



Featured Article

Comparative Views on Technology of Heidegger and Daoism (with allusions to TCM 中医)¹

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Abstract

In this paper, I provide comparative insights into technology via Heidegger and Daoism. I argue that our relationship with technology is a byproduct of modernity's flight toward objectivity, which requires a certain critical, East-West comparative perspective. I first revisit Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* to elaborate on certain elements of how contemporary technology may be understood concerning human existence. This then is followed by my discussion of certain Daoist principles that exhibit an actual relationship between the individual and the technological from the perspective of the *Dào*. A reading of Daoism that is sympathetic to technology uncovers a critique of the divide between subject and object, yet one that is sensitive to reality's movement. This becomes clearer through my illustration of *zhōng yī* or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as sourced from the *Yijing* and the *Huángdì Nèijīng*. My comparison of the qualifications of technology in both Heidegger and Daoism attempts to provide a reevaluation of our approach to

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nature, both requiring a re-understanding of reality based on their own internal logic from either the perspective of Being or the *Dào*.

Keywords: Technology, Heidegger, *Dào Jiā* 道家, Classical/ Traditional Chinese Medicine *zhōng yī* 中医

Introduction

In this paper, I seek to provide comparative insights into the employment of technology via Heidegger and Daoism (*Dào Jiā* [道家]).² I begin with the premise that we live today in yesteryear's utopia.³ This extends to the possibilities opened to us by artificial intelligence (AI). In her public lecture, Michelle Zimmerman provided the enormous potential of incorporating AI in our disciplines as a testament to education's relevance vis-à-vis the speed with which society develops.⁴ Similarly, Emma Dalhin underscores the importance of multi-disciplinary research in bridging AI's use as a tool and its social embeddedness to close the analytical gap between technical and social approaches to AI.⁵ However, hundreds of researchers, engineers, professors, and even executives from industries and disciplines dealing with AI signed a statement that underscores the threat of its uncontrolled development: "Mitigating the risk of extinction from A.I. should be a global priority alongside other

² A note on my usage of Chinese characters. Throughout this manuscript, I use the pinyin with the proper accent marks to respectfully provide an accurate romanization of the Chinese script, which is the *Jiǎnhuàzì* [简化字] or the simplified characters throughout unless a direct quotation. Only in the first instance of the words are the *Jiǎnhuàzì* provided for advanced scholars. Titles of books are generally written as one word and italicized while names of individuals and concepts are separated, albeit the latter also italicized due to the foreign origin of the word. This avoids confusion when discussing, say, the *Zhuāngzǐ* and *Zhuāng Zǐ*.

³ See Rutger Bregman, *Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World*, trans. Elizabeth Manton (New York: Back Bay Books, 2014).

⁴ See Michelle Zimmerman, "Teaching Artificial Intelligence: Exploring New Frontiers for Learning," *National Humanities Center* (2022), <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/in-our-image-ai-humanities/>.

⁵ Emma Dahlin, "Mind the gap! On the future of AI research," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, (8)71 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00750-9>.

societal-scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war.”⁶ Humanity’s demise, the loss of what it means to be human, becomes the central concern of the banner of AI’s inclusion.⁷ This concern extends to various domains in which AI, specifically chatbots, is utilized, such as religious interpretations.⁸ The loss of the capacity to interpret, to understand information, and to discern for ourselves is pernicious in the face of a type of technology that we continuously turn to for this very function. This seeming two-sided relation to AI is likewise found in the field of education, with hopes for more of its inclusion and warnings of deviating from education’s primary goal.⁹ My contention in beginning my introduction with the ambiguity of our reception of AI is that it stems from a deeper uncertainty concerning our primal

⁶ Center for AI Safety, “Statement on AI Risk” (accessed 16 February 2024), <https://www.safe.ai/statement-on-ai-risk#open-letter>.

⁷ See Xiantao Wang, “Artificial Intelligence and the Loss of Humanity,” *Berkeley Political Review* (15 November 2020), <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2020/11/15/artificial-intelligence-and-the-loss-of-humanity/> and Cade Metz, “How Could A.I. Destroy Humanity?” *The New York Times* (10 June 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/10/technology/ai-humanity.html>.

⁸ See Hazel T. Biana, “Feminist Re-Engineering of Religion-Based AI Chatbots,” *Philosophies* (9)1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9010020>.

