

## JIXIA MASTERS AND LATER NATURALISTIC THOUGHT

Towards the close of the fourth century BCE the new ruling house of the state of Qi decided to strengthen its prestige by establishing an academy at its capital city of Linzi. This academy, which was located near a gate in the city wall known as the Jixia Gate, was intended to serve as a magnet for intellectual talent that would both redound to the credit of the Qi rulers and also provide them with a promising group of young men from which to recruit government talent. This institution is known as the Jixia Academy, though it was more a neighborhood of “masters” than a school, and it became the intellectual center of early third century China.

Jixia was attractive to learned men of every variety. We do not know precisely how men came to receive appointments there, but it seems likely that all that was needed was that a master and his disciples to find a patron among the patricians of Qi to recommend an appointment to the ruler. If the Qi court deemed such a master worthy of installment among the wise men of Jixia, then he would receive from the ruling house a stipend sufficient for his needs--including his need to house and feed his disciples--and in return he would simply be expected to remain at Jixia, accepting disciples and participating in the ceremonial events of the Academy.

Once the most famous masters of China were assembled at Jixia, young men came there in numbers to select a master and be trained in some tradition that would provide them with a path to employment, fame, or simply intellectual fulfillment.

Among the schools of thought that flourished at Jixia, one group in particular seems to have enjoyed the greatest growth during the third century. This was the group of schools that may be called “naturalisms.” The term “naturalistic schools” covers a broad range of intellectual trends which became prominent at this time, and which continued to flourish after the close of the Classical age.

Some of the ideas associated with naturalism were so powerful that they came to dominate Chinese thought during the centuries immediately following the close of the Classical era; all surviving schools of early thought were reshaped by incorporating elements of these systems. In order to portray naturalism more fully, we will stray beyond the scope of the Classical period in this section, moving from of the first naturalists of the third century BCE to works associated with the early decades of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE).

In the following pages, we will examine several thinkers and short texts illustrative of the progressive development of naturalistic ideas in early China. We will begin with the biography of the man most commonly pictured as the founder of naturalism as a philosophical

school, Zou Yan, a master at Jixia about 300 BCE. This is followed by two brief naturalistic texts that are included in a compendium produced in the state of Qin in the late third century BCE, each offering a portrait of the manner in which the natural world could be conceived as a cosmic framework for ethical meaning. Our survey will end with a discussion of the system devised by Han period Confucians, most notably the foremost thinker of the early Han, Dong Zhongshu, who lived in the second century BCE. In this way, this reading surveys elements of naturalistic thought as they develop over a period of a little under two centuries.

A brief appended text relates not to naturalism per se, but to the context of philosophical discourse at Jixia. It is a primer in the appropriate conduct of students – most likely those at Jixia – providing a window into the lived experience of intellectual learning in early China.

## Zou Yan

Zou Yan 鄒衍, who lived early in the third century B.C., seems to have been the first to combine together two different conceptual sets, which had earlier played important roles in the mantic, or soothsaying, traditions of China. These sets are known as “*yin-yang*” and “the five forces.”

**Yin-yang.** “Yin” and “yang” are fundamental notions of a view of the cosmos which first appears in texts about the fourth century B.C. and comes to have enormous influence in China and elsewhere from then on. Yin and yang were believed in this scheme to be two complementary forces or force-qualities which governed the flux of the universe. The yin force was most clearly manifest in all things that ancient Chinese thinkers associated with the female: softness, darkness, submissiveness, cold, and so forth. Yang was the complementary set of qualities: hardness, light, forcefulness, heat, etc. Yin-yang thinkers tended to hold that while the universe expressed an essential unity which was its original and enduring quality, that unity was never static, it was always manifest as a dynamic interaction of the polarities of yin and yang. These forces alternated in their ascendance: for instance, yin was ascendant in winter and yang in summer. But there existed always in even the most predominant state of yin the seed of yang’s re-ascendance, and vice versa, thus ensuring an eternal dynamic.

**The five forces.** The notions of yin and yang came in the third century to be associated with another set of cosmological ideas. This set is variously known as the five powers or the five forces (the Chinese terms vary; we will use only “five forces”). The concept of the five forces seems to have arisen independently of the notions of yin and yang, but during the late Warring States era they became combined into a single system. Five forces thought had various applications. On the broad cosmological level, it was believed that, like yin and yang, these five forces interacted in a constant dynamic that determined the overall rhythms of existence. For example, during the early spring, the force of wood was in the ascendant; the sprouting of woody plants and a wide range of other natural and astronomical phenomena were explained by the dominance of the force of wood. As the season progressed, however, the power of fire would grow until it dominated. Then in midsummer, earth would become dominant; in autumn metal; in winter water; in spring wood once again. All of the regular phenomena of the natural world and many of those pertaining to the human world could be explained by the resonant power of the alternating forces.

