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Russell Kirkland. *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition.* New York and London: Routledge, 2004. xxii, 282 pp. Paperback $19.95, ISBN 0–415–26322–0. Cloth $150.00, ISBN 0–415–26321–2.

Taoism: The Enduring Tradition is a provocative reinterpretation of the diverse ideas and practices called Daoism. Arguing that Chinese and Western interpreters have radically misconstrued the Daoist tradition, Russell Kirkland reconstructs its history and import in this innovative, yet at times overly polemical, work. It is a valuable introduction to the Daoist tradition, particularly for what has been dismissed as "religious Daoism" (*Daojiao*), as well as current research and controversies concerning Daoism's significance.

In chapter 1, Kirkland argues that Daoism is in need of being internally elucidated according to its own criteria. It should be: (1) contextually interpreted as a Chinese phenomenon, (2) based on a more complete interpretation of the full range of Daoist texts of all tendencies and periods without excluding some a priori, and (3) engaged as a living and diverse tradition and form of life. Thus, Daoism needs to be conceptualized according to the self-interpretation of Daoists rather than Chinese and Western critiques or faddish adaptations. For Kirkland, belonging to a Daoist heritage, lineage, and tradition constitutes being Daoist such that Daoist identity and thought cannot be defined by the philosophical and sinological reconstruction of a few "classics." These claims imply that Daoism should be situated in its social-political context to bring into focus its moral and social dimensions, including the questions of power, gender, and class explored in chapter 4.

Kirkland begins chapter 2 by considering the retrospective and inaccurate Han classification of "philosophical schools" that oversimplified the diversity of pre-Han thought. Since (1) Daojia is an anachronistic Han invention and (2) the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* are not coherent self-consciously "Daoist" texts but rather compilations arising from varied and sometimes contradictory sources, there is no such thing as "early," "classical," or "philosophical" Daoism centered on "basic concepts" such as *dao*, *wuwei*, or *ziran*. Instead these ideas have (1) shared origins, as visible in Mengzi's reference to the self-cultivation of flood like *qi;* (2) origins in different intellectual circles, such as *wuwei* emerging from texts labeled as Confucian and legalist; or (3) a different meaning than what is later ascribed to them by Han dynasty, neo-Confucian, and Western thinkers, such as interpreting *ziran* in the *Daodejing* as "spontaneity" or "naturalness." Although mostly insightful, Kirkland problematically employs words such as "spontaneity" or "naturalness" as if they have one univocal meaning, namely, their everyday Western sense of arbitrary and individualistic self-assertion at odds with any sort of self-cultiva-

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tion. However, instead of exclusive opposites, there is a different sense in which the ease and directness of spontaneity and naturalness can be said to define Daoist—not to mention Confucian—self-cultivation. Likewise, he claims that no Daoist ever suggested "living according to nature" yet uses arguably equivalent phrases such as learning "how to live in accord with life's unseen forces and subtle processes" (p. 59) and "living in accord with what really is" (p. 191). This creates the impression that Kirkland's critique of other approaches to Daoism is in part merely verbal insofar as he inadequately defines concepts, conflates words with their popular usage, and leaves unexamined which or what kind of nature, reality, unseen forces, and life might be at stake in these philosophical and sinological arguments.

A further weakness is his effort to deemphasize the significance of the *Zhuangzi* (not to mention *xuanxue*, which is mostly ignored) for Daoism while still using this text to support various arguments about its further development. Kirkland claims in chapter 2 that the *Zhuangzi* has no great import for actual Daoism, and yet argues in chapter 5 that the *Zhuangzi* provides the central source and exemplar of the Daoist sage and perfected person (*zhenren*). Much like Ge Hong's critique of *xuanxue*, and despite Girardot's convincing arguments that biospiritual practices are present in this text, Kirkland only finds a beautiful, yet empty and ethically bankrupt, idea of life in the *Zhuangzi* without any actual program of practical self-cultivation. Kirkland provides a stronger account of underappreciated yet seminal texts such as the *Taipingjing*, the *Huainanzi*, and the *Neiye* (inner cultivation) chapter of the *Guanzi,* which many discussions of Daoism unfortunately disregard. The development of universalistic altruistic ethics and religious-political organization can be traced from Mohism to the Taiping movements in the *Taipingjing.* The *Neiye* and the *Daodejing* are in many ways more closely related than either one is to the *Zhuangzi*. The *Neiye* is a seminal text for the Daoist focus on techniques of self-cultivation, and its interpretation is accordingly a necessary condition for any adequate interpretation of Daoism.

