we shall see.

I presume Coghill has in mind Lynn White Jr's 1967 polemic, 'The Historic Roots of our Ecologic Crisis'², in which Christianity is blamed for an enduring anthropocentrism, an unworldly insensitivity to the rights of non-human beings and an exploitative attitude to the environment. Whatever the truth of these claims - and on the whole I agree with recent writers within my own Catholic tradition, such as Sean McDonagh and Paul Collins who are with us today, that they have some justification³ - I also believe that they are overstated, and relate to specific strains within Christianity, and to misappropriations and ideologisations, rather than being intrinsic to Christianity or to religious worldviews. The White thesis has persisted despite frequent and devastating criticism. John Passmore showed the Greek philosophical rather than Christian religious roots of European notions of human mastery

¹Leichhardt, NSW (Pluto Press) 1990, p.viii.

²*Science* 155 (1967), pp.1203-7. It is noteworthy that White saw no solutions in Asian thought, specifically Zen Buddhism, because it was embedded in Asian history and hence he was 'dubious of its viability among us', but rather looked to a revitalised Christianity. Needless to say I reject such arbitrary dichotomies. However, romantic and physical misreadings of Chinese ideas such as Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics* (London, Fontana Collins, 1976) are a warning against premature 'lumping' of Western and Eastern systems of thought.

³S. McDonagh, *The Greening of the Church*, Maryknoll, N.Y. (Orbis) 1990, and P. Collins, *God's Earth: Religion as if Matter really Mattered*, Melbourne (Dove) 1995.

over nature.⁴ Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World*⁵ has well demonstrated the non-religious factors that have devastated the English countryside and the counter-weight of Christian values in slowing and in some cases preventing such changes.

Further, I would argue that religion, or better religions, are a key to survival. The most devastated ecosystems I have personally experienced have been in secularist anti-religious societies, such as the former Soviet Union, East Germany and the People's Republic of China⁶. The emphasis on the financial bottom line and on short-term profit in the West in recent times can only be countered by some sort of holistic vision; and religions, while not having exclusive claims here, do usually have a coherence, an organisation and practices apt to energise and sustain a counter-culture.

When Johan Galtung, the Norwegian peace studies theorist, was in Australia some years ago, he argued that religion was both part of the problem and essential to its solution. This is as true of the ecological crisis as it is of the crisis of violence and oppression. But what kind of religion? The danger seems to lie not in the belief in extra-mundane powers but in the religious conceptions of human relationships with the other beings which inhabit their world.

It is here that the Chinese religious traditions, especially those centering on the notion of Dao⁷, 'the Way', have a potential for escape from Western anthropocentrism. Arne Naess has invoked Daoism in his deep ecological vision, 'Ecosophy T'⁸, and had earlier been interested in Chinese philosophy⁹, as had Thomas Berry, before (I would suggest partly as a cause of) his late career turning to ecotheology.¹⁰

It has often been observed, especially by the great historian of Chinese culture and science, Joseph Needham, that the Chinese worldview is organicist.¹¹ Holism, the interconnectedness of all beings, the world as in unceasing transformation, are constant themes in all major Chinese philosophico/religious systems.¹² Human existence in such systems cannot be

⁴*Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, London (Duckworth) 1974.

⁵K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, Penguin Books, 1984.

⁶On the last, see Ouyang Kang and Steven Havercamp, 'China's Environmental Puzzle: Theory and Practice' in D. Vajpey, ed., *Modernizing China*, Leiden (Brill) 1994, pp.29-45.

⁷Throughout this paper I will use the more recent Pinyin romanization system; so *Dao* rather than the more familiar *Tao*, Laozi rather than Lao-tzu, Zhuangzi not Chuang-tzu.

⁸See a useful summary in Appendix A to B.Devall and G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, Salt Lake City (Peregrine Smith Books) 1985.

⁹See, for example, the work he edited with Alastair Hannay, *Invitation to Chinese Philosophy*, Oslo (Universitetsforlaget) 1972.

¹⁰v. *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco (Sierra Club Books)1988.

