Article

Kong Yingda, Cheng Xuanying, and Their "Others": A Synchronic Contextualization of Visions of the Sage

Friederike Assandri

Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leipzig, 04109 Leipzig, Germany;
friederike_assandri@yahoo.com

Abstract: The early medieval period saw the spread of Buddhism from India into China and the development of Daoism as a religious institution. By the early Tang dynasty, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism were referred to as the three teachings, and had developed separate institutions; representatives of the three teachings were competing at court for patronage and influence. This paper probes the extent to which the institutionalization of these three teachings as separate, often competing, entities is mirrored at the philosophical level and attempts to delineate the fault lines of philosophical contention among them. Scholarship on Daoist *chongxuan* philosophy, as it developed in early Tang Changan, documents Daoists' utilization of Buddhist concepts and terminologies, implying shared discourses. This paper extends this investigation to include Confucianism, focusing on excerpts from two texts written in early seventh-century Changan: the Confucian *Zhouyi zhengyi* and the Daoist *Daode jing yishu*, as a case study for a synchronic contextualization across the boundaries of the teachings. Analyzing explicit demarcation discourses and intertextual occurrences of specific terminologies, the paper juxtaposes the Daoist and Confucian conceptualizations of the "sage who embodies Dao". Through this analysis, the paper explores shared discourses and demarcations in philosophical thought among the three teachings, emphasizing the complexity of fault lines in philosophical arguments, which resist simplistic alignment with sectarian affiliations.

Keywords: *Zhouyi zhengyi*; Kong Yingda; Cheng Xuanying; *Daode jing*; sage; *shengren*; three teachings; Daoism; Confucianism; Tang dynasty

1. Introduction

The early medieval period witnessed the spread of Buddhism from India into China and the development of Daoism as a religious institution. By the early Tang dynasty, the three teachings—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—had become distinct entities with separate institutional backgrounds and were engaged in demarcation debates and competition for the attention of the court. Did this institutional separation also imply that the three teachings developed their respective philosophies diachronically relatively independent from each other? Or were there philosophical dialogues and common discourses across the boundaries of the three teachings?

At first glance, the Confucian exegesis and Daoist religion of the early Tang dynasty seem unrelated. This paper will present a close reading of a few passages that discuss the "sage who embodies Dao" (*tidao* 體道), from the Confucian commentary to the *Book of Changes*, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, and from the *Daode jing yishu* 道德經義疏, a commentary to the *Laozi* by the ordained Daoist Cheng Xuanying, as case studies to explore the possibility of synchronic philosophical discourse or dialogue across the boundaries of the teachings.

Commentaries were one of the most important practices to express philosophy in premodern civilizations in general, and also in China ([Henderson 1991](#), p. 3). Taking commentaries as expressions of philosophy in their own right, a hermeneutic interpretation requires contextualization. A common way to contextualize commentaries to the classics

is to contextualize them diachronically in their own exegetical traditions, which is in line with the emphasis on intellectual lineages, teacher–disciple relations, and the reverence for the classics that characterize the medieval Chinese intellectual environment.

Studies of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* and the *Daode jing yishu* in the context of Confucian and Daoist exegesis in the diachronic perspective indicate, in both cases, a heritage from *xuanxue* 玄學 (see e.g., Qiang 2002a, p. 40ff; Bender 2019).

Xuanxue philosophy emerged long before Buddhism and Daoism had reached the level of institutionalization they would have in the Tang dynasty. *Xuanxue* philosophical discourse was generally not confined within the constructed boundaries of "*ru*" 儒 (Ruist, or Confucian) scholarship, Daoism, or Buddhism (Bender 2019, p. 85). By the early Tang dynasty, instead, the three teachings were firmly established as separate entities (Mou 2023, p. 251). Buddhism and Daoism each had separate monastic institutions and clergies. Confucianism was long since institutionalized in the curriculum of studies of the elite and in civil service (Knapp 2019, pp. 486–93; Lee 2000, pp. 57–77). Members of the three teachings competed against each other for patronage and influence, especially at court.

Did this institutional separation of the three teachings also entail the separate development of philosophical ideas? Where were the fault lines between the three teachings in terms of philosophical discourse? Did they each develop their ideas following their own traditions, or were there shared philosophical discourses across the boundaries of the three teachings?

Studies of early Tang Daoist philosophy show that early Tang Daoists like Cheng Xuanying extensively engaged with Buddhist concepts (see e.g., Cheng 2003; 2006, p. 164f; Assandri 2021b, pp. 9–28; Hong 2020). Particularly in the environments of the courts of the northern and southern dynasties, Buddhism and Daoism had developed in constant interaction and competition. Between the later sixth and seventh centuries, Daoist authors developed a philosophy that employed the logic techniques of Buddhist Madhyamaka in the exegesis of the *Daode jing*. Cheng Xuanying's *Daode jing yishu* is representative for this philosophical trend. A close study of the text (Assandri 2021b) reveals that it not only integrates Madhyamaka logic, but incorporates many other Buddhist concepts. In fact, Daoism of the Sui and early Tang in Changan had incorporated many Buddhist concepts, as the *Benji jing* also shows. The Confucian commentaries to the Five Confucian Classics of the *Wujing zhengyi*, have so far hardly been considered in research on "border-crossing" discourses between the teachings.[1] This paper proposes to include the Confucian *Wujing zhengyi* in the research on the question of interactions among the three teachings, exploring its attitude to Buddhism as well as to Daoism.

To begin this exploration, I propose to add a synchronic approach to the diachronic perspective of contextualization: Arguably, any text can be seen in a broader web of context comprising the diachronic as well as the synchronic dimension. In addition to the task of explaining a classic (which emphasizes the diachronic dimension and exegetical traditions), commentaries might also be intended to show the relevance of the classic text for contemporaneous philosophical interests, current issues, and ongoing discourses (which constitute the synchronic dimension). Elaborating the relevance of a revered classic for contemporaneous discourses might have gained relevance after the reception of Buddhism challenged the traditional intellectual field and brought a vast number of new concepts to China, which needed to be integrated.[2] The high status of the classics made it necessary to engage with new knowledge and conceptions—otherwise the classics might have become obsolete.

In order to explore the possibility of synchronic interaction and shared discourses systematically, I propose an approach combining hermeneutic contextualization, the study of intertextual relations in terms of shared terminologies, and the analysis of the philosophical conceptions in the respective interpretations. Concretely, I will present a case study of close readings of passages with a shared specific expression in texts from the same time and place, belonging to different teachings, with the examples of the Confucian *Zhouyi zhengyi* and the Daoist *Daode jing yishu*.

This approach aims to add to the existing approaches for studying Tang philosophy across the boundaries of the three teachings: Methodologically, the earliest approaches relied on microhistory with the study of individual thinkers, including Buddhists, Daoists, and mid- and late-Tang Confucian thinkers. Such a focus on single thinkers suggested, in many cases, that adherence to one teaching did not preclude engagement with the teachings of the others (Emmerich 1987; Barrett 1992; Hamar 1999; Yu 2000; Cheng 2003; Qiang 2006; Höckelmann 2016; Makeham 2018a; Assandri 2021b). Using a larger framework, studies of Daoist *chongxuanxue* of the sixth and seventh centuries showed how Daoist authors engaged with Buddhist concepts and ideas (Lu 1993, 1997; Yu 2000; Qiang 2002a; Li 2005; Assandri 2009; Cheng 2009; Hong 2020). More recently, scholars developed yet larger frameworks and methodological approaches to overcome the constrictions of the "three teachings" framework in the study of Chinese philosophy. John Makeham (2018a, 2018b) and D'Ambrosio et al. (2018) proposed to study philosophical conceptions diachronically across all three teachings. Ge (2014) proposed to include "common knowledge", as found in almanacs, technical treatises, archival materials, encyclopedias, or literary works, as sources for a more comprehensive reconstruction of intellectual history. Mou (2018, 2023) presented an outline of the history of the relationships between the three teachings from ancient times to the present. None of these approaches so far has focused on early Tang discourses across the three teachings, and none emphasized synchronicity and locality.

2. Context: The Three Teachings at the Imperial Court in Early Tang Dynasty

Xuanxue philosophies and philosophical discourses, which are part of the exegetical traditions of both commentaries discussed in this paper from a diachronic perspective, developed in an environment where the three teachings were not yet fully institutionalized.

However, the situation since the heydays of *xuanxue* had changed in the four centuries of division before the Sui dynasty unified China in 589. Buddhism had permeated all levels of society, including the imperial courts. Daoism had developed from rather disparate lineage-based "communities of practice" (Raz 2012, p. 4) into a more unified and institutionalized religion that reached the elites and the court (Verellen 2019, pp. 217–20). The spread of Buddhism as a foreign teaching entailed lively debates about the demarcation between Buddhist and Chinese teachings, in particular the Confucian teachings.[3] From the fifth century onward, apologetic writings document growing competition between Buddhists and Daoists in the environment of the courts (Schmidt-Glintzer 1976; Kohn 1995; Zürcher 1959, chap. 6). Imperial support became increasingly important to finance monastic institutions for Buddhists and Daoists (Poceski 2017, p. 45; Kohn 2000, p. 92; Bumbacher 2000, p. 431ff). Buddhists and Daoists vied to offer rulers legitimation, ideological support, access to divine assistance, and help with good government, often in return for imperial patronage and material support. The Northern Zhou emperor Wu (r. 543–578) included Confucianism in the competitive setup by organizing public debates among representatives of the three teachings held at court over four years, in 568, 569, 573, and 574. The purported aim was to establish an official ranking of the three teachings (*Zhoushu* 5, pp. 2589c–2590b, *Guang Hongming ji* T 2103, 7, pp. 135c–136b, cf. Assandri 2015, p. 22; Kohn 1995, p. 31; Tang 1938, vol. 2: p. 541; Luo 1968, p. 160).