A different use for this model, and one associated with the thinker Zou Yan, pertained to the succession of dynasties. Zou Yan seems to have applied the five power theory to the process of history, which he conceived in terms of dynastic eras. He attempted to explain the process of dynastic change as a transition stage in the revolutions of the five forces. Thus he associated the rise of the Yellow Emperor with the element earth (which, in the five forces system, is correlated with the color yellow); Yu, founder of the Xia, reflected the dominance of wood in his age; the Shang conquest signaled the dominance of metal; the Zhou conquest the ascendance of fire (hence the legend of the fire-crow omen which we encountered in the tale of the Zhou conquest).

It appears from the biography of Zou Yan that appears in the historical text *Shiji* (written about 100 B.C.) that Zou may have begun his career as a Confucian adherent, and made his mark by trying to search for a suitable cosmological model to supplement the anti-metaphysical school to which he belonged. If so, his original training was overwhelmed by the novelty of his ideas, and his role in early Chinese thought is noted solely for his naturalistic contributions.

### ***The Biography of Zou Yan***

There were actually three Masters Zou in the state of Qi. The first was Zou Ji, who rose to high administrative rank through having played the zither for King Wei. He received an estate as Marquis Cheng and the seals of the Prime Minister. Zou Ji preceded Mencius's stay in Qi. Zou Yan came later, after Mencius's time.

Zou Yan recognized that the rulers of his time were becoming increasingly dissolute. They were unable to honor virtue or to follow the lesson of the "Greater Court Odes" to "reform your own person first and then extend it to the black-haired masses."

Zou Yan carefully observed the waxing and waning of the forces of Yin and Yang, and he wrote the texts, "Bizarre Transformations," "End and Renewal," and "The Great Sage," altogether totaling over 100,000 characters. His discussions were vast and unorthodox. He always began from the observation of some small phenomenon and then extrapolated from it to great lengths, until it receded into the boundless.

Zou Yan composed a careful ordering of recent events, and then inferred back to the Yellow Emperor. Basing himself on the records transmitted by scholars, he traced the patterns of flourishing and decay down the ages and correlated them with recorded signs and omens and the various systems of administration. Then extrapolating back into the distant past he

described the time before the birth of heaven and earth, into the misty darkness where origins can be traced no further.

He composed a list of the major mountains and rivers of China, noting the great ravines and the species of birds and beasts. He recorded the plants that flourished in the various soils and waterways, and the types of rare objects and species. Extrapolating from these he spoke of things beyond the seas, where no man can travel to see.

Zou Yan said that ever since the time when heaven and earth were first rent apart, five powers had circulated therein. There existed principles of government for responding to each of the five, and portentous signs that signaled when the appropriate accord was reached.

He believed that the lands which Confucians term the “Central States” [China] in fact occupied only one part of eighty-one in the entire world. He called China the Spirit District of Vermillion Parish. Within the Spirit District of Vermillion Parish there were nine sub-districts, the very same that were first designated by the Emperor Yu, but these were not counted separately in the total of eighty-one. The Spirit District of Vermillion Parish comprised one of nine similar lands, each encircled by a small sea which prevented people, birds, and beasts from crossing from one the other. The set of nine comprised a single continent, and there were altogether nine of these. The whole was circled by a great ocean, beyond which was the horizon where heaven and earth meet.

All of Zou Yan’s teachings were like this. However, if one traced them back to their base, one always found there the values of ren and righteousness, constraint and thrift, the proper conduct of ruler and minister, superior and inferior, and the six types of family relationships. It was only that his ideas spilled over too far from these beginnings.

When kings and lords and grandees of state first learned of Zou’s arts they were struck with awe, and totally won over. But later on, they would find themselves unable to put them into practice.

Master Zou was greatly revered in Qi. He traveled to Wei, where King Hui came out to the suburbs to greet him and personally performed the rites of host and guest. When he traveled to Zhao, Lord Pingyuan walked sideways before him, and bent to brush off Zou’s mat for him.

When he traveled to Yan, King Zhao came out with a broom to sweep his path clean, and requested permission to sit as a disciple among Zou’s followers. The King ordered a residence called the Standing Stone Mansion to be built for Zou and visited there, treating Zou as his teacher.

## Two anonymous texts: *The Cyclical Dao* and *The First Month of Spring*

What follow here are two brief texts that suggest the mix of cosmological and political interests that characterized early naturalistic thought. Both texts are chapters from an eclectic compilation known as *The Almanac of Lord Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), which is traditionally dated to the mid-third century as a product of the western state of Qin, far from Qi and Jixia. The first, “The Cyclical Dao,” presents an overview of the way in which the structure of the universe could be conceived as a context for human political order.

### *The Cyclical Dao*

The Dao of Heaven is cyclical, the Dao of earth is a gridwork. The sage king emulates these; they are the means of setting what is above and below.