¹¹*Science and Civilization in China*, vol.2, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1956, esp. pp.281, 286-7, 592. cf. Derk Bodde's critique in *Chinese Thought, Society and Science*, Honolulu (University of Hawaii Press) pp.345-55. Needham himself uses the term 'philosophy or organism' but 'organism' seems to me too ambiguous and Bodde's translation to 'Chinese cosmological organicism' (p.346) linguistically more accurate.

¹²For purposes of this paper I will use the generic term 'religion', a Western category with no counterpart in Chinese until modern times. The Chinese terms *jiao*, 'tradition', and *chia*, 'family' or 'sect' embrace what in

removed from a total context of animate and inanimate, sensate and insensate being, even if some more than others emphasise a 'vertical' relationship to a transcendent source such as Heaven [*Tian*]. In this paper I will focus on Daoism and Confucianism among the 'great' Chinese traditions, leaving aside the characteristically 'Chinese' developments in Chinese Buddhism and Chinese Christianity and Islam; and for reasons of space, I cannot begin to explore the lush jungle of Chinese popular religion.

Let us begin with Daoism, and with the Daoist founding fathers, Laozi and Zhuangzi. Since Laozi and the *Dao De Jing* are more familiar to most people, I will focus on my favourite philosopher, the mercurial visionary, Zhuangzi.

The world, for Zhuangzi,¹³ is an unpredictable place, full of change, variety, paradox; but, to the one who attunes himself/herself to its vagaries, patterns emerge, and an unmistakable but ineffable underlying presence, the Dao. Such a reality cannot be expressed in any but metaphorical language and the *Zhuangzi* abounds in powerful images for the Dao and its action, beginning with its opening scene where a gigantic fish broods in the northern seas only to be transformed into a bird with a wingspan of thousands of kilometres; it flies south, darkening the land.¹⁴ We are immediately introduced to a world of marvellous natural processes, inexorable transformations, dwarfing human beings and reducing them to awe and conformity to those processes. And we humans are like the quail who sees the great shadow passing over and laughs at it in his arrogance and incomprehension.¹⁵

Early in the second chapter another image of nature is developed, that of the world as a wind instrument playing tunes as the world breath pervades it. Ziqi, lost in contemplation, rebukes his companion, Yancheng Ziyu: 'You hear the piping of men, but you haven't heard the piping of the earth. Or if you've heard the piping of earth, you haven't heard the piping of Heaven'.¹⁶ 'The piping of Heaven' is later explained by Ziqi as 'Blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself - all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?'¹⁷

Western traditions would be called both 'religion' and 'philosophy'. In any case, both imply basic and ultimate worldviews, with an element of transcendence, thus fulfilling modern broad definitions of religion.

¹³I will mostly restrict myself to the so-called inner chapters of the book, *Zhuangzi*, those commonly attributed to Zhuang Zhou, "Master Zhuang" [Zhuang-zi] himself.

¹⁴v. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson, New York (Columbia University Press) 1968 [henceforth Watson], pp.29-30. cf. A.C.Graham, trans. *Chuang-tzu: the Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book, Chuang-tzu*, London (George Allen & Unwin) 1981 [henceforth Graham] .pp.43-4. It is usually advisable to use these two major translations in tandem, Watson's being the more readable, Graham's the more accurate and philosophically sophisticated.

¹⁵Watson, p.31, Graham, p.44.

¹⁶Watson, p.36 cf. Graham, p.48.

¹⁷Watson, p.37 cf. Graham, p.49. I agree with Watson's note that the reference is to 'the natural and spontaneous functioning of earth and man' rather than Graham's farfetched claim that it is a resolution of 'the conflicting utterances of philosophers'. A theistic interpretation of Heaven here is, however, equally plausible. See the commentary by Claude Larre S.J. and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée in *Flutes et Champignons*, Paris (Institut Ricci) n.d.

Another of Zhuangzi's fables with important ecological lessons is the story of Chaos at the end of the seventh chapter. The Emperor of the North Sea, Fast, and the Emperor of the North Sea, Furious, are entertained by Chaos, Emperor of the Centre. Fast and Furious¹⁸ decide to repay his hospitality by boring holes in him so that, like humans, he can see, hear, eat and breathe. 'Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day, Chaos died.'¹⁹ The moral seems to be that boring holes in natural Chaos to humanise the landscape is the death of nature - a parable very relevant to the modern mining industry!