The Tang came to power in 618, following the short-lived Sui dynasty (581–618) which had unified the empire after centuries of division. Famous scholars, Daoists, and Buddhists flocked to the unified empire's capital. The newly united empire necessitated a consolidated (and unifying) ideology. Confucianism played a significant role; however, Tang rulers, like their predecessors, did not rely solely on one teaching for their ideological needs. Capitalizing on an alleged epiphany of Lord Laozi (s. *Jiu Tang shu* 1, p. 3485c, *Hunyuan shengji* 8, p. 3a–b), and the fact that they shared the surname Li 李 with Laozi, the Tang emperors declared to be descendants of Lord Lao. Consequently, they elevated Daoism, framed as the teaching of Laozi, to the first rank among the three teachings. The first emperor, Tang Gaozu (r. 618–626), declared this on the occasion of a debate on the three teachings held after the *Shidian* 釋奠 ceremony in the imperial university.[4] The occasion

seems almost ironic, as the *Shidian* sacrifice was held to honor the former Confucian sages and teachers. The second emperor, Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649 CE), formalized this ranking in 637 by officially proclaiming Laozi as an ancestor of the Tang (*zunzu* 尊祖) and giving precedence to Daoism over Buddhism.[5]

The interest of the first two emperors in Daoism and Laozi likely contributed to the significant attention the *Daode jing* received at the time. Not only Daoists, but also Confucian authors like Wei Zheng 魏征 (580–643) and Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) wrote commentaries to the *Daode jing*.[6] In 647, emperor Taizong commissioned a Sanskrit translation of the *Daode jing* by the Buddhist Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) in collaboration with leading Daoists of the capital, among them being Cheng Xuanying.[7]

However, even though the ranking at court implied a strategic preference for Daoism, Tang Taizong promoted all three teachings through various projects and patronage. He established monasteries and temples for both Buddhists and Daoists, and sponsored Buddhist and Daoist rituals to bring blessings. He also promoted Confucian learning, such as the project of the *Wujing zhengyi*. After 645, he sponsored the translation activities of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang.[8] He invited outstanding representatives of all three teachings to reside in Changan.

In early Tang Changan, representatives of the three teachings lived in relatively close proximity and had many occasions for social interaction; this offered concrete possibilities of intellectual engagement and interaction. It might even be that some of the *xuanxue* philosophical spirit survived into the more sectarian environment of the early Tang period. The Confucian scholar Lu Deming 陸德明 (ca. 550–630), in his *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文, also commented, in addition to the Confucian classics, on the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*, and the Confucian scholar Yan Shigu, who was involved in the compilation of the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, also authored a commentary on the *Daode jing*, the *Xuanyan xinji ming lao bu* 玄言新记明老部. Also, the Daoist Cheng Xuanying wrote commentaries to the three texts central to *xuanxue*, the *Daode jing*, the *Yijing*, and the *Zhuangzi*.

Overall, the early Tang intellectual environment in the capital was characterized more by social interaction and engagement, at least to some extent, with the teachings and texts of others, than by isolated sectarianism. Therefore, a synchronic approach that posits the possibility of shared discourses across the boundaries of the three teachings seems justified.

3. Texts

Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (ca. 601–604 to 690) (Qiang 2002b, p. 323) was an ordained Daoist monk from Henan (Shanzhou 陝州). In 631, Emperor Taizong invited him to Changan (*Xin Tang shu*, 59, p. 163). There, he resided in the Xihuaguan 西華觀, a large state-sponsored Daoist temple, and became one of the most prominent Daoist clerics of early Tang Changan. As a member of the clerical and intellectual elite of the capital, he was involved in public court debates between representatives of the three teachings as well as in the high-profile project of translating the *Daode jing* into Sanskrit (op. cit.). A prolific writer, he authored commentaries on the *Daode jing*, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the *Lingbao duren jing* 靈寶渡人經 (Scripture of Salvation), and the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes).[9] Cheng Xuanying is considered the foremost representative of *chongxuan xue* 重玄學, a philosophy characterized by the application of the technique of continued negation in four steps (*siju* 四句, or *tetra lemma*) to the interpretation of the *Daode jing*. This technique had become known in China through the Buddhist Madhyamaka teachings. *Chongxuan xue* authors like Cheng Xuanying exemplified this type of philosophical reasoning in the interpretation of the sentence "*xuan zhi you xuan*" (玄之又玄) in the first chapter of the *Daode jing* (Li 2005; Cheng 2003; Assandri 2009; Lu 1997, 1993; Qiang 2002a).

Cheng Xuanying wrote the *Daode jing yishu* 道德經義疏 together with an introductory essay *Kaiti* 開題 in Changan, most probably shortly after 637, when Emperor Taizong proclaimed his edict that established Laozi as a Tang ancestor and granted precedence to the Daoists at court (Qiang 2002b, p. 322). The commentary with its introductory essay can be considered a veritable *summa* of the Daoist teachings then current in Changan. It is representative for Daoist *chongxuan xue* and also integrates many other originally Buddhist concepts,

such as the concept of a compassionate savior deity, the concept of karma, Buddhist conceptions of the workings of the mind, and others (Assandri 2021b, pp. 9–28). Many of these concepts had earlier been co-opted in the Daoist *Lingbao* scriptures, where they were associated with the deity Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊. Cheng Xuanying integrated them with Laozi and the *Daode jing*, thereby managing to streamline different Daoist traditions under the mantle of the *Daode jing* and Laozi.

The *Daode jing yishu* is representative of Daoism in Changan in the early Tang dynasty. Its engagement with Buddhist concepts and doctrines is well documented. The Confucian compilation of the *Wujing zhengyi* has found less attention with regard to the question of interactions between the teachings.

The *Wujing zhengyi* was compiled on the orders of Emperor Taizong in Changan between 631 and 653 by a team of scholars. The project began with the establishment of definite editions (*dingben* 定本) of the five classics by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645). From 638 onwards, the compilation project was headed first by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648) (*Tang huiyao*, 77; Twitchett and Fairbank 1979, p. 215). Kong Yingda eventually retired, and the final project was submitted in 653 by the scholar minister Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (?–659) (Lewis 2009, p. 233; McMullen 1988, p. 73). The *Wujing zhengyi* established the state-approved interpretation of the five Confucian classics and the standard texts to be studied by candidates for the imperial examinations for centuries to come.[10] Its early Tang compilers were members of the Confucian scholarly elite, and the *Wujing zhengyi* can be considered a mainstay of Confucian learning.

As a first step in exploring the question of early Tang Confucian engagement with synchronic "other" teachings, I will look at the commentary to the *Book of Changes*, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, in relation to the *Daode jing yishu*. Among the five Confucian classics, the *Zhouyi* or *Yijing* is the most congenial to philosophical speculations akin to those found in the interpretation of the *Daode jing*. In fact, after the end of the Han dynasty, *xuanxue* philosophers articulated their ideas through commentaries to the *Daode jing*, the *Yijing* (or *Zhouyi*), and the *Zhuangzi*. The compilers of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* under Kong Yingda, in their efforts to streamline the rich and diverse heritage of the Six Dynasties period, selected the southern commentaries of the *xuanxue* scholars Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) and Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (ca. 332–380) (Meyer 1999, p. 63) as their foundational commentary, to which they then added their sub-commentary. Kong Yingda authored the preface.

The authors of the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, working under Kong Yingda, were a collective of Confucian scholars. According to *Xin Tangshu* (57, p. 156c), it included Ma Jiayun 馬嘉運, Zhao Qianye 趙乾叶, Yan Shigu, Sima Caizhang 司馬才章, Wang Gong 王恭, Wang Tan 王談, Yu Zhining 於志寧 (588–665), and Su Derong 蘇德融. The head of the project, Kong Yingda, was the foremost authority on Confucian learning. In 638 he became the director (*jijiu* 祭酒) of the imperial university (Guozijian 国子监) (*Jiu Tang shu*, 73, p. 313a). In 639, Kong attended a court debate between the Buddhist Huijing 慧靜 and the Daoist Cai Huang 蔡晃, where he reportedly intervened supporting the Daoists (*Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng*, T 2104, 3, p. 383a29). Unfortunately, we have little information about the other team members. Ma Jiayun and Wang Gong served as Erudites in the National University (*taixue boshi* 太學博士) (*Xin Tangshu* 198, p. 602a). Yan Shigu, the son of the famous scholar Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–590s), was known as a classicist, despite his family's long-standing affiliation with Buddhism (Tian 2021, p. xxiv). Yu Zhining was a Confucian scholar involved in the translation academy of Xuanzang (Mayer 1992, pp. 85–86). We can reasonably assume that all the scholars involved were active in Changan in the early Tang period.

Thus, the two texts under discussion originated in early Tang Changan in an environment of elite scholars and clerics active at the court of Emperors Taizong and Gaozong. Representatives of the three teachings in this environment had concrete possibilities of social contacts and likely were acquainted with texts composed by members of other teachings, as they were presented at the court. Buddhist apologetic literature, especially the works of Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) (*Guang hongming ji* T 2103, and *Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng* T 2104; cf. Liu 2018; Assandri 2015) and Falin 法林 (572–640) (cf. Jülch 2014), documents numerous

intersections, debates, and written exchanges between Buddhists and Confucians and Buddhists and Daoists, respectively, in this environment. Thus, even though there is no dedicated documentation of Confucian–Daoist encounters, mutual knowledge and engagement with teachings and conceptions seem plausible in this triangular relationship.

4. Interpretation and Demarcation: The Sage Who Embodies Dao

Confucian classics and the *Daode jing* both discuss the concept of an ideal, perfectly accomplished being, referred to as the "sage" (*sheng* 聖). The specific attributes of a sage and the criteria for determining who qualifies as a sage have been subjects of ongoing debates through the ages. Maybe also because of this openness, the term "sage" (*shengren*) came to be used in all three teachings to designate an ideal person.[11] Yet, the respective interpretations differed not only in identifying sages—whether Confucian legendary emperors or culture heroes, Laozi, or Buddha—but also in defining the general characteristics of a sage.

Given the prevalent use of the term in the literature of all three teachings, exploring intertextual overlaps through the term *sheng* provides a meaningful entry point. In order to restrict the materials to a meaningfully manageable sample of texts, I will focus on passages where the qualification "embodying Dao" (*tidao* 體道) is added to *shengren*. Both the *Daode jing yishu* and the *Zhouyi zhengyi* deliberate on the sage who embodies Dao. Taking a diachronic perspective, the expression was used by the *xuanxue* author Han Kangbo.

The following analysis will examine the discussions of "the sage who embodies Dao" in the *Daode jing yishu* and the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, emphasizing interactions with other teachings in terms of explicit demarcations and the adoption or co-option of concepts of other teachings. The aim is to explore the possibility of a shared discourse or dialogue on the definition of the sage.