What do we mean by ‘the Dao of Heaven is cyclical?’ The pure essence and *qi* alternatively rise and fall, circulating everywhere and repeatedly intermixing, stopping in no place: hence we say that the Dao of Heaven is cyclical.

What do we mean by ‘the Dao of earth is a gridwork?’ The things of the world are of different species and different forms; each type has its allotted office and these do not mutually impinge upon one another, hence we say that the Dao of earth is a gridwork.

If the ruler grasps the cyclical and the ministers dwell within the gridwork, with the cyclical and the grid never changing places, the state will thereupon flourish.

The cycle of day and night is the cyclical Dao; the procession of the moon through the twenty-eight lunar mansions, the house of Zhen [#28] proximate to that of Jiao [#1]: this the cyclical Dao.\* The essence proceeds through the four seasons, first rising then descending, each encountered in accord: this is the cyclical Dao. Things move and sprout up, sprouting they live, living they grow, growing they become large, growing large they mature, maturing they decline, declining they are killed, being killed they are stored up: this is the cyclical Dao.

The *qi* of clouds proceeds westward, always traveling, never ceasing summer or winter; the stream of the waters flows eastwards, never ceasing night and day, the upper reaches never exhausted, the lower reaches never full, the small streams becoming large, the heavy drops becoming light mist: this is the cyclical Dao.

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\*The twenty-eight lunar mansions are an ancient zodiac. The point here concerns the fact that the last gives way to the first, forming the eternity of a ring.

The Yellow Emperor said, “The Lord has no constant place, where he is, thereupon he is not.” This describes his unobstructed movement: it is the cyclical Dao.

People have nine orifices. When one is at the focus, the other eight are vacated; if they are vacant for very long, the body withers. Hence when one responds and then listens, the responding stops; when one listens then looks, the listening stops. If we say that one of these is most pleasurable we do not want to stop long therein. To stop the successive motion is to be destroyed. This is the cyclical Dao.

The One is equal to the most honored:

None knows its source;  
 None knows its font;  
 None knows its beginning;  
 None knows its end;  
 Yet the things of the world take it as their ancestor.  
 The sage kings emulate it  
 To complete their natures,  
 To set what is upright,  
 To issue their ordinances.

The ordinances issue from the mouths of the ruler. The officers in their offices implementing these, night and day never resting, broadly penetrating below, entering the hearts of the people, through to the four quarters, circulating and returning again to the place of the ruler: this is the cyclical Dao. When the orders circulate, the permissible and impermissible, good and not good are all unblocked [from view]. When all are unblocked, the Dao of the ruler penetrates. Hence rulers take ordinances as their destinies and the means by which worth and unworthy, security and danger are determined.

People have a form and four limbs; their ability to employ these is because they are able to be stimulated and be aware of it. If they were to be stimulated but not be aware of it, then they would not be able to employ their bodies and limbs. It is also so of ministers: if they are not stimulated by commands and ordinances they could not be employed. If they are possessed but cannot be employed, it would be better not to have them at all. A ruler should be one who employs that which he does not possess: Shun, Yu, Tang, and Wu were all such rulers.

When the former kings set up high officials, they made sure they fit a gridwork. When they are a grid then their allotments are set and being set they do not conceal one another. Yao and Shun were worthy rulers, and both selected worthies to succeed them, unwilling to pass their thrones on to their sons and grandsons: this is like making sure officials fit a

gridwork when setting them up. The rulers of today's generation wish to pass the throne by heredity to their sons and grandsons without any break, and in setting up officials, they are unable to make them fit a gridwork because they are disordered by personal desires. Why is this? What they wish is distant, and what they know is what is close.

Now, none of the five tones fails to achieve resonance because their allotments have been investigated. Each of the tones, *gong*, *zhi*, *shang*, *yu*, and *jiao*,\* occupies its place and their harmonies are evenly tuned: they never transgress upon one another, and thus there is no encroachment. The worthy rulers' appointments to office are of this nature. Each of the hundred officials occupies his duties and orders his tasks in service to the ruler: in none of these is the ruler unsettled. If one rules a state in this way, no aspect of the state will not profit. If one guards against crises in this way, crises will have no route by means of which to arrive.

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The second text, "The First Month of Spring," is one of a set of twelve chapters, known collectively as "The Monthly Ordinances." They describe in parallel fashion the activities properly suited to a ruler and a state during each month of the year. These chapters, which employ yin-yang and five-forces theories throughout, illustrate the way in which some naturalistic writers relied on these ideas to develop a detailed regulative map of human behavior. This intricacy takes this text (with its companion chapters) well beyond the general ideas of "The Cyclical Dao." (I have not provided detailed annotations for the various types of references in this text; it is its general contour that is of interest.)