The Dao is everywhere but so common that we overlook it. Zhuangzi in typical fashion literally rubs our nose in it:

Master Dong Guo asked Zhuangzi, 'This thing called the Dao, where is it? Zhuangzi said: 'There is nowhere where it is not'. Master Dong Guo said: 'I can't allow that unless you are more specific'. Zhuangzi said: 'It's in the grasshoppers and ants'. 'What, something as low as that?' 'It's in the weeds!' 'That's lower still!' 'It's in the rubbish heap!' 'What, even lower still?' 'It's in piss and shit!' Master Dong Guo had no answer.²⁰

Again there is an immediate application to our world: that garbage disposal and sewage are as important as native forests and landscape for ecological wholeness.

The Dao is in constant flux and human beings are involved in this flux. Death is simply yet another transformation. In Ch.6 Zhuangzi tells the story of the Daoist Master Li visiting his colleague Master Lai who is ill and close to death. Li chases away Lai's wife and children from the deathbed and says: 'Shoosh! Out of the way! Don't hold back the transformation!' Then he leans against the doorpost and says:

How marvellous are the processes of creation and change? What are they going to turn you into now? Where are you going to end up this time? Will you become a rat's liver? Or will it be an insect's leg? A child has a father and mother who tell it to go east, west, north, south and they have only to command and it obeys. But for us humans the Yin and the Yang are more than father and mother. When they touch us, we die, and if we do not heed them, we are just being perverse. How can we blame them.²¹

¹⁸I use Graham's ironic, if somewhat forced, translation of the names.

¹⁹Watson, p.97 cf. Graham, p.98. See also the extended meditation on this passage in N.J.Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Daoism: the Theme of Chaos (hun-tun)*, Berkeley (University of California Press) 1983.

²⁰Ch.22, My translation from Chen Xiyong ed., *Zhuangzi Jinzhu Jinshi*, 2nd. ed., Taipei (Commercial Press) 1977, vol.1, pp.627-8, cf. Watson, pp.240-1; Graham, p.161.

²¹Again my translation from Chen, vol.1, p.209; cf. Watson, p.85, Graham, pp.88-9. Compare the better known story of the death of Zhuangzi's wife in ch.17 (Watson, pp.191-2; Graham, pp.123-4.

The Yin and the Yang are of course the classic expressions of the cyclicity of natural processes, common to all traditional Chinese thinkers.²² But note that human beings are not exempt from their actions, although they may reflect on them and even enjoy them.

Zhuangzi extols simplicity. Not just the simplicity of life, the Greenie8 paradise such as Laozi presents in his second last chapter²³, but something even more fundamental. Zhuangzi accuses Confucius of destroying the world by destroying its simplicity.²⁴ His enemy is 'the machine mind'²⁵, not machines per se but the mentality they develop.

For the Daoist, ecodisaster looms whenever we think we can control or tame nature. 'Heaven and earth', says Laozi in D.C.Lau's brilliant translation, 'are ruthless, and treat the myriad creatures like straw dogs; the sage is ruthless, and treats the people as straw dogs'.²⁶ Anyone who tries to change the course of nature will, to change the metaphor, be run over and crushed by it, and those who understand this do not allow human considerations to divert them. There is more than a little ecofascism in Zhuangzi!

But what is this Dao? It is not the equivalent of Nature in Western thought, although it does have something of the *Natura Naturans* of medieval European philosophy and Zhuangzi often reminds me of my favourite medieval philosopher, the Twelfth Century Bernardus Silvestris (Bernard the Greenie?) whose *Cosmographia*²⁷ is a brilliant hymn to the seasonal transformations of nature, and, incidentally, a rebuke to Lynn White Jr.'s facile identification of Christianity with Puritan individualism.

Nor is the Dao God, although I believe there is a shadowy theism in Zhuangzi at least in the form of Heaven²⁸ and the One,²⁹ and perhaps in Laozi's 'Nothingness'³⁰ which lie beyond and behind the Dao. It has something of the Platonic Demiurge, an intermediary creative and directive force in the universe.