4.1. The Daoist Cheng Xuanying's Vision of the Sage Embodying Dao

In his commentary to the *Daode jing* and the accompanying introductory essay (*Kaiti* 開題, see Assandri 2021a), Cheng Xuanying refers to the term sage as denoting a spiritually accomplished being, savior of the world, and a potentially ideal ruler. In Cheng's interpretation, this sage is identified as Laozi, who had reached or obtained Dao, also interpreted as the origin (*ben* 本), and thereby achieved mystic union and absolute stillness. However, this state is not static. Moved by his compassion for the beings, the sage returns from the state of mystic union with the origin back to the world to save the beings. Cheng Xuanying elaborates upon this particular concept of the sage as a savior with recourse to a specific definition of the term "traces" (*ji* 跡), which he understands as the various concrete manifestations of the sage in the world (Assandri 2021a, p. 26f). This interpretation of the concept of "traces" aligns with Buddhist interpretations, like those of Sengzhao 僧肇 (ca. 384–414) (*Zhu Weimojie* jing, T 1775, 1, p. 327b; cf. Baggio 2019, p. 122) or Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538–592) (*Miao fahua jing xuanyi* T 1716, 7, p. 764c), rather than with the well-known *xuanxue* reading proposed by Guo Xiang 郭象 (ca. 252–312) in his commentary to the *Zhuangzi* (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu* DZ 745; cf. Ziporyn 2003, p. 32f).[12]

In Cheng's interpretation, the manifestations (traces) occur not out of the sage's intentionality but in response to the needs of the beings (*yingji* 應迹). Thus, the sage remains in a state of no-mind (*wuxin* 無心) while manifesting himself to help the beings to return to the origin. In terms of doctrine, this interpretation of Cheng Xuanying is arguably inspired by the Buddhist concepts of upaya (*fangbian* 方便, skillful means) and the theory of the bodhisattva. His theoretical elaboration of the relation of the sage who obtained Dao and his manifestations relies on an adaptation of the concepts of the response body (*yingshen* 應身) and the dharma body (*fashen* 法身) from the concept of the three bodies of the Buddha.[13]

The commentary on the sentence "Returning is the movement of Dao" (反者道之動) in chapter 40 of the *Daode jing*, illustrates Cheng's perspective:

> 'Returning' (*fan* 反) means coming back. 'Movement' (*dong* 動) means compassion. The sage, who has attained Dao, even goes beyond the three highest heavenly spheres.[14] But because he is moved by compassion and wants to save the beings, he

returns from the Three [Clarity-Heavens and the Great] Veil-[Heaven],[15] and then mixes his [manifest] traces into [the world of] being. He preaches according to the opportunities and manifests [his traces] in response [to the needs of the beings]. This is why the first part of the *Daode jing* [chap. 25] says: "[Going] far means returning". (Assandri 2021b, p. 206, adapted)

反, 還也。動, 悲也。得道聖人超淩三境, 但以慈悲救物, 反入三羅, 混跡有中, 赴機應化。故上經云遠曰反。

The sage obtains Dao and mediates between Dao and the worldly phenomena by returning to the world to "mix his traces in the world of being". Cheng Xuanying also uses the term trace in his sub-commentary to Guo Xiang's *Zhuangzi* commentary in several places in the connotation developed in the *Daode jing yishu*, notably with the expression *hunji renjian* 混迹人間.[16]

Commenting on the second sentence of chapter 79 of the *Daode jing*, Cheng offers an explicit definition of how he understands the sage embodying Dao:

This says that for the sage who embodies Dao the sphere of objective phenomena and the subjective wisdom are in perfect consonance. Subject and object are united in emptiness, going beyond these four statements [of the *tetra lemma*], and leaving behind those hundred negations.[17] Therefore he obtains a long vision and long life.[18] (Assandri 2021b, p. 357)

言體道聖人境智冥符, 能所虛會, 超茲四句, 離彼百非, 故得久視長生。

Embodying Dao is interpreted here as a state where subjective consciousness (wisdom) and the objective phenomena are both empty. This, then, is defined as surpassing the realm where the four statements of the *tetra lemma* apply. The latter statement might be a rebuttal of a statement by the Buddhist Jizang 吉藏 (549–623), who was active in Changan less than a decade before Cheng Xuanying. Jizang claimed, in his *Sanlun xuanyi*, that only the teachings of the Buddha would go beyond [the realm in which] the four statements [can be applied], but not those of Laozi.[19]

Examining Cheng's commentary to the sentence "Therefore the ordering of the sage" (是以聖人治) in chapter two of the *Daode jing*, Cheng defines the sage as one who embodies Dao, saves the beings compassionately, imparts the teachings, and orders the world:

The sage (*shengren* 聖人) is a man who embodies the Dao and tallies with the true. It is also said that "the sage is one who is correct".[20] Being able to make himself correct, he is also able to correct others in the same way. This is why he is called sage. "Govern" (*zhi* 治) means to regulate. This means that this sage, compassionately [wanting to] save the beings, passes on the wondrous teaching of non-action, and governs the multitude of beings who have desires. (Assandri 2021b, p. 49)

聖人者, 體道契真之人也。亦言聖者正也, 能自正己, 兼能正他, 故名為聖。治, 理也。即此聖人, 慈悲救物, 轉無為之妙法, 治有欲之蒼生。

Here, Cheng Xuanying cites a Daoist and a Buddhist interpretation of the term sage referring to the sage who embodies Dao and the sage who imparts the teaching. Again, Cheng foregrounds the motive of compassionately saving the beings, comparable to a Mahayana bodhisattva. The definition "the sage is the one who is correct" appears in the fifth-century translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*,[21] and in texts authored by Tiantai Zhiyi (智顗, 538–597) and Jizang,[22] which were most probably circulating in Changan by the time Cheng Xuanying was active there. This definition does not appear in the Confucian or Daoist classics.[23] This Buddhist definition allows him to emphasize that the sage teaches the beings the same method he uses for himself.

Cheng co-opts Buddhist notions of the concept of the sage, such as compassion as primary motive, and the concept that the way to "correct himself" is also the way to teach and "correct" others. However, he does not name these concepts as "Buddhist" or allude to their origin in the Buddhist teachings. Cheng's integration of Buddhist definitions and tenets into Daoist discourse suggests a fluidity in conceptual boundaries between Daoism and Buddhism.

Demarcation of Daoism versus Confucianism in the *Daode Jing Yishu*

While the demarcation lines between Buddhist ideas and Daoist ideas seem blurred in Cheng's interpretations, he explicitly draws a demarcation line between Daoism and Confucianism. This is based on the rejection of certain Confucian key values found in the *Daode jing* itself. Specifically, Cheng rejects the Confucian emphasis on erudition, as reflected in his commentary on the line "Erudition and eloquence is not as good as keeping the middle" (多聞[24]數窮, 不如守中) from Chapter Five of the *Daode jing*:

> Erudition and eloquence can only augment worldly wisdom, since this is not embodying Dao, the principle will eventually fail. Middle (*zhong* 中) is the One Dao. Erudition is sufficient for [understanding] the worldly phenomena (*youwei* 有爲); keeping the middle [instead] is long life and enduring vision. (Assandri 2021b, p. 63)

> 博學多言, 唯益世智, 既不體道, 理歸於窮。中, 一道也, 多聞適足有為, 守中即長生久視。

Erudition, *boxue* 博學, is associated with Confucianism not only in Confucian texts like, e.g., the *Analects* (e.g., VI, 25; IX, 2; XII, 15, Legge 1971, pp. 193, 216, 257), but also in critiques of Confucian teachings like here in the *Daode jing*, or the *Zhuangzi* (chap. 12, Watson 2013, p. 91). In the Daoist perspective, the erudite scholar does not embody Dao, and is therefore the counter image of the sage who embodies Dao. The erudite scholar is confined to the realm of *youwei*, the world of worldly phenomena and intentional action, which Cheng deems inferior to the Daoist, who "keeps the middle" and attains long-lasting life. Keeping the middle here refers to the concept of the middle way as it was elaborated on in Buddhist *sanlun* 三論 (Madhyamaka) teachings, which Cheng Xuanying integrated into his interpretation of the *Daode jing* (see e.g., Assandri 2021b, p. 56).

Different to the erudite scholar, the sage who embodies Dao has "no mind" (*wuxin* 無心), as Cheng affirms commenting on the sentence "When the sage governs, he makes his mind empty and he makes his belly full" (聖人治：虛其心, 實其腹) from the third chapter:

> Since outside there is no sphere of desirable objects, inside there is also no subjective mind that can desire. Mind and objects are both forgotten, therefore this mind is no mind. Since the former proposition [showed that] the external realm is illusory, in the later proposition also the mind is [correspondingly] empty. (Assandri 2021b, p. 54)

> 既外無可欲之境, 內無能欲之心, 心境兩忘, 故即心無心也, 前既境幻, 後又心虛也。

> Even though this mind is no mind, yet in reality there is the numinous reflecting. So the text says that the marvelous embodiment is empty and still, yet it comes to respond without fail. (Assandri 2021b, p. 54)

> 雖複即心無心, 而實有靈照, 乃言妙體虛寂, 而赴感無差, 德充於內, 故言實其腹也。

Cheng Xuanying emphasizes that the sage has no [intentional] mind (*wuxin*). This signifies that, for him, external phenomena are illusory and his subjective (internal) mind is empty—different from the erudite scholar criticized in the previous citation for focusing on phenomena. The term *wuxin* describes the highest realization and is used across Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian contexts. In Cheng's interpretation, *wuxin* corresponds to embodying Dao, which is emptiness or nothingness. Realizing emptiness and the illusory nature of the outer world of phenomena and the subjective (inner) mind is a constitutive part of Cheng's conception of *wuxin*.

This realization of the emptiness of both the outer phenomena and the mind, does not prevent the sage from acting in the world: he is always able to respond to the needs of the beings in the world in a timely manner. This paradox is resolved through the concept of "numinous reflecting"; a still and empty "no mind" (*wuxin*) can reflect, comparable to a mirror, allowing for non-intentional responses to stimuli in the world.

Cheng Xuanying's interpretation suggests that the sage can be a perfected being, ruler, and savior of the world, precisely because he fully embodies Dao. For Cheng, this state is characterized by the suspension of the subject and object of cognition in nothingness.

To address the tension between embodying nothingness (Dao) and acting beneficially in the world of phenomena, Cheng introduces two conceptions: the concept of "return", where the sage moves between Dao and the world, "mixing his traces into the world of being (or thingness)" while remaining in a state of no mind (*wuxin*), and the concept of "reflection", where the acting in the world is conceived as reflection produced by no-mind (*wuxin*) in response to the stimuli of the beings.