### ***The First Month of Spring***

In the first month of spring, the sun is in the constellation Yingshi. The constellation Shen [Orion] reaches the zenith at dusk, the constellation Wei [Scorpio], at dawn. Its cyclical signs are *jia* and *yi*, its divine ruler is Tai Hao, its attendant spirit, Gou Mang. Its creatures are scaly, its musical note *jue*, its pitch-pipe *taicu*, its number 8. Its taste is sour, its smell goatish; its sacrifice is at the inner door for which the spleen of the victim is essential.

The east wind dispels the cold, the hibernating insects and reptiles begin to stir, the fish rise up under the ice where the otter catches them to eat, and the wild geese fly north in season.

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\*The pentatonic scale included these five relative tones.

The Son of Heaven shall live in the apartment on the left side of the Green Bright Hall. He shall ride in a great belled chariot drawn by dark green dragon horses and bearing green flags. He shall wear green robes with pendants of green jade. His food shall be wheat and mutton, his vessels coarse and open to represent a coming forth.

During this month, spring begins. Three days before spring begins, the Grand Astrologer shall report to the Son of Heaven, saying: "On such and such a day spring will begin. The agent of wood is in ascendance." The Son of Heaven shall then fast and purify himself and on the first day in person lead the chief ministers and feudal princes and officials to the eastern suburbs to greet the spring. On his return he shall hold court and bestow rewards upon them. He shall order the three chief ministers to publish abroad his good teachings and to relax the prohibitions of winter, to present awards and bestow alms to all, down to the common people, so that everyone who is deserving shall receive awards and gifts.

He shall order the Grand Astrologer to cherish the laws and publish the ordinances, to observe the sun and moon, the stars and zodiacal signs so that there will be no error in the calculations of their movements and no mistake in their courses, taking as a model the astronomical laws of ancient times.

In this month, on a favorable day, the Son of Heaven shall pray to the Lord on High for abundant harvests. Then, selecting a lucky day, he shall himself bear a plowshare and handle in his carriage, attended by the charioteer and the man-at-arms and, leading the chief ministers, feudal princes, and officials, shall personally plow the Field of the Lord. The Son of Heaven shall plough three furrows, the three chief ministers five, the feudal princes and officials nine. On their return, they shall assemble in the Great Hall where the emperor shall take a chalice and offer it to each of them, saying: "This is wine in recompense for your labors."

In this month the vital force of Heaven descends, the vital force of earth arises; Heaven and earth are in harmony and the grass and trees begin to burgeon.

The ruler shall order the work of fields to begin. He shall order the inspectors of the fields to reside in the lands having an eastern exposure, to repair the borders and boundaries of the fields, to inspect the paths and irrigation ditches, to examine closely the mounts and hills, the slopes and heights and the plains and valleys to determine what lands are good and where the five grains should be sown, and they shall instruct and direct the people. This they must do in person. When the work of the fields has been will begun, with the irrigation ditches traced out correctly beforehand, there will be no confusion later.

In this month, the Chief Director of Music shall be ordered to open school and train the students in dancing.

The rules for sacrifices shall be reviewed and orders given for offerings to the spirits of the mountains, forests, rivers, and lakes, but for these sacrifices no female creature may be spared. It shall be forbidden to cut down trees, to destroy nests, to kill young insects, the younger yet in the womb or new born, or fledgling birds. All young of animals and eggs shall be spared.

Multitudes of people shall not be summoned for any service, nor shall any construction be done on walls or fortifications. All bones and corpses of those who have died by the wayside shall be buried.

In this month it is forbidden to take up arms. He who takes up arms will surely call down Heaven's wrath. Taking up arms means that one may not initiate hostilities, though if attacked he may defend himself.

In all things one must not violate the way of Heaven, nor destroy the principles of earth, nor bring confusion to the laws of man.

If in the first month of spring the ruler carries out proceedings proper to summer, then the wind and rain will not come in season, the grass and trees will soon wither and dry up, and the nations will be in great fear. If he carries out the proceedings proper to autumn, then a great pestilence will strike the people, violent winds and torrential rains will come in abundance, and the weeds of orach and fescue, darnel and southernwood will spring up together. If he carries out the proceedings of winter, the rains and floods will cause great damage, frost and snow will wreak havoc, and the first seeds sown will not sprout.

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## DONG ZHONGSHU AND LATER CONFUCIAN COSMOLOGY

Nowhere is the power of naturalism more evident than in its incorporation into Confucianism. This process probably began during the mid-third century BCE (recall that Zou Yan may have originally been a Confucian master), but did not become the dominant mode of Confucianism until a century later. The individual most often associated with this transformation of Confucianism is a man named Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 179-104), who played an enormous role in the Confucianization of the government of the Han 漢 Dynasty (and of the traditional China of later eras). Although Dong's specific role in the incorporation of naturalistic concepts has recently come into question, and it is now widely suspected that key elements were developed by his later disciples, for the sake of simplicity in this course we will continue to treat Dong as the innovative force behind these changes.