²²v. A.C.Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, Singapore (Institute of East Asian Philosophies) 1986.

²³Ch.80 in the received text: it is Ch.70 in the Mawangdui version. All future references are to the standard chapter numbers.

²⁴Ch.13 (Watson 149, 152-3 cf.Graham 139-40). Lao-tzu to Confucius:'Do you really want to keep the world from losing its simplicity?'

²⁵Ch.12. Watson, p.134 cf.Graham, pp.186-7.

²⁶*Dao De Jing*, Ch.5 . For D.C.Lau's translation, see his Penguin Classics *Tao Te Ching* or better, *Tao Te Ching*, Chinese Classics series, Hong Kong (Chinese University Press) 1989 which has Chinese text for both ancient versions with translation. The 'straw dogs' were ritual paraphernalia thrown away and burnt after the sacrifice.

²⁷*Cosmographia*, trans. W. Wetherbee, New York (Columbia University Press) 1973.

²⁸v. *Dao De Jing*, chs. 59, 70, 77.

²⁹*Dao De Jing*, ch.42.

³⁰*Wu*, 'nothing', 'nothingness' or 'non-being' makes an enigmatic appearance in the *Dao De Jing*, ch.11, to be made the key concept in the elaboration of Daoist metaphysics by the early commentators. v. A. Chan, *Two Visions of the Way: a Study of the Wang Pi and the Ho-shang Kung Commentaries on the Lao-tzu*, Albany (SUNY Press) 1991.

There are, however, remarkable coincidences between the Dao of Zhuangzi, Laozi and later Daoist cosmological theory and James Lovelock's Gaia theory.³¹ The Dao like Gaia is immanent, self-correcting, amoral, giving purpose and direction but by no means certainty to the relationship of human beings with the world. It is not in itself a religious concept but neither is it incompatible with religion.³² I am not endorsing Gaia theory which is open to much criticism on both scientific and philosophical grounds, especially its personalising of Mother Earth, but I merely note here Lovelock's emphasis on a prior 'presence' determining the fate of life on earth in contrast to the 'conventional wisdom which held that life adapted to the planetary conditions as it and they evolved their separate ways'.³³

Popular Daoism is, of course, overtly religious with a proliferation of gods, rituals, moral precepts and practices ranging from divination of the forces of nature operating in a specific place (*Fengshui*) to the 'art of the bedroom'.³⁴ Particularly interesting in relation to our theme is the great Daoist *Jiao* ritual, which Michael Saso calls 'The Rite of Cosmic Renewal'³⁵. In this ritual, common in Taiwan and recently restored in many parts of the P.R.C. a map or model of the universe is constructed in a public space, usually a temple, and Daoist priests over several days ritually renew each part of it. It is a religious and ritual expression of the Daoist worldview.

Confucianism, by contrast seems both more human-centred and unconcerned with the environment. Confucius himself was focused on human relationship and society, good government and ethical and ritual norms. There is a reference in the *Lun Yu* ('Sayings of Confucius') that would not endear him to animal rights activists: 'The [ducal] stables caught fire. Confucius rushed out of the audience hall and said: "Have any people been hurt?". He did not ask about the horses.'³⁶ On the other hand, he deplored elaborate cages for animals³⁷ and, we are told, always fished with a hook not a net, and when hunting refused to fire arrows at sitting targets.³⁸

³¹J.E. Lovelock, *Gaia: a New Look at Life on Earth*, Oxford (Oxford University Press) 1979.

³²cf. Rosemary Ruether, *Gaia and God: an Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, San Francisco (Harper Collins) 1992. Ruether rejects the feminist divinising of Gaia: 'I believe that merely replacing a male transcendent deity with an immanent female one is an insufficient answer to the "god-problem"' (p.4)

³³In the definition of 'Gaia Hypothesis', *Gaia*, p.152.

³⁴The best path through this jungle is Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, Berkeley (University of California Press) 1993. The misleading view of Daoism as purely philosophical, based on Laozi and Zhuangzi, has been redressed by the recent work of Livia Kohn (especially *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Early Taoist tradition*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1992) and the availability in English of other early Daoist texts (e.g. S. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997).