With regard to the teaching, Cheng maintains that the sage teaches the adepts the same way that he used himself to become a sage—embodying Dao or obtaining Dao (*dedao* 得道). Thus, according to Cheng, the teaching (of Laozi and of Daoism) focuses on merging with Dao as origin and nothingness; any beneficial actions result from this.

In the subsequent discussion, we will see that the authors of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* employed key terms found in Cheng Xuanying's discussion, specifically the concept of "no mind" (*wuxin*), in their interpretation of the sage who embodies Dao. However, their resolution of the tension between embodying nothingness and acting in the world differs from Cheng's Daoist approach.

4.2. The Confucian Interpretation of the Sage Embodying Dao in the Zhouyi zhengyi

The *Yijing*, the first of the five Confucian classics, was the one most prone to lead to metaphysical and philosophical speculations. When, after the fall of the Han dynasty, *xuanxue* became the predominant trend of Chinese philosophical speculation, the *Yijing* took center stage alongside the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. *Xuanxue* philosophers, although occasionally labelled "Neo-Daoists", (see e.g., Fung 1953, vol. 2: p. 168; Chan 1963, p. 314), were not Daoists in the strict sense of the word. In fact, they revered Confucius as the great sage (Wagner 2000, p. 120f; Lynn 1999, pp. 11–12). While during the third and fourth centuries, when *xuanxue* flourished, the supremacy of Confucius remained unchallenged, the intellectual field in Tang-dynasty Changan had become more polarized. Confucian scholars found themselves defending their ground against influential and well-educated Daoist and Buddhist clergy promoting their own teachings and visions of what, and who, a sage is.

Demarcation of Confucianism versus Daoism and Buddhism in the *Zhouyi zhengyi*

Qing Dynasty editors of the *Siku quanshu* criticized Wang Bi's commentary to the *Zhouyi* for its approach of reading the *Yijing* in the light of the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, and vice versa (Hon 2003, p. 224).

This blurring of the demarcation lines between Daoism and Confucianism, which later Confucian scholars found problematic, might have been less of a concern for early Tang scholars such as Kong Yingda and his team, given the importance the court attributed to Daoism. Instead, the demarcation between Confucianism and Buddhism appears to have been a more important issue.

In the preface for the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, Kong Yingda clarifies the demarcation lines concerning Daoism and Buddhism:

> "As far as the Pattern of the Changes is difficult to exhaustingly [explain], even though it is "mysterious and mysterious again",[25] when it comes to handing down models and creating standards, then it [the pattern of the changes, *yili*] is Being (*you*), and its teaching [concerns] Being. When it comes to discussing "residing in inner and outer emptiness"[26], and the talk of "following the subject or following the object"[27], these are meanings that then move into Buddhism, they are not something that is taught at the doors of Confucius. They turn their back on the original [text of the classic] and go against the commentary [of the recognized interpreters, like Wang Bi] as well.[28]

> 夫易理難窮雖復玄之又玄至於垂範作則便是有而教有若論住內住外之空就能就所之說斯乃義涉於釋氏非 為教於孔門也既背其本又違於注 (*Zhouyi zhengyi xu*, p. 6)

While rather brief, this passage effectively indicates Kong Yingda's positioning of the *Changes*, and thus Confucianism, vis à vis Daoism and Buddhism.

Kong opts not to engage in the debate on residing in inner and outer emptiness (*zhunei zhuwai zhi kong* 住內住外之空) and in the epistemological discourses on understanding of ultimate truth (*jiuneng jiusuo zhi shuo* 就能就所之說), simply because these debates and concepts originated in Buddhism. Yet, we should note here that, while this suggests an anti-Buddhist stance, Kong's choice of terminology indicates his awareness of intellectual developments within Buddhism. The terms *zhunei zhuwai zhi kong* 住內住外之空 and *jiuneng jiusuo zhi shuo* 就能就所之說 are very specific references, different from the more commonly cited generic designations of Buddhist teachings such as *fojiao* 佛教 or *shijiao* 釋教.

The expression *zhunei zhuwai zhi kong* appears in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (see *Mohebanruoboluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, T 223, 1, p. 219c8) and in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (*Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 T 1509) in discussions about the nature of emptiness. Both texts were translated by Kumārajīva. *Dazhidu lun* (T 1509, p. 285b6-17) explains that the Bodhisattva resides in inner and outer emptiness, adding that this refers to the faculties of the senses (inner) and their respective fields of contact (outer), which should both be considered as empty.[29] The preoccupation with the emptiness of both, the faculties of the senses as inner, subjective, factors of cognition, and the external fields or objects of contact are conceptually related to Cheng Xuanying's claims that for the sage "subject and object are united in emptiness" (op. cit.), although the terminology differs.

The expression *jiuneng jiusuo zhi shuo* 就能就所之說 refers to discussions on subject (*neng*) and object (*suo*), particularly in the context of cognition and epistemology. For example, Tiantai Zhiyi used these terms in his *Miaofa lianhua wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句, discussing the relationship of *prajñā* to the dharma-body (*fashen* 法身) of the Buddha (T 1718, 8, p. 112b12-18). The subject–object relation in the realization of ultimate truth was a much-debated issue in Buddhism (Ho 2014, p. 416), and Cheng Xuanying also discussed it in his commentaries.

Kong Yingda's choice of terms to designate Buddhist teachings refer to specific Buddhist discussions on the nature of ultimate realization and the role of subject and object in realizing ultimate reality. This suggests that, even though Kong flatly rejects these teachings, he was, to some extent, acquainted with these Buddhist discourses.

In contrast, Kong finds common ground with Daoism in their shared assumption of a conception of the ultimate, as he describes the pattern of the *Changes* as "mysterious and mysterious again". The chosen term, *xuanzhi you xuan*, alludes to the last sentence of the first chapter of the *Daode jing* ("玄之又玄，衆妙之門") that had become the eponym of the Daoist *chongxuan* 重玄 interpretation of Dao, which prominent Daoists like Cheng Xuanying, Cai Huang 蔡晃, or Li Rong 李荣 proposed in the environment of the court in Changan. We might assume that Kong Yingda was aware of this particular interpretation as it was discussed in the environment of the court where he was active.[30] Kong Yingda seems to accept this Daoist conception of the ultimate as "common ground". Thus, for him, the demarcation between the Confucian teachings of the *Yijing* and Daoism were not as clear cut as those between Buddhism and the *Yijing*.

In the following, I will examine the *Zhouyi zhengyi's* authors' conception of the sage embodying Dao as expressed in a passage of the commentary to the Xici section. This necessitates a more complex process compared to the previous analysis of Cheng Xuanying's text, because the *Daode jing yishu* is a simple commentary, while the *Zhouyi zhengyi* presents a sub-commentary, requiring us to look at an extra level of text, namely the *xuanxue* commentary, alongside the *Zhouyi zhengyi* sub-commentary.

While the Daoist Cheng Xuanying argued that the sage embodies Dao, and precisely because of that, is able to order the world and save the beings, the base text of the *Yijing* itself in the Xici shang, (§ 5) postulates a distinction between the sage and Dao. This distinction arises because Dao has the function of generating phenomena and the world, whereas the sage has the function of bringing order to the world:

> The reciprocal process of yin and yang is called the Dao. …That which allows Dao
> to continue to operate is human goodness [*shan*], and that which allows it to bring

things to completion is human nature [*xing*]. […] …It functions for the common folk on a daily basis, yet they are unaware of it. This is why the Dao of the noble man is a rare thing! … It is manifested in its benevolence but hidden within its functioning. … It arouses the myriad things but does not share the anxieties of the sage … As replete virtue and great enterprise, the Dao is indeed perfect! ([Lynn 1994](), pp. 53–54)

一陰一陽之謂道, 繼之者善也, 成之者性也。[…]。百姓日用而不知, 故君子之道鮮矣。顯諸仁, 藏諸用, 鼓萬物而不與聖人同憂, 盛德大業至矣哉。[…]

The *xuanxue* author Han Kangbo had explained the sentence "It arouses the myriad things but does not share the anxieties of the sage", (op. cit.) with reference to embodying Dao (*tidao* 體道):

"The myriad things follow it and thereby transform, this is why the text says "It arouses the myriad things". ([Lynn 1994](), p. 54) Even though the sage takes embodying Dao as his function, he cannot get to the point where he takes nothingness as embodiment;[31] therefore, when he smoothly moves everywhere in the world, there are the traces of his operating.

注萬物由之以 化故曰鼓萬物也聖人雖體道以為用未能至無以為體故順通天下則有經營之跡也 (*Zhouyi zhengyi* 7, p. 78b)

Han Kangbo's *xuanxue* reading suggests that the sage embodies Dao as his function, but cannot embody complete nothingness. This is because there are necessarily traces of his operating in the world. Han Kanbo uses the term "trace" (*ji* 跡) here, which is the same term Cheng Xuanying employs as a designation for the manifestations of the sage in the world to which he returns after he has obtained Dao. However, Han, writing several centuries earlier, might have viewed the term "trace" more in the sense Guo Xiang used the metaphor of the traces, as "the teachings and practices that others have left behind", to be distinguished from that which left the traces (cf. [Ziporyn 2003](), p. 32ff).[32]

The *Zhouyi zhengyi* sub-commentary to the passage further expands on Han Kanbo's discussion of the sage embodying nothingness:

The *Zhengyi* says: Speaking about merit and function of Dao, it has the capacity to arouse the ten thousand beings and cause them to transform and grow [and teach and raise them][33] therefore it says "rouse the ten thousand things".

正義曰: 言道之功用, 能鼓動萬物, 使之化育, 故云「鼓萬物」。

When the sage transforms the things, he cannot take complete nothingness as his embodiment, [because transforming things] he still has the concern of operational managing; the Dao indeed has empty nothingness as its function, no handling of affairs and no active interference, it is not the same function as that of the sage, who has the concern of operational managing.

聖人化物, 不能全無以為體, 猶有經營之憂; 道則虛無為用, 無事無為, 不與聖人同用, 有經營之憂也。

The *Zhouyi zhengyi* initiates its explanation by reiterating the essential disparity between the Dao and the sage. While Dao generates and raises all beings and things, it does not interfere in processes in the world of humanity. The sage, instead, does intervene in the human world, which necessarily entails concerns. Due to this involvement, the sage cannot embody complete nothingness. So far, this section offers an elaboration of the *Yijing* base text and Han Kangbo's commentary.

Next, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* continues the argument introducing the new term "no mind" (*wuxin* 無心)—a term which also played an important role in Cheng Xuanying's discourse on the sage (op. cit).