The Han period lies beyond the range of this course, but Dong Zhongshu's ideas and their role in China were, in many respects, the ultimate expression of the philosophy of Zou Yan and form a continuum with it. Therefore it makes sense to consider them here. Before looking at an example of Dong's writings on these subjects, however, we should consider the degree to which naturalistic ideas, and particularly the notion of the five forces, had come to dominate Han thought and society by Dong's time. By the early second century B.C., the theory of the five forces had come to be were applied to a very broad range of phenomena. For example, the five forces were each assigned to a direction and a season (with the sixth month, midsummer, being considered a separate season). This seasonal concept allowed the forces to be correlated with phases of the yin-yang cycle of polar influence as follows:

<b>WOOD</b>	East	Spring	Rising Yang
<b>FIRE</b>	South	Summer	Greater Yang
<b>EARTH</b>	Center	Midsummer	Balanced Yin and Yang
<b>METAL</b>	West	Autumn	Rising Yin
<b>WATER</b>	North	Winter	Greater Yin

With these as starting points, the system that emerged became a grand correlative scheme:

<i>Category</i>	<b>WOOD</b>	<b>FIRE</b>	<b>EARTH</b>	<b>METAL</b>	<b>WATER</b>
<b>colors</b>	green	red	yellow	white	black
<b>astral bodies</b>	stars	sun	earth	constellations	moon
<b>planets</b>	Jupiter	Mars	Saturn	Venus	Mercury
<b>weather</b>	wind	heat	thunder	cold	rain
<b>sense organs</b>	eye	tongue	mouth	nose	ear
<b>emotions</b>	anger	joy	desire	sorrow	fear
<b>organs</b>	spleen	lungs	heart	kidney	liver
<b>tissue</b>	muscles	blood	flesh	skin & hair	bones
<b>tastes</b>	sour	bitter	sweet	acid	salty
<b>smells</b>	goat-like	burning	fragrant	rank	rotting
<b>animals</b>	sheep	fowl	oxen	dogs	pigs
<b>sage rulers</b>	Emperor Yu	King Wen	Yellow Emperor	Emperor Tang	First Emperor
<b>tools</b>	compass	measures	plumb-lines	T-square	balance
<b>numbers</b>	8	7	5	9	6

The list could be extended indefinitely. Musical notes, constellations, government ministries, geographical regions of China, sacrifice locations--all were incorporated into this system.

Now, Dong's integration of such concepts into Confucianism was a response to a specific set of problems that Confucianism faced at the time that he lived. Although we now tend to think of the Han Dynasty as a Confucian era, this was not so when Dong was a young man. Confucianism had been in disfavor since the rise of the Han, and Huang-Lao 皇老, a syncretic philosophy based principally on Legalism and Daoism, was the official philosophy of state. Confucians had suffered many decades of active persecution because they were seen as a potential threat to the legitimacy of the imperial government of China, which had been established in 221 through the Qin conquests of the other feudal states. Dong's adaptation of naturalism to Confucianism was an attempt to capture government support for Confucianism and displace the Huang-Lao ideology.

Dong's opportunity arose in 140 BCE, when an ambitious new ruler became emperor of China. This man, known as Emperor Wu, was young and anxious to remove from his court the many old advisors whom his predecessors had put in place. Dong Zhongshu proposed to Emperor Wu that Confucianism, as a more practical tool of statecraft than Huang-Lao, be made the established philosophy of the Han, and that an entirely new group of Confucian officials be recruited for state service, trained in a newly established Confucian state academy. This proposal fit the new emperor's needs very closely. However, Confucianism, with its long

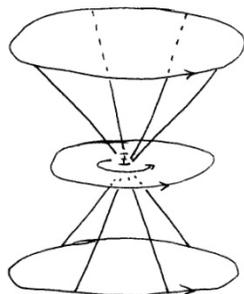
tradition of political independence, was not in itself an attractive option for an emperor bent on autocratic control of the state.

But the naturalistic cosmology that Dong Zhongshu provided for Confucianism made it a far more attractive ideology for imperial patronage. Dong adopted the portrait of a universe governed by the dualism of yin-yang and the rhythm of the five forces. Working to reconcile these with Confucian values of *ren* and righteousness, and the Confucian interests in humane government and the nurturance of a moral population, Dong argued that the patterns of nature, if properly translated into the human sphere, would produce just such ethical regularities. Moreover, Dong adopted a portrait of the cosmos designed to be attractive to any ruler.