⁹ Cf. M Arli Rusandi, Ahman, Ipah Saripah, Deasy Yunika Khairun, Mutmainnah, “No worries with ChatGPT: building bridges between artificial intelligence and education with critical thinking soft skills,” *Journal of Public Health* 45, no. 3 (September 2023): e602–e603, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdad049>; Christopher Ryan Maboloc, “Chat GPT: the need for an ethical framework to regulate its use in education,” *Journal of Public Health* (2023): fdad125, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdad125>; Raup Padillah, “Ghostwriting: a reflection of academic dishonesty in the artificial intelligence era,” *Journal of Public Health* (2023): fdad169, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdad169>. Parenthetically, my own experiences as a researcher and a teacher attest to this rather ambiguous relationship with technology: on the one hand, I reap the benefits of AI’s assistance, but at the same time, I lament the fact that the dual practice of reading-writing is not easy to teach students these days. The utilization of ChatGPT and other types of applications to draft papers ranging from reflections to theses poses a great challenge. In a thesis writing class for graduating students a few terms ago, I asked my students what topics they would want me to discuss to help them in writing their thesis. Some of the common answers were in fact the very rudiments of philosophic research: note taking, creating a study schedule, summarizing a text, citing, and choosing proper sources. These were what the students wanted to be reviewed to them despite at least three years of terminal requirements – such as journal article critiques, thought pieces, essays, book or movie reviews, and term papers among others – that necessitated such skills.

relationship to technology, or better put our *enframing* via technology today. Against the backdrop of this seeming ambiguity, what I write about is twofold. I attempt to provide a riposte to the misuse of technology today through the perception of reality provided by a piece of Indigenous medicinal knowledge and practice, with the hope of offering an alternative to our relation to technology a holistic approach.

In this paper, I revisit Heidegger's question of technology and provide how this Western approach is indeed rooted in Cartesian dualism, which I qualify through Susan Bordo's commentary. This becomes my turning point toward Daoist principles that exhibit an actual relationship between the individual and technology from the perspective of the *Dào* [道]. Using passages from both the *Dàodéjīng* [道德经] and the *Zhuāngzǐ* [庄子], I shed light on its relation to technology by revisiting its cosmological foundation of the *Dào*, contextualized through the *Yijing* [易经] and the *Huángdì Nèijīng* [黄帝内经]. Such discussion, I seek to argue, provides allusions to a form of Indigenous knowledge translated to an entire cosmological framework in Chinese medicine or *zhōng yī* [中医] that allows me to provide selective affinities between questioning modern technology and this form of Indigenous practice.

Questioning Technology

Heidegger begins his treatise with a casual account of how the current representation [*Vorstellung*] of technology as being both a means and a human activity is its instrumental and anthropological definition.¹⁰ Our current idea [*Vorstellung*] of technology is defined by this complementary definition of either being a tool or a fundamental part of our very selves. As a means to an end, the employment of technology allows humans to express themselves in attaining certain ends. Further explaining this, Heidegger quotes passage 205b of

¹⁰ See Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, in *Gesamtausgabe Bd. 7 Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 8; Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), 5. I provide cross reference to the English translation to guide the reader in terms of a commonly accepted translation. All citations of the German work will be accompanied by the English translation's citation and vice versa.

Plato's *Symposium* to equate *poiesis* [ποίησις] with *Her-vor-bringen*.¹¹ This passage is part of the conversation between Diotima and Socrates during which she explains to him what Love or *Eros* is using the metaphor of poetry. Heidegger provides his own German translation of the Greek and highlights poetry's role as a genesis of a sort. The verb *hervorbringen* may be translated as to give rise to something or to be the cause of something [*entstehen lassen*]. Figuratively, it may also be rendered as to give birth or to bring forth. This Heidegger connects with Diotima's teaching as to the poetic function or capacity as creation or the genesis of when something, that which has not existed before, into existence.