Zhengyi says: [When the commentary] says "even though the sages take embodying Dao as their function", it means that the sage cannot handle affairs without having

concerns. The Dao is without [intentional] mind and without [visible] traces, [however,] the sage also has no [intentional] mind, [but] he has [visible] traces, the sage can embody close to the Dao, but his traces take existence (*you*) as a function.

正義曰: 云「聖人雖體道以為用」者, 言聖人不能無憂之事。道則無心無跡, 聖人則亦無心有跡, 聖人能體附於道, 其跡以有為用。

Introducing the concept *wuxin* here, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* characterizes Dao as having no mind (*wuxin*) and no traces, whereas the sage has no mind, but does have traces, which function solely in the realm of the phenomenal world or being. This discourse on "no mind" and "traces" subtly shifts the characterization of the sage: The base text of the *Yijing*, along with Han Kangbo, associates the sage's activities in the world with worries or concerns (*you* 憂). The term "worries" denotes a mental state in contrast to the equanimity and stillness associated with the concept of *wuxin*, which Cheng Xuanying (and also Buddhist contemporaries) ascribe to the sage. In Cheng Xuanying's vision of the sage embodying Dao, the mental state of *wuxin* is a defining characteristic.

By interweaving the attribute of no mind (*wuxin*) with those of having or not having traces (*wuji/youji*), the *Zhouyi zhengyi* portrays the Confucian sage as possessing a mental state of no mind, akin to the Daoist (and Buddhist) sage. The "worries" are attributed to the "traces", which, in this context, could be understood in Cheng Xuanying's sense as a manifestation in the world, as he argues in the subsequent step:

When [Han Kangbo] says "[this does] not [mean that] they are able to take complete nothingness as their substance" he means that with regard to Dao, both mind and traces are nothingness, this is its embodying complete nothingness; with regard to the sage, he has no intentional mind [but] has traces, and because his traces are existent (*you*) and his mind is nothingness (*wu*), this means he cannot embody complete nothingness as his substance.

云「未能全無以為體」者, 道則心跡俱無, 是其全無以為體; 聖人則無心有跡, 是跡有而心無, 是不能全無以為體。

When he says "therefore as they smoothly move everywhere in the world, there are the traces of their operating", this means that the sage can smoothly penetrate the patterns of the whole world, even though inside there is no intentional mind, outside there are the traces of his operating and managing, thus there is concern. With regard to Dao, mind and traces are both nothingness, it has neither concerns nor worries, therefore he says it does not have the same concerns as the sage.

云「故順通天下, 則有經營之跡」者, 言聖人順通天下之理, 內則雖是無心, 外則有經營之跡, 則有憂也。道則心跡俱無, 無憂無患, 故云「不與聖人同憂」也。

Reading this passage in the context of Daoist assertions that the sage embodies Dao, and realizes that mind and world are both empty, and only by virtue of this can "save the beings" and bring order to the world; it appears that the authors of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* are arguing against such a conception.

They accept Dao as the ultimate ontological grounding, representing both ultimate non-being or nothingness and the genealogical beginning of all being. They also acknowledge that the sage can embody Dao as a function. However, they emphasize that the "traces" of the sage (using the same term as Cheng Xuanying to denote the sage's manifestations and activities in the world) necessarily operate only in the realm of being.

Seen in a diachronic perspective, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* introduces a distinction between the mind and the "traces" of the sage, which is not present in either the *Yijing* base text or in Han Kangbo's commentary. This explicitly asserts that the sage, like Dao, has "no [intentional] mind" (*wuxin*)—a characteristic highlighted by Daoists and Buddhists, denoting a state of superior spiritual cultivation or enlightenment.

The authors of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* seem to emphasize that the sage of the *Yijing* spiritually shares the enlightenment and embodiment of Dao implied in the Daoist proposal. But nevertheless, his functioning in the world requires operational managing, constituting a "concern",

or worry, opposed to the complete equanimity arising from the state of no mind. Tied to the concept of "trace", however, the "worried" state of mind remains relegated to the activities in the "outside" world, while "inside" the sage maintains the equanimity of "no mind".

The difference between Dao and the sage, as postulated by the *Yijing* passage, remains. Dao generates, the sage manages, and managing entails "concerns". Consequently, the sage cannot completely embody Dao because that would imply embodying nothingness. Instead, he needs to focus on being in order to manage the world. However, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* mitigates this separation of the sage from Dao by relegating the "concerns" in operational managing to the outer world, distinct from the sage's inner mental state—a state of "no mind" akin to the Daoist sage. In this sense there is a rapprochement between the Daoist and the Confucian visions regarding the mind of the persona of the sage embodying Dao. The key difference lies in their understandings of the world of phenomena. For Cheng Xuanying, similar to the Buddhist conceptions of inner and outer emptiness that the preface of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* rejects explicitly, the inner mind and outer world are both empty, whereas for the Confucians, the outer world exists.

What does this imply for the conception of the teaching of the *Zhouyi zhengyi* compared to the *Daode jing yishu*? Cheng Xuanying argued that the sage teaches that which "made him correct" and thereby enabled him to obtain Dao. The teaching of the sage is thus a guide to self-cultivation to reach the ultimate. Pragmatic benefits in the world of phenomena, like good government and peace, are bound to follow, but are viewed rather as side effects of the teaching; the primary aim of the teaching is to guide the beings to obtain Dao, origin, or absolute nothingness.

In contrast, Kong Yingda already emphasizes in his preface that the teachings of his sages transmitted in the *Yijing* are about "being" or the world of phenomena: "when it comes to handing down models and creating standards, then it [the pattern of the changes, *yili*] is Being (*you*), and its teaching is Being" (op. cit.).

5. Conclusions: Discourses on Sagehood between Dao and the World

Examining these contemporaneous discussions on the sage who embodies Dao provides some insights into common discourses and demarcations in terms of philosophical thought in the interplay of the three teachings.

With regard to affiliations of concepts, the Daoist text incorporates Buddhist notions, suggesting co-option and shared discourses between Buddhists and Daoists, while explicitly demarcating them from Confucian practice and values. Conversely, the Confucian interpretation creates an explicit demarcation from Buddhist teachings, while engaging with the Daoist interpretation using terminologies and notions which indicate a shared discourse. Nevertheless, the Confucian text presents a distinct vision of the sage in his relation to Dao and the world.

In terms of the philosophical argument, the *Zhouyi zhengyi* and the *Daode jing yishu* passages both address the question of the relationship between the sage and Dao with the same terminology, suggesting a shared discourse. The issue at stake is the logical challenge of how a sage can embody Dao, conceived as nothingness, and yet operate in the world of being or thingness. The *xuanxue* scholar Han Kangbo had addressed this with the concept of "embodying Dao but not quite embodying nothingness".

In Cheng Xuanying's vision, the sage mediates between the nothingness of Dao and the world of phenomena, moving from the world to the origin (Dao) and back to the world. Introducing the concept of the sage's movement as a "return" from Dao to the world, Cheng expands the traditional notion of a unidirectional return to Dao for salvation. The Daoist perspective sees the sage's capacity to order the world deriving from his embodying Dao, described as a convergence of inner mind and outer phenomena in emptiness; that is, mind and world are both considered as empty nothingness. As his teaching, the Daoist sage imparts the method to obtain Dao, which then enables the sage to act in the world, responding to the needs of the beings like a mirror reflecting the world.

Cheng critiques Confucian scholars who accumulate worldly knowledge and are concerned only with the realm of being (*youwei*). His argument against the Confucians is a normative refutation of practice: a sage should embody Dao—and teach the method to obtain and embody Dao—but the Confucian practice of accumulating knowledge focusses only on the world, it cannot lead to embodying Dao, rather, it will impede the realization of "the real thing", the nothingness of Dao.

The Confucian interpretation in the *Zhouyi zhengyi* relies on the vision of the sage in the *Yijing* as the one who explains the patterns of the world. In this perspective, the sage's concern, namely ordering the world, pertains to operational action in the world of being. The world of phenomena is accepted as real, and the sage's operating "traces" in the world necessarily remain in the realm of being. With his "traces" manifest in the world, the sage can only get close to the nothingness that is Dao, he cannot and should not completely embody nothingness. Different from Cheng Xuanying's proposal, which argues on the basis of practice (one should not strive for knowledge, thus the Confucian way is misguided), this is a logical refutation of the Daoist stance, based on the recognition of the world of phenomena as real: the sage's teaching needs to deal with the world of being (*you*), and thus it needs to be based in the world ("Nothing" cannot manage "something").

The fault line distinguishing the Confucian interpretation from the Daoist interpretation of the sage embodying Dao revolves around the question of the reality of the world of phenomena rather than around characteristics of the sage. While there is disagreement regarding the nature of the world, there is consensus on the nature of Dao as the origin and ontological ground of all being, best conceived as absolute nothingness, and there is consensus on the sage's state of mind as *wuxin*, a characteristic the sage shares with Dao.

In a diachronic perspective, it is noteworthy that, while the discourse on embodying Dao and on "traces" also appeared in Han Kangbo's earlier commentary, the theme of "no mind" (*wuxin*) is new in the interpretation of this passage, as is the argument of a separation of inner mind and outside world for the persona of the sage. Both arguments reflect a concern within the contemporaneous Daoist discourse on the sage in Changan. In this respect, there is a possibility of shared discourses among these Confucian and Daoist texts.

Interestingly, the Buddhist concepts, which the *Zhouyi zhengyi* explicitly rejects in the preface; namely, "residing in inner and outer emptiness" and "following the subject or following the object" refer to discussions related to the question of emptiness of inner mind and outer phenomena, which is also expressed in Cheng Xuanying's conception of *wuxin* as "subject and object united in emptiness" (op. cit.) and "mind and objects are both forgotten" (op. cit.). The *Zhouyi zhengyi* adopts the concept of *wuxin* for the sage, but in an interpretation which juxtaposes it with the reality of the world of phenomena, instead of collapsing mind and world in emptiness as the Daoists and Buddhists proposed.

This paper presented only one small example of a synchronic contextualization across the boundaries of the teachings, based on the analysis of intertextual occurrences of specific terminologies. I hope to have shown that there is a strong possibility of shared discourses across the teachings, and that fault lines of philosophical arguments are complex and cannot simply be determined along sectarian affiliations. Future studies will hopefully provide further evidence that thinkers of the early Tang period, especially those active in Changan, where the elite of the Buddhist and Daoist clergy as well as Confucian scholars were living and working in an environment that promoted collaboration and intellectual exchange, communicated and engaged with each other regardless of their sectarian affiliations, even though the three teachings were established with separate institutions and competed against each other at court.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Notes

[1] See (Bender 2019, pp. 78–79) for a concise survey of *Wujing zhengyi* scholarship.