Dong pictured the universe as an organically connected composite of three separate realms of existence: the realm of heaven above, the realm of earth below, and the realm of man between them. Heaven and earth possessed natural types of cyclical rhythms, governed by the forces of yin and yang and by the successive influences of the five forces. This natural realm was largely a homeostatic (balanced and self-correcting) system that harmonized a concatenation of rhythms: the day, the month, the seasons, the year, the circuit of Jupiter, and so forth. But this homeostatic system is not an exhaustive portrait of the cosmos, which also includes elements such as the spirits, mankind, and anomalous natural irregularities, such as comets, earthquakes, floods, and so forth. Dong Zhongshu seems to have viewed mankind as a governor preserving the regularities of nature through action that suppressed the eruption of anomalies.

The central regulator of the human sphere was the king, or emperor. The actions of mankind could not hope to accord with natural patterns if each individual invented his or her own guidelines. Instead, over the course of history, sages had traced the appropriate forms of confluence between human and natural patterns, had developed the complex array of everyday life rituals and focal state ceremonies that ensured a proper fit between man and the cosmos. At the center of this system stands the king, who represents the pivot of all human society, the hub of a constantly revolving wheel of action. The directionality of his actions--his ritual observances, his manifestations of character, his policies--synchronizes the action of the entire human realm. If his acts are appropriate, the entire realm will harmonize with nature. If the king deviates from the appropriate path, all human action is distorted and the homeostasis of the cosmos is disturbed.

Dong Zhongshu's model of the harmonious universe can be represented by this diagram, which pictures the realms of heaven, man, and earth in synchronous motion, with the king at the center, his own directional action tied to the operation not only of the human sphere, but of all the lines of force (yin, yang, five elements, spirituality, and so forth) that link the three realms. The character for "king" (王) was, in Dong's view, a representation of this model.



Dong Zhongshu elaborated the role of the ruler in this system at great length. In doing so, Dong was not only currying favor for Confucianism by appealing to Emperor Wu's self-appraisal as the center of the universe. The portrait of the emperor as the center of the cosmos certainly had the potential to exalt his political standing to heights that were semi-divine, but it also had the effect of sharply *constraining* the emperor. Under Dong's system, the ruler had a very extensive set of "cosmic duties" to perform. And in light of the stimulus-response model which pictured the effect of the emperor's actions on the realm of nature, any natural anomaly could be interpreted as a sign of imperial error, thus opening the door to ministerial remonstrance.

We have many texts bearing Dong Zhongshu's name that discuss the role of the ruler in this system. The following excerpt will convey the degree to which Dong revolved his cosmos around the person of the emperor. Note the resonance with the earlier selection from the "Monthly Ordinances," which was a non-Confucian yin-yang text.

Those who in ancient times invented writing drew three lines and connected them through the middle, calling the character "king." The three lines are Heaven, earth, and man, and that which passed through the earth, and man, passing through and joining all three--if he is not a king, who can do this? Thus the king is but the executor of Heaven. He regulates its seasons and brings them to completion. He patterns his actions on its commands and causes the people to follow them. When he would begin some enterprise, he observes its numerical laws. He follow its ways in creating his laws, observes its will, and brings all to rest in *ren*. The highest *ren* rests with Heaven, for Heaven is *ren* itself. It shelters and sustains all creatures. It transforms them and brings them to birth. It nourishes and completed them. Its works never cease; they end and then begin again, and the fruits of all its labors it gives to the service of mankind. He who looks into the will of Heaven must perceive its inexhaustible *ren*. . . .

Only the way of man can form a triad with Heaven. Heaven's will is constantly to love and benefit, its business to nourish and bring to age, and spring and autumn, winter and summer are all the instruments of its will. The will of the king likewise is to love and benefit the world, and his business to bring peace and joy to his time; and his love and hate, his joy and anger, are his instruments. The loves and hates, joys and angers of the king are no more than the spring and summer, autumn and winter of Heaven. It is by mild or cool, hot or cold weather that all things are transformed and brought to fruition. If Heaven puts forth these in the proper season, then the year will be a ripe one; but if the weather is unseasonable, the year will be lean. In the same way if the ruler of men exercises his love and hate, his joy and anger, in accordance with righteousness, then the age will be well governed; but if unrighteously, then and bringing about a ripe year are the same; that the principle behind a chaotic age and a lean year is identical. So we see that the principles of mankind correspond the way of Heaven.

Dong's strategy was successful. Confucianism was adopted as state orthodoxy within a few years. Emperor Wu was able to recruit a new staff of bureaucrats to run his state the way he wished it to be run, and Confucians, employing the omenological ideas of Dong Zhongshu, were able to influence policy and check the ruler's excesses by manipulation the reporting and interpretation of anomalous events in the natural world. (Tendencies strongly subversive of autocracy persisted in Han Confucianism, as exemplified by Han interpretations of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which we will discuss at the end of the course. Dong Zhongshu was, perhaps not paradoxically, a central figure in this subversive facet of Han Confucianism.) In this way, the naturalism of Zou Yan found a permanent home at the center of power in China, alongside Confucianism – although it is likely that neither Confucius nor Zou Yan would have acknowledged this hybrid ideology as his own.