A part, however, of this poetic genesis is the actual physical component that is significant for the poetic function: *techne* [τέχνη] refers to the genesis not just of creative activity but also of the high and fine arts.¹² This physical genesis is complemented by mental processes. Heidegger brings together *techne* and *episteme* [ἐπιστήμη] in the time of the ancient Greeks to show how there is this profound relationship between the aptitude of doing something and the knowledge of the actual thing or ability.¹³ With these two components, it slowly becomes clear how technology for Heidegger is a way of revealing [ἀληθεύειν] although paradoxically, since what it brings forth is precisely what it conceals.¹⁴ The actual essence of technology is therefore concealed through its instrumentality in that what is generated and the means for such generation is, in fact, external to the acting subject. Technology as understood to us reveals an even deeper level of our captivation to it in that we burrow ourselves within its system through the exact means offered us by technology.¹⁵

With the foregoing, what becomes clear(er) is an apparent relationship of *techne*, *poiesis*, *episteme*, and *aletheia*. With this in

¹¹ Cf. Plato, *The Symposium*, ed. M. C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield, trans. M. C. Howatson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 205b, 42; Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 12; Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 10.

¹² See Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 14; Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 13.

¹³ See *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See Carmine Di Martino, "Heidegger and the Conception of Technology as Fate," in *Heidegger and Contemporary Philosophy: Technology, Living, Society & Science*, ed. Carmine Di Martino (Cham, CH: Springer, 2023), 58.

mind, we can now consider Heidegger's characterization of modern technology: the revealing that governs modern technology is challenging [*Herausfordern*].¹⁶ Heidegger supplies several examples of how he makes more sense of this challenge in the figures of the hydroelectric plant in relation to the Rhine River's current or even how the tract of land is challenged by modern means of agriculture. There is this constant tension between the natural and artificial elements, with the latter demanding more from the former. Yet beyond this is the vital role of the individual in the equation. Heidegger tells us, "Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this ordering revealing happen."¹⁷ There is this relationship between the individual person and that piece of technology or what that technological piece is applied to that should be considered. The intersection of birthing, creation, knowledge, and revealing requires the presence and employment or utilization of technology by a subject.

Therefore, characterizing technology as modern is not simply about describing how developed gadgets are or how exploited practices have become. Indeed, "what modern technology or calculative scientific methodology does, *alters* questioning. Today we no longer question, we google, the process of rendering/engendering what will be regarded as AI. [...] Morphologically, the interrogative form remains; the spirit of questioning vanishes."¹⁸ Babich provides us with the crux of the description of modernity. With the example of AI in the introduction of this paper, one must ask whether an individual utilizing the application today is in him- or herself challenged or is challenging nature because such a supposed state discloses the opportunity for the revealing and its absence indicates as blind state of being, filled with idle chat and lukewarmness.

Following Heidegger, a reason I opine why it is quite difficult to simply demarcate a tool from technology, say in my illustration of AI today, is due to the inability to definitively use the object in one specific function. This lack of connection between technology and

¹⁶ See Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 15; Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 14.

¹⁷ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 18. See Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 18.

¹⁸ Babette Babich, "Heidegger's Questioning After Technology," *The Heidegger Circle Annual Gatherings* 13 (2023): 14, <https://heidegger-circle.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/3-Babich-Questioning-After-Technology.pdf>.

causus in the Aristotelian sense – as Heidegger explains in his essay¹⁹ – brings AI or whatever type of contemporary technology to this gray area. Against the backdrop of a society that encourages us to indulge in comforts, to optimize and burn ourselves out because of neoliberal promises, and to sever our ties with a *natural* way of life, we find ourselves lacking to fully be able to ask questions. However, despite criticisms I may raise against our technology today, it would be amiss to not mention the benefits we reap from such advancement. The more responsible question that we should concern ourselves with in relation to this is in what sense may we better understand technology or, perhaps better said, in what sense should technology allow us to understand ourselves closer to this world.

Heidegger's direction would lead us to enframing, and the German *Gestell* ironically signifies nothing technological. For him it is the "gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve."²⁰ The interplay therefore of all of these elements – *techne*, skill, *episteme*, knowledge, *poiesis*, birthing, and *Gestell*, enframing – conjures this image of what it means to be in the world, of how our horizons are opened up for us, and of what it means to be in this *presence*. Fabio Grigenti interprets this as Heidegger's way to express that modern technology does not just equate to a device among others but evokes the horizon on which all the resources of the technological world, including human beings, are collected.²¹ It is on this same horizon that the object touched by the machine is converted into a standing reserve [*Bestand*] or something to be extracted, converted, and consumed. Returning to our example of AI, there is a lot still left open in such enframing such as what skills are really developed, what forms of knowledge are ultimately cultivated, what type of birthing are we witnessing, and what is the setting upon which we are challenged, to which we are revealed, and according to what we are ordered.