[2] Compare also studies on Indian commentarial literature by Preisendanz (2008), Kramer (2013).

[3] This is documented in the apologetic and historiographical literature, like, e.g., *Hongming ji* T 2102, *Guang Hongming ji* T 2103, Shilao zhi in *Wei shu*, chap. 34, *Bianzheng lun* T 2110.

[4] The Shidian 釋奠 sacrifice was a ceremony dedicated to the former sage and former teacher, Duke of Zhou and Confucius, or, in some versions, Confucius and his disciple Yan Hui. The ceremony is mentioned in the *Liji*, j. 8 ("Wenwang shi zi" 文王世子, 20, pp. 1405c and 1410a). Tang Gaozu participated in this ceremony 623, 624 and 625 (McMullen 1988, p. 32).

[5] "Ling Daoshi zai Seng qian zhao" 令道士在僧前詔, *Quan Tang wen* 6, pp. 6b–7b. See also *Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng*, T 2104, 3, p. 382 and *Guang hongming ji*, T 2103, 25, p. 283c.

[6] See Wei Zheng's *Laozi zhiyao*, Yan Shigu's *Xuanyan xinji ming lao bu*, and the slightly later commentary of the Daoist Li Rong 李荣, *Daode zhenjing zhu* 道德眞經注 DZ 722, also in Meng (2001, pp. 553–674).

[7] The debates surrounding this translation are recorded in *Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng* (T 2104, 3, pp. 386b–387b, cf. Pelliot 1912; Zhang 2018, p. 85f). It remains unclear what became of the project.

[8] Compare here Kotyk (2019, p. 535), who emphasizes that Tang Taizong's sponsorship of Xuanzang's translation was most likely motivated by political expediency rather than by an appreciation of Buddhism. Kotyk shows that Yancong's biography of Xuanzang (*Da Tang Daci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T 2053), which implies Taizong had a change of heart and, as a result of meeting Xuanzang, came to believe in Buddhism, should not be trusted on the matter of Taizong's attitude to Buddhism, because the text was written under Empress Wu Zetian with the aim to bolster Xuanzang's reputation.

[9] *Daode jing xuxue yishu kaiti*, see Assandri (2021b, pp. 405–6). *Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, DZ 745, *Yi liuyan qiongji tu* 易流演窮寂圖 (lost); his commentary to the *Scripture of Salvation* is contained in *Yuanshi wuliang duren miaojing sizhu* DZ 87. The Yuan dynasty *Dongxuan lingbao jiutian sheng shen zhang jing zhu* DZ 398, 0, p. 1a, mentions a lost commentary of Cheng Xuanying to the *Dongxuan lingbao jiutian sheng shen zhang jing*.

[10] See Bender (2019, p. 77): They were replaced by the Neo-Confucian commentaries in 1315.

[11] Buddha was also designated a sage. See e.g., Zhi Daolin, "Shijiawen foxiang zan" 釋迦文佛像讚in *Guang hongming ji* T 2103, 15, p. 195c, where Buddha is called a great sage (*dasheng* 大聖), or *Ji gujin FoDao lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 T 2104, 4, p. 388a18, which cites the Buddhist Huili in a court debate held in 658 speaking about "our Tathāgatha, the great sage" (我如來大聖).

[12] In his sub-commentary to the *Zhuangzi*, Cheng uses expressions like *hunji renjian* 混迹人間 (e.g., chap. 4, DZ 745, 5, p. 52a); *hun ji tong chen* 混迹同塵 (chap. 1, DZ 745, 1, p. 31a), or *hunji chensu* 混跡塵俗 (chap. 2, DZ 745, 3, p. 30a), or else *ji ben ji ji*, 即本即迹 (chap. 1, DZ 745, 1, p. 33a), which are in line with his interpretation of the traces in his *Daode jing* commentary, quite often. This interpretation of the term "traces" differs markedly from Guo Xiang's 郭象 (ca. 252–312) earlier *xuanxue* interpretation. Guo Xiang had used the image to differentiate the sage and the classics, which are "mere traces, but not that which has left the traces" (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, chap. 33 Tianxia 天下, DZ 745, 35, p. 5a). This differentiation of "traces" (interpreted as Confucian social institutions, including the classics) and "that which has left the traces" (interpreted as the sages) allowed him to criticizes Confucian social institutions without extending the critiques to the sages who established them (cf. Ziporyn 2003, p. 32).The conceptual pair traces/origin underwent a shift of meaning in different Buddhist interpretations. The Buddhist Sengzhao僧肇 (ca. 384–414) used the conception of "traces" and "origin" in the exegesis of the Vimalakīrti sutra. In his preface to his commentary (*Zhu Weimojie jing* 注維摩詰經, T 1775) he refers to the miracles that occur in the scripture as traces; they are the responses of the sages in order to explain the inconceivable. He emphasizes the interdependence of "trace" and "origin", the soteriological function of the traces, and the ultimate unity of trace and origin in the inconceivable: "Since the dark gate [of the inconceivable] is difficult to explain, the sages responded in various ways. If there is no fundamental origin, there is nothing to bring down the traces [or outward manifestations], if there are no trace manifestations, there is nothing to make the fundamental origin manifest. Even though origin and traces are different, the inconceivable is one". 然幽關難啟。聖應不同。非本無 以垂跡。非跡無以顯本。本跡雖殊而不思 議一也. (T 1775, 1, p. 327b). See Baggio (2019, p. 122) for a detailed discussion of the concept of origin and traces in Sengzhao's exegesis of the Vimalakīrti sutra.Closer to Cheng's own time, Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538–592) in his *Miao Fahua jing xuanyi* (妙法蓮華經玄義T 1716, 7, p. 764c), presented a complex analysis of the relation of "origin" and "traces" with six different explanations. The fourth interpretation explains origin and traces in terms of substance (ti 體) and function (yong 用), and relates this to the dharma-body

(fashen 法身) and the response-body (yingshen 應身) of the Buddha. Tiantai Zhiyi, like Sengzhao, emphasizes the interdependence of origin and trace: "Fourth, explaining origin and traces in terms of substance and function: initially understanding the principles through practice and attaining the dharma-body is the origin. Because one first attained the dharma body, therefore the substance gives rise to the function of the response body. Through the response body the dharma-body becomes manifest. Though origin and traces may differ, in their inconceivability they are one. The text says: 'Since my attainment of Buddhahood, it was like this for an immensely long time, but I have spoken in this way solely for the skillful guidance and transformation of sentient beings.'" 四、約體用明本迹者, 由昔最初 修行契理，證於法身為本, 初得法身本故, 即體起應身之用, 由於應身得顯法身; 本迹雖殊, 不思議一。文云:「吾從成佛已來, 甚 大久遠若斯, 但以方便教化眾生, 作如此 說。」 (*Fahua xuanyi* T 1716, 7, p. 764c6).Cheng Xuanying's understanding of the term "traces" in the *Daode jing yishu* and in the places cited above follow rather this Buddhist line of interpretation of the terms. However, Cheng works in a few places also with Guo Xiang's differentiation between the traces and that which has left the traces (suoyi ji 所以迹); specifically in the Tiandao 天道 chapter (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, chap. 13): (Zhuangzi:) "故書曰: 有形有名。形名者, 古人有之, 而非所以先也。" Hence the book says, 'There are forms and there are names.' Forms and names were known to antiquity, but the men of old gave them no precedence". (Watson 2013, p. 102). Cheng comments: "〔疏〕先, 本也。言形名等法, 蓋聖人之應迹耳, 不得已而用之, 非所以迹也。" […] Precedence refers to the origin. This says that form, name, and such dharmas must refer only to the responding traces of the sage, one uses them (form and names) necessarily, [but] they are not that which produces the trace". (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, chap. 13, DZ 745, 15, p. 23a). This passage seems to agree with Guo Xiang's interpretation of traces. The second passage comments on the discussion of Laozi and Shi Chengzhi: "老子曰: 夫巧知神聖之人, 吾自以為脫焉。" Lao Tzu said, 'Artful wisdom, the spirit-like sage—I hope I have shuffled off categories of that sort!'" (Watson 2013, p. 105). Cheng Xuanying comments "(疏): 夫巧智神聖之人者, 蓋是迹, 非所以迹也。汝言我欲於聖人乎? 我於此久以免脫, 汝何為乃謂我是聖非聖邪? 老君欲抑成綺之譏心, 故示以息迹歸本也。郭注云, 脫, 過去也。謂我於聖已得過免而去也。" The person who has artful wisdom and is a spirit-like sage, this must refer to the traces, not to that which produces the trace. You say I want to be a sage? I have given up this thing a long time ago—so why do you say I am a sage or I am not a sage? Lord Lao wanted to raise Cheng Shizhi's disrespectful heart/mind, therefore he showed [how to] stop the trace and return to the origin. Guo Xiang's commentary says: "give up" refers to the past. This means that I have already reached sage-(hood) and have left it". (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, ch. 13, DZ 745, 15, p. 33b). Here Cheng seems to indicate that the distinction of the trace and that by which the trace is produced serves a paedagogical scope, as also the Buddhists had argued.

[13] The three bodies of the Buddha are the dharma-body (fashen 法身) as the abstract ultimate, the sambhoga (reward)-body (baoshen 報身) as the manifestations of the Buddha in paradise, and the nirmāṇa (response)-body (yingshen 應身) as the manifestation to save the beings. Cheng uses the terms *yingshen* (應身) and *zhenshen* (真身) as designations of the two bodies (corresponding to response-body and dharma-body) in his commentary to chapter 36 of the *Daode jing*: "With regard to the sage's responding in many different ways, his adaptations to the capacities [of students] are many. […] For this reason, he has the two bodies, the truth body and the response body, and the two wisdoms, expedient wisdom and real wisdom". 夫聖應多途, 逗機匪一 […] 故有真應兩身, 權實二智. (Assandri 2021b, p. 185, cf. also pp. 25–26 and Assandri 2009, p. 179f).

[14] *Sanjing* 三境 refers to *sanqing* 三清, the highest heavens of Shangqing Daoism.

[15] *Sanluo* 三羅, cf. Miller (1995, p. 127), is a short form of *sanqing daluo*, the Three Clarities and the Grand Veil Heaven.