### ***Larger philosophical implications of early naturalism***

Early naturalistic schools in China developed models of the cosmos that differ in important respects from those with which we are more familiar. The universe of the naturalists, from Zou Yan through to Dong Zhongshu, was one that was distinguished by “forces of rhythm and resonance,” rather than the forces that we associate with Newtonian physics.

The operation of yin-yang and the five forces may be analogized on one level to that of a clock. The “times” of the universe are the cyclical alternations of these forces in a regular fashion. Without understanding the astronomical bases of the seasons, the naturalists envisioned a spontaneous law of the rhythmic succession of these forces: the Dao of nature

as a regulator of cosmic intervals. Naturalists, like other Chinese thinkers, were in search of the key to refashioning human society as a self-regulating system, and from this standpoint, they were essentially looking towards what we might call a “law of simultaneity” to guide human action. The clock-like regularities of nature implied for them that the key to order was to reproduce in the human sphere the cycle of nature, and both social *and* earthly order would be produced by aligning the “ticks” of human action with the clock of nature.

But naturalism also employed other analogies and the clock-like picture of the universe was supplemented by others. One of these used music as a governing metaphor, and saw the regularity of nature as the product of a harmony among the “vibrations” of the things of the world, as they were all influenced by basic cosmic forces. The notion that arose from this was that human beings could adjust for imbalances in the universe by “fine-tuning” their behavior to enhance certain resonances while dampening others. The concept of resonance and response endowed the cosmos with a basic principle supporting “action at a distance,” and explaining why the conduct of a king or emperor might influence the motion of planets or comets far away.

Here is a selection of a passage from Dong Zhongshu that exemplifies the portrait of the universe as a resonant system.

If water is poured on level ground, it will avoid the places which are dry and move towards those which are wet. If identical pieces of firewood are exposed to fire, the fire will avoid the damp one and ignite the dry one. All things reject what is different from them and follow what is like them. Thus it is that if two *qi* are similar, they will coalesce, and if notes correspond, they resonate.

The proof of this is very clear in the tuning of instruments. The *gong* or *shang* notes, when struck upon one zither, will be answered by the *gong* or *shang* notes from other stringed instruments, and these will sound of themselves. There is nothing spirit-like about this, it is that the five notes are in certain relation to one another; they correspond to natural numerical regularities.

In a similar way, beautiful things attract others among the class of beautiful things, and ugly things attract others among the class of ugly things. This arises from the manner in which things of the same class are mutually responsive, as they are when a horse whinnies and another horse answers, or a cow lows and another cow replies.

When a great ruler is about to arise, suspicious omens first appear. When a ruler is about to perish, there are baleful omens. . . .

The resonance of the *gong* note on stringed instruments when the *gong* note is struck upon a zither is a case of comparable things being affected by members of the same class. The strings are moved by a sound which has no visible form. When people see no form accompanying such motion and action, they describe the phenomenon as a case of spontaneous sounding. Wherever there is a mutual reaction without anything being visible, they describe the phenomenon as “spontaneous.” But in truth, there is no such thing as the spontaneous. . . . Things have a real causative power, invisible though it may be.

Thus the naturalistic portrait of the world differs in basic ways from the everyday notion of the universe that dominates modern commonsense (though not contemporary physics): the picture of atoms in space governed by “billiard ball” causation. The foremost analyst of the history of Chinese science, Joseph Needham, believes that the naturalism that came to pervade Chinese views of the cosmos from the end of the Classical era on was based upon what he terms an “organismic” understanding of the universe. This notion points towards the way in which these thinkers tended to picture the cosmos as a holistic self-regulating system. When we discuss these issues in class, we will address the underlying general concepts of naturalism by surveying a variety of alternative models of causation that fit aspects of naturalistic cosmology in early China--the billiard ball model not being among them.

### Appendix: “The Role of the Disciple”

The short text appended here is found in a compendium known as the *Guanzi* 管子, or “teachings of Master Guan” – supposedly the writings of the seventh century BCE prime minister of Qi, Guan Zhong (the same text includes “The Inner Enterprise”). The compendium is generally thought to have begun as a collection of texts associated with Jixia masters (though some of its components seem datable to a later era). The *Guanzi* chapter titled, “Role of the Disciple” may be a portrait of expectations for conduct by young men in attendance on Jixia masters.

The teacher expounds the teaching and this is what the student emulates. If the student is affable and respectful, preserving an emptiness of self, he will reach the limit of what may be received thereby. Seeing the good he should follow it; hearing what is right he should submit to it. Affable and pliant, filial and respectful of elders, he should never be arrogant, muscling his way; he should be free of all deviance in his will. His conduct should always be straightforward, he should be regular in the places where he roams and lodges, he should always cleave to the virtuous. His expression should be upright, his inner heart exemplary, rising early and retiring late, his tunic and sash properly adorned. He should increase his knowledge by morning and practice in the evening, painstaking and formal without the slightest indolence: such a one may be said to study the exemplar.