¹⁹ See Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 9; Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 7.

²⁰ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 20. See Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, 24.

²¹ See Fabio Grigenti, "Martin Heidegger – Machine and Truth. In: Existence and Machine," in *Existence and Machine: The German Philosophy in the Age of Machines (1870-1960)* (Springer Cham: 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45366-8_5.

Perhaps a way forward is found in a return to the past. I would go to the extent to say that this modern regard for technology traces its roots in the early modern, rationalist orientation of society. We turn our attention to René Descartes, particularly Susan Bordo's commentary in her book *The Flight to Objectivity*.²² In *The Meditations*, we are quick to point out Descartes' experiences of doubt and the eventual movement towards epistemic and even psychological security.²³ We understand, thus, the entire Cartesian task as a re-understanding of the world. However, this experience is dissimilar to an innocent childlike experience, for such innocence today celebrated, especially the Christian perspective of the child's naivete, was not shared during his time. Being a child or the state of childhood during Descartes' time was an innocent *tabula rasa* but the experience of sensuality and even of animality.²⁴ Here we see the connection on the one hand between intellectual immaturity both in the literal and metaphorical senses and the eventual Enlightenment dictum of using one's own understanding on the other hand. From such an intellectually immature standpoint, the development that Cartesian objectivity directed was an attempt for an individual to reconstruct the world and to give birth to the world, the maturing masculine individual (encapsulated by the self) replacing the feminine capacity of birthing. This drama of parturition, as Bordo presents, or the drama of one's very rebirth, takes place through a step away from the feminine, natural element associated with nature. Thus, the masculine (which the Cartesian *cogito* represents) takes the place of the primordial feminine Nature from which the *cogito* is formed.²⁵ Consequentially, the history of Western philosophy is replete with references to the natural world as *mothered*, the feminine here invoked due to its receptive and birthing capacity but also due to its weaker condition, thus open to domination.

From Bordo's reading, it becomes obvious how the Cartesian movement away from subjectivity entails this gendered discourse of

²² See Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York, 1987).

²³ See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See especially Meditation Four and the corresponding objections and replies.

²⁴ See Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought and the Seventeenth-Century Flight from the Feminine," in *The Flight to Objectivity* 98.

²⁵ See *Ibid.*, 101.

the flight from the feminine, the obscure, and the weak. This movement allows us to re-understand the entire direction of modernity: the Enlightenment, our very understanding of ourselves, was premised on this drama of parturition, and Enlightenment discourse – from modernity to talks on the Anthropocene – is premised on an experience of moving away from our primordial births and initial associations with this *mother-earth*.²⁶ Understanding the world as *Gaia* or Mother Nature or all of these things has been forgotten in favor of rational discourses of what the environment is, of nature per se, and even of scientific breakthroughs. The objectivity of this type of approach to nature eventually became the measure for all things; it is not the human person that is the measure of all but instrumental reason.²⁷ This instrumental use of reason is that which favors the objective over the subjectivity and through Bordo's gendered reading of Descartes, the masculine over the feminine. In our context, this instrumental type of reasoning approaches technology as simply a commodity of great fetish to quantify art, standardize education, and homogenize design, laying things bare for their ultimate commodification in today's hyper-consumerist society.

I would contend that this dualistic perspective of the world which we inherit from this early modern period – between the thinking substance and the material component, between the rational principle and the nonautonomous, between the human and the nonhuman – obscures the capacity to shift to a different type of thinking. We should therefore see that how we are framed in today's

²⁶ See Bruno Latour, *Facing Gaia. Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017). Also, on the gendered account that Bordo brings up, it is beneficial to consider the direction provided by bell hooks, especially in the discussions of Hazel Biana and Joseph Martin Jose as published in the June 2024 issue of the SES Journal. See Hazel T. Biana, "bell hooks and the New Feminists," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* (June 2024): 75–94, <https://ses-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SES-Journal-Special-Issue-on-Gender-and-Culture-June-2024-Article-4.pdf>, and Joseph Martin M. Jose, "bell hooks' Postfeminism and Indigenous Women in the Philippines," *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy* (June 2024): 244–272, <https://ses-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/SES-Journal-Special-Issue-on-Gender-and-Culture-June-2024-Article-11.docx.doc.docx.pdf>.