[16] See for example ch. 6, commenting on the true man, who "ate without savoring" (其食不甘) (Watson 2013, p. 42), Cheng writes: "He mixes his traces with the human world, like worldly dust, but when he eats he does not indulge in rich tastes, therefore he doesn't know [when something is] sweet and refreshing". 混迹人間, 同塵而食, 不耽滋味，故不知甘美. (*Nanhua zhenjing zhushu*, ch. 6, DZ 745, 7, p. 7a). The manifestation of the sage in the world is purely a "response" to the needs of the beings, it is not tied to any intention or volition of the sage; therefore the sage "does not know sweet and refreshing tastes", his mind does not differentiate. For further occurrences of the expression see above, note 12.

[17] Four statements (siju 四句) and a hundred negations (baifei 百非) are Buddhist Madhyamaka technical terms for the process of continued negation of the *tetra lemma*, cf. Assandri (2009, pp. 92–93).

[18] See *Daode jing*, chap. 59.

[19] Jizang answers the question if Laozi's and Buddha's Dao could be considered the same with reference to the four statements: "The Dao of Laozi points to empty nonbeing; the Dao of Śākyamuni [instead] surpasses [the realm in which] the four statements [can be applied]. [With this] there is already a distinction [with regard to the two teachings] of superficial and profound, how could the substance be the same?" 伯陽之道道指虛無。牟尼之道道超四句。淺深既懸。體何由一 (*Sanlun xuanyi*, T 1852, p. 2a).

[20] The definition 聖者正也, refers to definitions used in Buddhist contexts, see e.g., Faxian's early fifth century translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* 大般泥洹經, T 376, 5, p. 888a, where the term *sheng* is defined in the context of sagely wisdom (聖智): "Sage (*sheng*) means correct, it can make the moral standards (*fadu*) correct and everywhere set up correct rules and ceremonies, this is its meaning". (聖者正也, 能正法度行處律儀及世間法度，是其義也). The expression appears also in Jizang's *Shengman baoku* 勝鬘寶窟, T 1744, 3, p. 66a.

[21] *Fo shuo daban nihuan jing* 佛說大般泥洹經, T 376, 5, p. 888a.

[22] *Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi* 妙法蓮華經玄義, T 1716, 4, p. 728a; *Miaofa lianhua jing wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句 T 1718, 3, p. 37c, both by Tiantai Zhiyi 智顗, and *Shengman baoku* 勝鬘寶窟, T 1744, 3, p. 66a, by Jizang 吉藏.

23   A search for the expression "聖者正也" in the Kanseki database (kanripo.org), which contains in addition to the Buddhist and Daoist canon also the Siku quanshu 四庫全書 and Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 compilations, and thus allows for a broad search in Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist texts, confirms that the occurrences of this definition for the term *shengren* before the mid- seventh century are found only in Buddhist texts: URL: https://www.kanripo.org/search?query=%E8%81%96%E8%80%85%E6%AD%A3&sort= (accessed on 6 January 2024).

24   Cheng's reading follows the 5000 Word Edition of the *Daode jing*.

25   *Xuan zhi you xuan* 玄之又玄 cites the first chapter of the *Daode jing*, and it is the eponym of *chongxuan* 重玄 philosophy, see Assandri (2009, pp. 85–89).

26   This refers to a discussion in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sutras*, see e.g., Kumarajivas translation *Mahabanruo boluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, T 223, 1, p. 219c8, Paramārtha's *Shiba konglun* 十八空論, T 1616, p. 861a15-18. The terms figure also in the version translated by Xuanzang in 660 CE, see e.g., *Dabanruo boluo miduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經 T 220, 4, p. 38a1-8.

27   The terms suo 所and neng能 refer here to subject and object. The distinction was particularly important with regard to theories of cognition, but applied also in other fields. The expressions *jiuneng* 就能 and *jiusuo* 就所 appear for example in Tiantai Zhiyi's *Miaofa lianhua wenju* 妙法蓮華經文句 (T 1718, 8, p. 112b). The terms *suo* and *neng* are also used in Buddhist logic in the terms *suochengli* 所成立, probandum or thesis, and *nengchengli* 能成立, proof consisting of the reason and the example. See e.g., Paramārtha's *Foxing lun* 佛性論, T 1610, p. 791a1, or Xuanzang's *Yujia shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論 T 1579, 15, p. 356c9-10.

28   This might be a reference to some attempts to explain the *Yijing* in terms of the said Buddhist conceptions; I was unable to find such a commentary.

29   See also Paramārtha's *Shiba konglun* 十八空論 (T 1616, p. 861a15-18) for a similar explanation.

30   He had met the Daoist *chongxuan* representative Cai Huang in a public debate in 639 (*Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng* T 2104, 3, p. 383b20).

31   Interestingly, Wang Bi actually had on one occasion claimed the sage—Confucius—did embody nothingness: "The Sage embodied nothing (*wu*), so he also knew that it could not be explained in words. Thus he did not talk about it. Master Lao, by contrast, operated on the level of being (*you*). This is why he constantly discussed nothingness; he had to, for what he said about it always fell short". (Lynn 1999, p. 12).

32   For the complex development of the use of the term "trace" between *xuanxue* and *chongxuanxue* see above, note 12.

33   The term *huayu* refers to physical transformation and growth as well as to "mental" transformation and education.

References

Primary Sources

DZ: *Zhengtong daozang* 正統道藏. Shanghai: Shanghai shangwu, 1923–1926. [Reprint Taibei: Yiwen, 1962.] The numbering follows Schipper, Kristofer Marinus and Franciscus Verellen. 2004. *The Taoist Canon. A Historical Companion to the Daozang*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

T: *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 100 vols. Tōkyō: Taishō issai-kyō kankō kai, 1929–1934.

Benji jing 本際經, ed. Wan, Yi 萬毅. "Dunhuang Daojiao wenxian Benji jing luwen ji jieshuo" 敦煌道教文獻本際經錄文及解說. In *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu* 道家文化研究 13, Edited by Chen Guying, 陳鼓應. Beijing: Sanlian, 1998: pp. 367–484.

Bianzheng lun 辯正論. T 2110.

Da banruo boluomiduo jing 大般若波羅蜜多經 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*). T 220.

Da Tang Daci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳. T 2053.

Dazhidu lun 大智度論. T 1509.

Daode jing 道德經, 5000 Word Edition, *Zhonghua daozang*, 中華道藏. (Zhang Jiyu 張繼禹 and Wang Ka 王卡 ed.) Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2003: vol. 9, No. 3.

Daode jing xujue yishu kaiti 道德經序訣義疏開題, ed. *Zhonghua daozang*: vol. 9, No. 14.

Daode jing yishu 道德經義疏, ed. Meng Wentong 蒙文通. *Daoshu jijiao shizhong* 道書輯校十种. (vol. 6 of Meng Wentong wenji 孟文通文集) Chengdu: Bashu shudian, 2001: pp. 342-552.

Daode zhenjing zhu 道德眞經註. DZ 722.

Daode zhenjing zhushu 道德真經注疏. DZ 710.

Daode zhenjing xuande zuanshu 道德真經玄德纂疏. DZ 711.

Dongxuan lingbao jiutian sheng shen zhang jing zhu 洞玄靈寶天生神章經注. DZ 398.

Fo shuo daban nihuan jing 佛説大般泥洹經. T 376.

Foxing lun 佛性論. T 1610.

Guang hongming ji 廣弘明集. T 2103.

Hongming ji 弘明集. T 2102.

Hunyuan shengji 混元聖紀. DZ 770.

Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng 集古今佛道論衡. T 2104.

Jingdian shiwen 經典釋文, ed. Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985.

Jiu Tang shu 舊唐書 (Liu Xu 劉煦, 887–946) et al. Ershiwu shi 二十五史. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986: vol. 5.

Laozi zhiyao 老子治要 (Wei Zheng 魏征, 580–643) in *Qunshu zhiyao* 群書治要 (Sibu congkan chupian 四部丛刊初编: 443. Hanfenlou edition, digitalized on ctext.org (accessed 25 August 2023).

Liji: Liji zhengyi 禮記正義. Shisan jing zhushu 十三經註疏. 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980.

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra: *Daban nihuan jing* 大般泥洹經. T 376.

Miaofa lianhuajing xuanyi 妙法蓮華經玄義. T 1716, by Zhiyi 智顗.

Miaofa lianhua jing wenju 妙法蓮華經文句. T 1718, by Zhiyi 智顗.

Mohe banruo boluomi jing 摩訶般若波羅蜜經. T 223.

Nanhua zhenjing zhushu 南華真經註疏. DZ 745.

Quan Tang wen 全唐文, 5 vols. Taibei: Dahua, 1987.

Sanlun xuanyi 三論玄義. T 1852.

Shengman baoku 勝鬘寶窟. T 1744 by Jizang 吉藏.

Shiba konglun 十八空論. T 1616.

Sibu congkan 四部叢刊. Digital edition with facsimile in Kanseki Repository database: https://www.kanripo.org/ (accessed 6 January 2024).

Siku quanshu 四庫全書. Digital edition with facsimile in Kanseki Repository database: https://www.kanripo.org/ (accessed 6 January 2024)

Tang Huiyao 唐會要. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju. 1991.

Wei shu 魏書. Ershiwu shi 二十五史. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986: vol. 3.

Xin Tang Shu 新唐書. Ershiwu shi 二十五史. Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1986: vol. 6.

Xuanyan xinji ming lao bu 玄言新记明老部. *Zhonghua daozang* 中華道藏. Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2003: vol. 9, No. 13.

Yuanshi wuliang duren miaojing sizhu 元始無量度人經四註. DZ 87.

Yujia shidi lun 瑜伽師地論. T 1579.

Zhouyi zhengyi 周易正義. Shisan jing zhushu 十三經註疏. 2 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980.

Zhu Weimojie jing 注維摩詰經. T 1775.

Secondary References

Assandri, Friederike. 2009. *Beyond the Daode Jing. Twofold Mystery Philosophy in Tang Daoism*. Magdalena: Three Pines Press.

Assandri, Friederike. 2015. *Dispute zwischen Daoisten und Buddhisten im Fo Dao lunheng des Daoxuan (596–667)*. Gossenberg: Ostasien Verlag.

Assandri, Friederike. 2021a. Explanation of the Title of Laozi's Daode Jing. A Preface to the Expository Commentary to the Daode Jing by Cheng Xuanying. OUP Companion Website. Available online: https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780190876463/res/ (accessed on 6 January 2024).