³⁵M.Saso, *Taoism and the Rite of Cosmic Renewal*, Pullman, Washington (Washington State University Press) 1972.

³⁶*Lun Yu*, 10:17 (my translation here and below)

³⁷*Lun Yu*, 5:18

³⁸*Lun Yu*, 7:27

Perhaps the most neglected passage in the *Lun Yu* is one which reveals far greater affinities with Daoism than is usually acknowledged.³⁹ Confucius asks his disciples what they would most like in the world. They reply each according to his temperament and ambitions, and to their respective understanding of the Master's principles - to save the state in crisis, to be a great reforming prime minister, to be master of ceremonies at the royal court. Then he turns to his favourite:

'Dian, what about you?' Dian, who was engaged in playing the lute, paused and put aside the instrument which was still sounding, and replied: 'I have a different opinion to my three colleagues'. The Master said: 'There's no harm in that. I want each of you to say what you really wish for.' Dian said: 'On a fine Spring day, wearing light Spring clothing, I would like to go with five or six men and six or seven boys to bathe in the river, enjoy the breeze at the Altar of the Rain God, and in the evening return home singing.' The Master replied with a sigh, 'I agree with Dian'.⁴⁰

This Confucius gives no comfort to the economic rationalists, despite the attempts of East Asian governments today to coopt him. 'A truly human person is not a tool', he said.⁴¹ I find something almost obscene in the invocation of Confucian values to defend acts of ecobarbarism such as the Three Gorges project. Human beings are in China today regarded as expendable tools, and many a Rain Altar is to be destroyed by Premier Li Peng's grandiose ambitions.

Mencius, the most acute of early Confucian thinkers, did give some attention to environmental issues. In a famous passage he deplored the fate of Ox Mountain, the vegetation of which had been stripped by wood cutting and over grazing: 'That is why it is stripped so bare. People see its bareness and thoughtlessly conclude it never had any trees on it, but is this the nature of mountains?'⁴² Admittedly, Mencius characteristically goes on to draw a moral analogy not an ecological directive. His concern is with the effect on people, not the environment for its own sake. I would suggest, however, that Confucian humanism, or any other form of humanism for that matter, is not necessarily incompatible with ecological sensitivity. The issue is what constitutes the human, whether the individual human being is an isolate, a self-sufficient end, or part of a greater whole. 'True humanism', to use Jacques Maritain's term⁴³, involves relationship, including relationship to the creator and hence creation. We are all, inevitably, 'speceist' in the sense of being restricted to our human consciousness, but not necessarily to the detriment of other species.⁴⁴

³⁹See my 'Was Confucius a Taoist?', *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 22/23 (1990-1991), pp.146-155.

⁴⁰*Lun Yu* 11:25

⁴¹*Lun Yu*, 2:12

⁴²*Mencius*, 6A:8 (my translation)

⁴³J. Maritain, *True Humanism*, 1941, reprint Westport, Conn. (Greenwood press) 1970.

⁴⁴The major error Peter Singer makes in his influential definition of 'speceism' is, in my view, to couple concern with the interests of one's own species with bias against members of other species v. *Animal Liberation*, London (Paladin) 1977, p.26.

State Confucianism as it developed in the early Chinese Empire, drawing on fairly spurious classical sources and Han cosmology, focused on the person of the Emperor, who both symbolised and guaranteed the harmony of the universe. Archaising Confucian theorists claimed that the ancient kings had lived in special microcosmic palaces, so-called Halls of Light (*Ming Tang*), with rooms for each season of the year and special days of the month, to enable them to perform their major imperial function of preserving natural as well as human order.⁴⁵

When we turn to the so-called Neo-Confucianism - the Chinese term for it is significantly *Dao Xue*, 'the Study of the Dao' - we find that under the influence of Daoist and Buddhist metaphysics, the Confucians of the Eleventh and later centuries developed a complete system of the universe based on an all pervading Principle (*li*) which embraced all reality. Admittedly, human reality is still privileged since mind (*xin*) or 'mind-and-heart' to use W.T. de Bary's translation⁴⁶ is the highest expression of Principle, but human beings are not radically separated from other beings. Spirit and matter, creator and created form an undifferentiated whole.⁴⁷

This concept was given classic expression by one of the founders of Dao Xue, Zhang Zai (1020-1077). A text he wrote on the western wall of his study, the so-called 'Western Inscription' begins:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.⁴⁸

And Zhang goes on to prescribe responsibility and concern for the whole universe as a moral duty incumbent on all human persons.