²⁷ See Max Horkheimer, "The Concept of Man (1957)," in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell and others (London and New York: Verso, 2012).

world is founded on this flight toward objectivity rather than a sense of openness for nature, greatly found in indigenous practices.

An Alternative Worldview: Daoism and the *zhōng yī*

In respect to the question concerning modern technology and the possibility of bridging Indigenous or ancient technology to our current situation, I focus on providing an alternative reading of humanity's relation to technology by analyzing the philosophical development of Daoism alongside a somatic expression in Chinese Medicine. What is called Traditional Chinese Medicine or Classical Chinese Medicine (CCM) is simply *zhōng yī*, Chinese medicine, in the Sinosphere. Its foundations are traced all the way back to the *Yijing*, discussed here alongside a more explicit account in the *Huángdì Nèijīng*. This overview is provided with the intention to draw later some reflections on the affinities between Daoism and Chinese Medicine's cosmological vision and Heidegger's characterization of technology.

To begin, the association between Daoism and technology must first be cleared since it is almost immediate to consider Daoism as anti-technology. This is evidenced by several passages in the *Dàodéjīng* that illustrate the wrongs of too much technical and technological intervention such as when a blade is sharpened too much (chapter 9), when an excess of knowledge divides than unifies (chapter 12), and the greatness of a small country with tools they do not use (chapter 80).²⁸ Conversely, a similar anti-technology tenor is also found in another work in the Daoist literature, the *Zhuāngzǐ*. Chapter 12 presents this discussion on irrigation between Zi Gòng [子貢], one of the disciples of Kǒng Zǐ [孔子], and a gardener.²⁹ Their discussion was due to Zi Gòng's suggestion to use a well sweep to irrigate the land rather than manual labor. This idea was of great dismay if not irritation to the old man, illustrating an anti-technology regard of technology.

The reaction of the gardener may seem gruesome for anyone who knows the difficulty of manual labor and the enormous benefit of

²⁸ See *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation*, ed. and trans. Roger Ames and David Hall (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003).

²⁹ Zhuang Zi, Chapter 12: Heaven and Earth, *Zhuang Zi: The Complete Writings*, trans. Brook Ziporyn (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2020).

using technology for the same task. Is the *Zhuāngzǐ* advocating that we simply stop using the benefits of technology and strain our backs through a return to hard manual labor? A good response to this is provided by Barry Allen, who aptly captures the positive tone of the use of technology through what he presents as the *Dào* of Technology or *Dào* Engineering:

Engineering maximum effectiveness by minimum intervention obviously requires accurate knowledge about how machines work and can be improved, which apparently demands an ingenious mind (*ji xin*). But I think we have to ask whether “ingenious” is necessarily the only right word here, or how to understand it. Ingenious has a positive sense, meaning elegant, intelligent, artful, and well-designed. Or it can be understood negatively, meaning clever, facile, contrived. I suggest that when the old man condemns *ji* machines, it is the clever, facile, and contrived that he objects to. Those machines do not demand notably good engineering or ingenious (subtle) minds. We might say the old man condemns mechanical minds, facile minds, minds whose *techne* is merely clever and superficially fixed on “efficiency.” This is a criticism that anyone who admires *wu wei* engineering must share.³⁰

The ingenious mind (*ji xīn* [机心]) which he mentions here is a riposte to the emphasis given to *xué* [学] – erudition, worldly learning, technology – characterized in chapter 16 of the *Zhuāngzǐ* as part of civilization’s devolution.³¹ Erudition, worldly learning, and technology

³⁰ Barry Allen, “A Dao of Technology?” *Dao* 9 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-010-9158-1>.