Assandri, Friederike. 2021b. *The Daode Jing Commentary of Cheng Xuanying Daoism, Buddhism, and the Laozi in the Tang Dynasty*. New York: Oxford University Press. [CrossRef]

Baggio, Giacomo. 2019. The Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary [T 1775] by Sengzhao et Alii and the Chinese Conquest of Buddhism. *Ph.D. dissertation, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands*. [CrossRef]

Barrett, Timothy H. 1992. *Li Ao: Buddhist, Taoist or Neo-Confucian?* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bender, Lucas Rambo. 2019. The Corrected Interpretations of the Five Classics (Wujing Zhengyi) and the Tang Legacy of Obscure Learning (Xuanxue). *T'oung Pao* 105: 76–127. [CrossRef]

Bumbacher, Stephan Peter. 2000. *The Fragments of the Daoxue zhuan*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Chan, Wing-tsit. 1963. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cheng, Tsan-Shan (Zheng Canshan) 鄭燦山. 2003. Chu Tang Daoshi Cheng Xuanying de chongxuan sixiang yu Dao Fo rongtong—yi qi Daode jing kaiti xujue wei hexin zhi taolun. 初唐道士成玄英的重玄思想與道佛融通—以其《道德經開題序訣義疏》為核心之探討. In *Huafan daxue di qi Ru Fo huitong xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 華梵大學 第七次儒佛會通學術研討會論文集. Taibei: Hua fan da xue zhe xue xi 華梵大學哲學系, pp. 193–207.

Cheng, Tsan-Shan (Zheng Canshan) 鄭燦山. 2006. Tang Daoshi Cheng Xuanying de chongxuan sixiang yu Dao Fo rongtong—yi qi Laozishu wei taolun hexin 唐道士成玄英的重玄思想與道佛融通–以其老子疏為討論核心. *Taibei Daxue zhongwen xuebao* 台北大學中文學報 1: 151–78.

Cheng, Tsan-Shan (Zheng Canshan) 鄭燦山. 2009. *Dong Jin Tang Chu Daojiao Daode Jing xue: Guanyu Daode Jing yu chongxuan sixiang ji Taixuanbu zhi taolun* 東晉唐初道教道德經學: 關於道德經與重玄思想暨太玄部之討論. Taipei: Taiwan xue-sheng shuju.

D'Ambrosio, Paul J., Hans-Rudolf Kantor, and Hans-Georg Möller. 2018. Incongruent Names: A Theme in the History of Chinese Philosophy. *Dao* 17: 305–30. [CrossRef]

Emmerich, Reinhard. 1987. *Li Ao (ca. 772—ca. 841): Ein chinesisches Gelehrtenleben*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Fung, Yu-lan. 1953. *A History of Chinese Philosophy. Volume II: The Period of Classical Learning*. 2 vols. Translated by Derk Bodde. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ge, Zhaoguang. 2014. *An Intellectual History of China*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, vol. 1.

Hamar, Imre. 1999. Buddhism and the Dao in Tang China: The Impact of Confucianism and Daoism on the Philosophy of Chengguan. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 52: 283–92.

Henderson, John B. 1991. *Scripture, Canon and Commentary*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ho, Chien-hsing. 2014. The Way of Nonacquisition: Jizang's Philosophy of Ontic Indeterminacy. In *A Distant Mirror: Articulating Indic Ideas in Sixth and Seventh Century Chinese Buddhism*. Edited by Chen-Kuo Lin and Michael Radich. Hamburg Buddhist Studies 3. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, pp. 397–418.

Höckelmann, Michael. 2016. *Li Deyu (787–850). Religion Und Politik in Der Tang-Zeit*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Hon, Tze-ki. 2003. Human Agency and Change: A Reading of Wang Bi's Yijing Commentary. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 30: 223–42. [CrossRef]

Hong, C. Lynne 洪嘉琳. 2020. Daojiao chongxuanxue yu Fojiao zhongguanxue jian de duibi yu jiaotan: yi Cheng Xuanying yu Jizang zhi fangfalun wei lie 道教重玄學與佛教中觀學間的對比與交談 以成玄英與吉藏之方法論為列. *Guoli zhengzhi daxue zhexue xuebao* 國立政治大學哲學學報 43: 69–116.

Jülch, Thomas. 2014. *Bodhisattva der Apologetik: die Mission des buddhistischen Tang-Mönchs Falin*. 3 vols. München: Utz.

Knapp, Keith N. 2019. Confucian Learning and Influence. In *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 2. The Six Dynasties, 220–589*. Edited by Albert E. Dien and Keith N. Knapp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 483–510.

Kohn, Livia. 1995. *Laughing at the Tao. Debates among Buddhist and Taoists in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kohn, Livia. 2000. A Home for the Immortals: The Layout and Development of Medieval Daoist Monasteries. *Acta Orientalia Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae* 53: 79–106. [CrossRef]

Kotyk, Jeffrey. 2019. Chinese State and Buddhist Historical Sources on Xuanzang: Historicity and the Daci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳. *T'oung Pao* 105: 513–44. [CrossRef]

Kramer, Jowita. 2013. Innovation and the Role of Intertextuality in the Pañcaskandhaka and Related Yogācāra Works. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 36/37: 281–352.

Lee, Thomas H. C. 2000. *Education in Traditional China: A History*. Leiden: Brill. [CrossRef]

Legge, James. 1971. *Confucius. Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean*. New York: Dover, (Republication of *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1, 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon, 1893).

Lewis, Mark Edward. 2009. *China's Cosmopolitan Empire: The Tang Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press. [CrossRef]

Li, Gang 李剛. 2005. *Chongxuan zhi dao kaiqi chongmiao zhi men* 重玄之道開啓眾妙之門. Chengdu: Bashu shuhe.

Liu, Linkui 劉林魁. 2018. *Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng jiaozhu* 集古今佛道論衡校注. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Lu, Guolong 盧国龍. 1993. *Zhongguo chongxuan xue* 中國重玄學. Beijing: Renmin zhongguo chubanshe.

Lu, Guolong 盧国龍. 1997. *Daojiao zhexue* 道教哲學. Beijing: Huaxia.

Luo, Xianglin 羅香林, ed. 1968. Tangdai sanjiao jianglun kao 唐代三教讲论考. In *Tangdai wenhua shi* 唐代文化史. Taibei: Taiwan Shangwu, pp. 159–70, (reprint, original edition 1955).

Lynn, Richard John. 1994. *The Classic of Changes. A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lynn, Richard John. 1999. *The Classic of the Way and the Virtue. A New Translation of the Tao-Te Ching of Laozi as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Makeham, John. 2018a. Chinese Philosophy's Hybrid Identity. In *Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters: The Relevance of Ancient Wisdom for the Global Age*. Edited by Mingdong Gu. London: Routledge, pp. 147–76.

Makeham, John. 2018b. *The Buddhist Roots of Zhu Xi's Philosophical Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mayer, Alexander L. 1992. *Xuanzang: Übersezter und Heiliger*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

McMullen, David. 1988. *State and Scholars in T'ang China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Meng, Wentong 蒙文通. 2001. *Daoshu jijiao shizhong* 道書輯校十种. Meng Wentong Wenji 孟文通文集. Chengdu: Bashu shushe, vol. 6.

Meyer, Andrew Seth. 1999. The Correct Meaning of the Five Classics and the Intellectual Foundations of the Tang. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA. Proquest UMI No. 9936217.

Miller, Amy Lynn. 1995. Doing Time in Taoist Purgatory: Annotated Translations, Dating, and Analysis of Punishments in Two Six Dynasties Ling-Pao Texts on Purgatory. Unpublished Master's thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA.

Mou, Zhongjian 牟钟鉴. 2018. *Ru Dao Fo sanjiao guanxi jianming tonglun* 儒道佛三教关系简明通史. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

Mou, Zhongjian 牟钟鉴. 2023. *A Brief History of the Relationship between Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism*. Translated by Mei Yang, and Peng Tian. Singapore: Springer Nature.

Pelliot, Paul. 1912. Autour d'une Traduction Sanscrite Du Tao Tö King. *T'oung-Pao* 13: 351–430. [CrossRef]

Poceski, Mario. 2017. Evolving Relationship between the Buddhist Monastic Order and the Imperial States of Medieval China. *Medieval Worlds* 6: 40–60. [CrossRef]

Preisendanz, Karin. 2008. Text, Commentary, Annotation: Some Reflections on the Philosophical Genre. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36: 599–618. [CrossRef]

Qiang, Yu 強昱. 2002a. *Cong Wei Jin xuanxue dao chu Tang chongxuan xue* 從魏晉玄學到初唐重玄學. Shanghai: Shanghai Wenhua.

Qiang, Yu 強昱. 2002b. Cheng Xuanying Li Rong zhushu xingnian kao 成玄英李榮著述行年考. In *Daojia wenhua yanjiu 19* (Special edition Xuanxue yu chongxuan xue 道家文化研究：第十九輯·「玄學與重玄學」專號). Edited by Guying Chen 陳鼓應. Beijing: Sanlian, pp. 318–30.

Qiang, Yu 強昱. 2006. *Cheng Xuanying pingzhuan* 成玄英評傳. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe.

Raz, Gil. 2012. *The Emergence of Daoism. Creation of Tradition*. New York: Routledge.

Schmidt-Glintzer, Helwig. 1976. *Das Hung-Ming Chi und die Aufnahme des Buddhismus in China*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Tang, Yongtong 湯用彤. 1938. *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史. Changsha: Shangwu, vol. 2, [reprint: Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1991].

Tian, Xiaofei. 2021. *Family Instructions for the Yan Clan and Other Works by Yan Zhitui (531–590s)*. Boston and Berlin: de Gruyter.

Twitchett, Dennis, and J.K. Fairbank. 1979. *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China 589–906*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Verellen, Franciscus. 2019. *Imperiled Destinies. The Daoist Quest for Deliverance in Medieval China*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Wagner, Rudolf G. 2000. *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

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

Yu, Shiyi. 2000. *Reading the "Chuang-tzu" in the Tang Dynasty*. New York: Peter Lang.

Zhang, Shuheng. 2018. Forming the Image of Cheng Xuanying (ca. 600–690). Master's thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA. Proquest UMI No. 10750492.

Ziporyn, Brook. 2003. *The Penumbra Unbound*. The Neo-Taoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Zürcher, Erik. 1959. *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. Leiden: Brill.