Chapter 3 examines the Daoist tradition from its emergence in the early medieval period out of diverse interpretations and practices inherited from the past. These earlier figures and movements, which cannot be reduced to texts considered *Daojia*, are sources for Daoism per se (i.e., as a self-conscious, socially cohesive group with organized principles and practices). Especially significant for Kirkland is Lu Xiujing (406–477 C.E.), who saw himself as an inheritor and reformer in systematizing the Lingbao scriptures and Daoist rituals as fasts (*zhai*), offerings (*jiao*), and ordinations (*jie*). Kirkland shows Daoism's continued vitality from movements such as Tianshi, Shangqing, Lingbao, and Quanzhen through the Qing dynasty. Kirkland distinguishes self-cultivation and liturgical ritual as the two primary poles of Daoist practices. He designates the modern sinological dismissal of the liturgical-ritualistic dimension "anti-Catholic," even though Jesuit and other Catholic missionaries inaugurated Western views of Daoist and

Buddhist practices as superstitious. Kirkland examines the role of ethics, politics, class, and gender in Daoism in chapter 4. Despite missing the *Zhuangzi*'s ethical dimension, he corrects prevalent views that Daoism (1) lacks an ethics showing how ethical concerns shaped Daoist practices and institutions and (2) was promoted by outsiders, rebels, hermits, and other marginal figures who rejected social norms and institutions. Daoism found adherents in all levels of society, including prominent figures who typically belonged to the literati and ruling classes who supported and legitimated imperial rule. These deep connections between Daoism and the state existed throughout the medieval period but were weakened after the rise of neo-Confucianism and the greater integration of society during the Song dynasty, which also saw diminishing roles for women.

Daoist traditions are primarily based on ideas and practices concerning self-cultivation and liturgical ritual. Yet, for Kirkland, ultimately both concern the practice of cultivating (*zhen*) life or perfecting reality. The Daoist tradition, and the debates that have shaped it, is centered in these overlapping and sometimes conflicting models of how self-cultivation occurs. Two models of self-cultivation are (1) emptying oneself of desires and thought based on the *Neiye*'s model of biospiritual cultivation and (2) guarding and preserving one's life-forces as part of a biospiritual process discussed in the *Taipingjing*, Ge Hong, and inner alchemy (*Neidan*). Already texts such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* contained the tension between affirming life in the face of its inevitable mortality and strategies for evading death and achieving longevity. This latter tendency has been misunderstood—especially in the anti-Daoist polemics of neo-Confucianism and academic sinologists like H. G. Creel—as suggesting the possibility of physically achieving immortality without experiencing death. Xian was (1) erroneously taken as the defining concept of Daoism rather than the more typical expression *zhenren* and (2) caricaturized as a literal physical immortality rather than as an achievement of self-cultivation in human life or a spiritual transformation and transcendence. Accordingly, Kirkland contests the standard account of Ge Hong and longevity as exemplary of post-Han Daoism. The language of alchemy adopted from these sources is primarily a language of spiritual transformation, that is, of *zhen* as cultivation rather than the achievement of a physical perfection, and the transformation of physical death is unavoidable even for those Daoists who believe it can be transcended.

This work is to be commended for correcting many misunderstandings of Daoism, especially its religious dimensions, and will be a valuable resource for rethinking established views of Daoism.

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