³¹ Zhuang Zi, Chapter 16: Repairing Inborn Nature, *Zhuang Zi*. Allied to this argument, Krystyna Krajewska points out that in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, “the term “*ji xin*” (机心), which translates to ‘machine heart’ [...] represents a concept in Daoist philosophy related to the ethical relationship between technology and nature.” (Krystyna Krajewska, “The Notion of the Machine Heart (*ji xin* 机心) in the *Zhuangzi*: The Ethical Relationship Between Technology and Nature” (MA Thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2014), <https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/id/eprint/465/1/KRYSTYNA%20KRAJEWSKA.pdf>) Rather than a form of knowledge which separates the human person from the environment, from life, from *Dào* as a whole, what the *Zhuāngzǐ* presents is a type of knowledge, a type of sensitivity that is receptive to the movement of *Dào*. Just a note

(all encapsulated by one character) are framed to have drowned the mind, ignoring inborn nature, and have fixated upon superficial knowledge. Thus, what may be argued from this analysis is that Daoism presents a positive view of technology, one which does not anesthetize this inborn sensitivity yet heightens our experience of both Virtue and the Way. The reason for the gardener's irritation was that, despite seemingly making activities easier for us, employing technology this way makes us wayward in our own travels or ramblings with respect to the *Dào*.³² This means that a Daoist view of technology holds that such interventions ought not to provide a distorted vista of our life but rather a more realist perspective aligned with our natural sensitivity.

Much talk on aligning oneself to the *Dào* is vital for Daoism for this type of living is one that is aligned to the natural flow of *qì* [氣] through the universe.³³ This concept is, in fact, one of those central to an even earlier text, fundamental to almost every school in Ancient Chinese Philosophy, the *Yijing*. The *Yijing* holds a central position in the great Chinese philosophical schools as this Classic (or Book) of Changes is part of the *Wujing* [五经] (Five Classics) in the Confucian canon is considered a precursor to the Daoist scriptural tradition.³⁴

on the character, 機 is the traditional character while 机 is the simplified one. The quotation uses the traditional while I have shifted to the simplified in my narrative.

³² The first sentence of chapter 12 narrates of Zigong's journey to the south of Chu [子貢南遊於楚]. The actual movement is written with the character 遊 (*yóu*). I follow Hans-Georg Moeller in his presentation of the importance of such form of rambling, an aimless travel, which perhaps illustrates best Zigong's sojourn whereas the gardener was fixed in his attention to his work, to his participation with the *Dao*. Interestingly, the gardener too is characterized by Kong Zi as one who wanders (*yóu*). Zigong reports the matter to the master who in turn characterizes the old man as one who knows one part of the equation but lacks the other, who does not restore simplicity, and who seeks to return to what is internal to himself while wandering, (and seeks to return to what is internal to himself while wandering (*yóu*) in the world [識其一·不知其二；治其內·而不治其外。夫明白入素·無為復朴·體性抱神·以遊世俗之間者]. This play of *yóu* is part of a larger discussion in Daoism. More information about this may be found in Hans-Georg Moeller, "Rambling without Destination: On Daoist "You-ing" in the World," in *Zhuangzi and the Happy Fish*, ed., Roger T. Ames and Takahiro Nakajima (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015).

³³ See Benebell Wen, *A Practical Guide to The Book of Changes* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2023), chapter 3.

³⁴ See Dennis Kat-hung Cheng, "Reexamining the English Translation of the *Yijing*," in Benjamin Wai-ming Ng (ed.), *The Making of the Global Yijing in the Modern*

Although tied closely to divination, this book is a testament to the ancient practice of sensitivity to one's ever-changing reality. *Qì* is this powerful drive in two modes of dissipating and concentrating, this force of vital creativity, that may be understood as a fundamental precondition for life itself.³⁵ The degree that *qì* is part of our existence varies from interpretation to interpretation, yet for a holistically oriented discussion, we may consider it as fundamental to a person's psyche, to that which balances the two sets of five *zàng fǔ* [臟腑] organs, the Five Elements or *wǔ xíng* [五行], to even its essential place in the changing of the seasons found in the *Guà Qì Xué* or the *Guà Qì* school.³⁶ What is important in realizing this movement of force is the balance between the *yīn* [阴] and the *yáng* [阳].

The interplay of all these elements becomes clearer when considering *zhōng yī* in how it banks on the crucial link between what is internal and external to an individual. Allow me to quote at length the fifth chapter of the *Huángdì Nèijīng* to situate my argument:

HUANG DI said, "The law of yin and yang is the natural order of the universe, the foundation of all things, mother of all changes, the root of life and death. In healing, one must grasp the root of the disharmony, which is always subject to the law of yin and yang. "In the universe, the pure yang qi ascends to converge

World: Cross-cultural Interpretations and Interactions (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021), 26. The rest of the Five Classics are *Shījīng* 诗经 (Book of Odes), *Shūjīng* 书经 (Book of History), *Lǐjīng* 礼经 (Book of Rites), and the *Chūnqiū* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals). There is an argument for a sixth Classic, the now lost *Yuèjīng* 乐经 (Book of Music) which is referred to in and usually accompanied by the *Lǐjīng*. See Alfredo Co, *The Blooming of a Hundred Flowers* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009), 27 and Hans van Ess, "Some Preliminary Notes on the Authenticity of the Treatise on Music in 'Shiji' 24," *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005): 48-67, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24047640>.