The duties of a student youth: Retiring early and rising early, having swept before his mat and washed his face, he undertakes his tasks earnestly. He brings to his teacher his robes and wash basin and, once his teacher has arisen, he pours his wash water for him and removes the basin after washing. He sprinkles water before sweeping his master's room and straightens his master's mat. Once the teacher has taken his seat, he enters and departs with the greatest respect, as though receiving a guest.\* When seated in humble posture facing his teacher, his aspect is never clouded.

The regulation for receiving instruction is that it should begin with the elder disciple and proceed in sequence once round, then after the order may be free. In recitation disciples rise upon their first response, afterwards they remain seated when reciting.

In all speech and action, the standard should be to aim for the mean. In the past, those who succeeded all began with this. Then came the rules: When the master comes in after the disciples are seated on their mats, those sitting on mats adjoining his rise; when guests come visit the group, disciples rise quickly to attention; when answering guests disciples do not defer to one another, each responds and then swiftly carries out commands; disciples run in to receive the orders of their teacher; though what a disciple is sent to find may not be there, he always returns to report; disciples turn in their seats and repeat their lesson as though doubts remain, clasping the hands to ask questions; when the master goes out, all rise.

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\*Cf. *Analects* 12.2.

At mealtimes when the master is ready to eat, the disciples serve him thus: Carry in the napkin and the basin for washing and rinsing the mouth and offer it kneeling. Place the sauces and pickles and present the main dishes in proper order. Vegetable dishes precede dishes of fowl, meats, fish, or shellfish. Congee and minced meats must be placed separately with the minced meats set before the sauces. Everything must be set in its proper place, with the rice set down last. The wine must be to the left and the sauces to the right. Then announce that all has been served and withdraw by clasping the hands and rising. Replenish the rice bowl with each dish twice and the wine once, holding the pitcher in the left hand and the serving spoon in the right. Serve by circling the table, watching for what has been finished and replenishing the rice bowl with that item; having revolved through the dishes once, resume from the beginning. Never kneel to replenish cup or bowl: this is the rule for second portions.

Once the master has finished the disciples remove the dishes, running rapidly and bringing the basin for rinsing the mouth. Then sweep up before the mat and retain leftovers for sacrificial uses.

On the order of the master, the disciples may eat, serving one another according to their age, each sitting at the front of his mat. Dishes served with steamed grain are eaten with the fingers; congees are not eaten with the hands. Disciples may lean their hands on their knees, but may not place their elbows on the eating table. When they have eaten their fill, they should wipe their mouths and their hands, shake out their napkin cloths and sweep their mats. Having finished eating and arisen, they brush their robes and circle to face their mats. Then each removes his own dishes with the same attentiveness as he would remove a guest's. Once the dishes have been removed and the utensils put away, the disciples return and stand.

The *dao* of sweeping: Fill a pan with water. Roll the sleeves up to the elbow. In the main hall, broadcast the water widely; in the inner chambers, shake it from the fist. Press the dustpan handle to the chest with the broom within. Enter the doorway and stand without any laxness of demeanor, gripping the broom, set the dustpan down leaning against the doorway.

The order of sweeping: Always begin from the "dark corner" in the southwest of the main hall. Whether looking up or down, or bent over double, never let the pan knock against anything. Sweep before you while backing up and collect the dust just inside the doorway. Then sweep it with the broom into the pan with the handle pointed towards you, place the broom in the pan. Sit down to pick up the pan and then stand. Carry the pan outside and discard the dust. Having completed the sweeping, come back in to your place and straighten out your mat.

If at this time the master has arisen from his rest, the disciples await his entry and excuse themselves to go out.

At the time of evening meal, these rituals are repeated with cooperation and care.

At dusk, when time for lighting up arrives, the disciples sit in the corners of the hall with torches. The method of preparing torches is to have the bundles arranged by the mat and, measuring the remaining length of the burning torches, be prepared to use the each expiring torch to light the next. Light the end where the finest kindling is, holding the burning portion down, the old and new torches at right angles to

one another. Then place the burnt remnant in a bowl, the right hand holding the new burning torch and the left making sure the burnt remnant is secure in the bowl. When new torches are brought in, the disciple who brings them disposes of the burnt remnants.

Sit facing the teacher, never turning your back to him. Only when the revered one goes out are the torches removed.

When the master retires, the disciples all stand. They reverently carry to him his pillow and mat and ask which direction he wishes to place the head. This is asked whenever the sleeping area is newly arranged; if there is an established custom it is not.

Once the master has retired, the disciples study in pairs, carving and polishing their mastery, each improving his deportment. When they have reviewed their lessons, they begin again.

Such are the rules of conduct for disciples.