The later Confucian theorist Wang Yangming (1472-1529) takes a similar position in his commentary on the early Confucian text, *The Great Learning*.

When I truly form one body with [all humanity], then the clear character of brotherly respect will be manifested. Everything from ruler, minister, husband, wife, and friends to mountains, rivers, spiritual beings, birds, animals and plants should be truly loved in order to realize my humanity that forms one body with them....⁴⁹

And Wang answers the objection that we can feel compassion for other human beings, and perhaps other sentient beings, but not plants and stones by insisting that as a matter of fact

⁴⁵ W.E. Soothill, *The Hall of Light: a Study of Early Chinese Kingship*, London (Lutterworth) 1951.

⁴⁶ See, for example, W.T. de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart*, New York (Columbia University Press) 1981.

⁴⁷ For an excellent exposition of the metaphysics of Neo-Confucianism as it relates to the environment, see Tu Wei-ming, 'The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature', in J. Callicott and R. Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, Albany (SUNY Press) 1989, pp.67-78.

⁴⁸ Translation by Wing-tsit Chan in his *A Source Book in Western Philosophy*, Princeton, New Jersey (Princeton University Press) 1963, p.497.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.661.

we do feel concern when plants are destroyed or tiles or stones broken. Our 'Heaven-sent nature' must tell us that humanity forms one body with all.⁵⁰

We must not idealize Confucianism since historically Confucian officials and their families have been instrumental in many forms of oppression and at times also environmental vandalism despite Confucianism's anti-profit values and concern for cosmic harmony. There is more than a little cant as well as some truth in a comment in 1989 by a leading Chinese official at a conference in Beijing on Confucianism:

As is known to all, the idea of harmony is an important component of the Chinese traditional culture. As early as in the last years of the West Zhou dynasty three thousand years ago, ancient scholars elucidated the brilliant idea of 'harmony and prosperity'. Later Confucius and the Confucian school put forward the proposition of 'Harmony above all', and established theories on the coordination of interpersonal relations, the protection of the natural environment, and the maintenance of ecological balance. These thoughts not only made positive contributions to the prosperity of ancient Chinese society, but also have profound practical significance for the survival and development of mankind.⁵¹

The Confucian record was a mixed one with regard to the environment. Buddhist compassion and concern for animals, too, was often joined to a lack of concern for ordinary people based on its doctrine of the illusoriness of everyday reality; and Daoism fed quietism and withdrawal from social concern. Temple building deforested the hills around Chinese cities and Chinese philosophers mostly lived on large estates in a highly artificial rather than 'natural' environment.⁵² However, on the whole, Chinese agriculture and Chinese architecture and landscape use did achieve a balance of sorts, a harmony that is notable compared with many other civilizations, and much of the feeling which brought this about came from China's religious heritage.⁵³ China is a model, not a definitive one, and certainly not one that can easily be transplanted, but one worth pondering by ecological activists.

⁵⁰Ibid., p.660.

⁵¹Gu Mu, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, Chairman of the Economic Committee and Honorary President of the Society of Economic Legislation, quoted in W.T.de Bary, 'The New Confucianism in Beijing', *The American Scholar*, vol.63 (Spring 1995), pp.181-2.

⁵²René Dubois, *A God Within*, New York (Scribner's) 1972, p.160.

⁵³On the complexities and contradictions of the Chinese attitude to nature - proclaiming love for wilderness while cultivating enormous and costly gardens, finding unity with the cosmos by meditation rather than direct experience - see Yi-fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, and Culture*, Washington, D.C. (Shearwater) 1993, pp.127-135.