³⁵ See Keekok Lee, *The Philosophical Foundations of Classical Chinese Medicine: Philosophy, Methodology, Science* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 144. Also, Jana S. Rošker, "Classical Chinese Philosophy and the Concept of Qi," *NEARCO: Revista Eletrônica de Antiquidade* 2020, XII(II) (2020): 118, <https://doi.org/10.12957/nearco.2020.57698>.

³⁶ See Wen, *A Practical Guide to The Book of Changes*, chapter 3. Also see Li Cunshan and Yan Xin, "A Differentiation of the Meaning of 'Qi' on Several Levels," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 3(2) (2008): 194-212, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40343871>.

and form heaven, while the turbid yin qi descends and condenses to form the earth. [...]

“Extreme heat or extreme cold will transform into its opposite. For example, on a hot day, the heat will rise, causing condensation and eventually rain, and therefore cold.

“Coldness produces turbid yin; heat produces the clear yang. If the clear yang qi descends instead of rising, problems such as diarrhea occur in the body. If the turbid yin qi becomes stuck at the top and fails to descend, there will be fullness and distension in the head. These conditions are imbalances of yin and yang.

“In nature, the clear yang forms heaven and the turbid yin qi descends to form earth. The earthly qi evaporates to become the clouds, and when the clouds meet with the heavenly qi, rain is produced. Similarly, in the body, pure yang qi reaches the sensory orifices, allowing one to see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and decipher all information so that the shen/spirit can remain clear and centered. The turbid yin qi descends to the lower orifices. The clear yang qi disperses over the surface of the body; the turbid yin qi flows and nourishes the five zang organs. The pure yang qi expands and strengthens the four extremities, and the turbid yin qi fills the six fu organs.³⁷

This excerpt is from the first part of the book entitled the *sù wèn* [素问] section, which is narrated in a question-and-answer format between the emperor and one of his ministers about the principles of the interplay of *yīn* and *yáng* and how this affects the body. The close connection between what is external to the body and how the internal organs operate is quite direct, a description that may be said too of the other parts of the book. What is vital to see is the premium given by *zhōng yī* to attentiveness to the body and how the body's environment plays a part in this: the medicine practitioner must be attentive to the patient's pulse, the color, and texture of the tongue, what type of food the patient has consumed, and the individual's general lifestyle.³⁸

³⁷ Maoshing Ni (trans.), *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine: A New Translation of the Neijing Suwen with Commentary* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1995), chapter 5.

³⁸ See *Ibid.* chapter 16ff.

What is then diagnosed and subsequently treated in TCM or CCM is the imbalance found within the body, the excess and deficiency of the *qì* in specific parts of the body. The goal becomes not directly the treatment of person through the elimination of certain pathogens, as is the case in Western medicine, but *dé qì* [得气] or the arrival of *qì*. Thus, treatment procedures such as acupuncture and moxibustion or *zhēn jiǔ* [针灸] are employed to address the specific needs of each of the organs within (the *zàng fǔ* organs ought not to be confused organs from the view of Western medicine) and the interplay of these through the meridians.³⁹

From the interplay of coolness and heat in the cosmos or the individual's environment, this same theme is tackled within the body and the effect of technology's intervention.

When acupuncturing deficient conditions, one should elicit a heat sensation with the needle. Only when the *qì* is strong will it be able to produce heat. In treating excess conditions, one should elicit a cooling sensation. When the pathogenic *qì* is weakening, one will experience a cooling feeling. When there is stagnation in the blood caused by the accumulation of a pathogen, one should promote bloodletting to rid the bad blood. In withdrawing the needle on patients with an excess condition, withdraw the needle quickly. Allow the hole to remain open in order to disperse the pathogen. In deficiency, withdraw the needle slowly and close the hole to prevent loss of *qì*.⁴⁰

The effect of the insertion of needles at specific points and even in particular angles or depths is linked to treating excess or deficient conditions, in which the effects would be either cooling or heating, respectively. The entire chapter proceeds with the description of the nine different needles and the arrival of *qì* and how ultimately the *yīn* and *yáng* are balanced through this intervention. The employment of technology here, albeit primitive if not ludicrous if juxtaposed to Western medicine, is ultimately for a realignment of the individual person to *dào*. The technical redirection of *qì* through the use of

³⁹ See Ilza Veith, Introductory Study to *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*, trans. Ilza Veith (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 23ff.

⁴⁰ *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine*, chapter 54.

needles and cups, though seeming superficial to the mind unfamiliar with this type of Daoist cosmology, rejuvenates the individual in finding oneself once more in sync with the force of *qi*. Technology here is simply a small part of a reality that far transcends the individual person.

Concluding Thoughts: Indigenous and Modern Technology?

In place of a conclusion, I provide some affinities between questioning modern technology and the impact of this form of Indigenous knowledge that persists today. Perhaps a decisive question that may be posed in this regard is the possibility of using technology to align ourselves closer to nature. What I want to shed light on through my narrative is perhaps how we can see an intersection of birthing, creation, knowledge, and revealing made possible through the presence and employment or utilization of technology by a subject from this Eastern, Indigenous perspective. What may be analyzed through my presentation of Chinese Medicine and the framework – or the more philosophically-sound term cosmology – it operates through in Daoism, is a creative genesis of the realization of one's alignment with the *Dào*. Taking it a step further, an individual is (re)birthed and (re)created through the practice of *zhōng yī* through the revitalization of the *qi* within. This type of birthing is definitely not the self-birthing in the Cartesian sense, but it is a rejuvenation of the creative power that made and makes life possible. What is revealed then in *zhōng yī* is a furthering of nature's movement within an individual. What becomes more sensitive and known, but not in the Western, rational sense, which seasons correspond to which organs, which illnesses are caused by which wrong mixture of sensations. This makes it possible a revealing of oneself, aligned to the *Dào* through the balance of *yīn* and *yáng*. However, the challenge that governs this type of revealing – should one push the idea that this Indigenous practice is made modern – is still that persistent problem of understanding the movement of *Dào* and the possibility of the balance. Yet, to answer this, the cosmological vision of *zhōng yī*, the individual is consistently challenged throughout one's entire life. And so, here we see an intersection of birthing, creation, knowledge, and revealing made possible through the presence and employment or utilization of technology by a subject.

What is found thus in TCM or CCM is not simply a preservation of an Indigenous form of knowledge that has been systematized into a larger form of relating with the world, but it has become an alternative way of realizing one's place in the world. The human person is rebirthed in a type of relating with the world and enframed neither as the master of nature nor above it, but as nothing but a part of nature in constant movement. The employment of technology, albeit primitive in juxtaposition to Western medicine, serves not as the elimination of the virus and the body's recuperation, but functions as the body's awakening to focus on its parts, which have lost the vital energy, or which clog the perpetual movement of *qi* within.

To end, what I have done in this paper was to provide some comparative views of technology, comparing not just insights from West and East but also of different timeframes, to highlight divergent relationships with technology and the effects these have on our relationships with nature. As a riposte to the seemingly bleak effect of our domination over nature through technology today, a form of Indigenous knowledge, practice, and employment of technology allows us to reflect on the possibility of seeing ourselves as better aligned with nature. The privilege that *zhōng yī* enjoys is its systemic accumulation and protection as part of its government's efforts to protect Chinese cultural identity.⁴¹ One is just left to wonder about the knowledge of countless Indigenous groups that have been eradicated from this planet with their population's disappearance, colonization, or even extermination. What bountiful ways we could have had to problematize contemporary technology if these forms of knowledge coexisted. The true challenge that we face is the cry to preserve what we have and to travel to the peripheries, not for these forms of knowledge to be rationalized but for rationality to be opened to alternative avenues of thinking about and experiencing the world we live in.

⁴¹ Liu Qing, "The cultural dilemma in the process of uniting Chinese and Western medicine from 1940 to 1950," *Journal of Chinese Society* 6(4) (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-019-0092-2>.

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