

Chapter 6

Truth-Concern Approaches in Classical Daoism

In this chapter, I examine several related truth-concern approaches in classical Daoism, as suggested in the two classical Daoist texts, Lao Zi's *Dao-De-Jing* (《道德經》) and Zhuang Zi's *Zhuang-Zi* (《莊子》).¹ In the first two sections, Sections 6.1 and 6.2, I focus, respectively, on two significant lines of Lao Zi's truth-concern approach. The first line is Lao Zi's account of the truth pursuit as the *dao* pursuit. The second line is Lao Zi's truth-pursuing language engagement with the ultimate reality, which shows how the semantic truth of the "unspeakable" is possible. In Sections 6.3 and 6.4, I focus, respectively, on the two significant lines of Zhuang Zi's truth-concern approach. The first line is Zhuang Zi's general methodological strategy in treating various reflective issues, which is essentially a kind of objective perspectivism and whose central point arguably presupposes people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding of truth. The second line is Zhuang Zi's account of truth-pursuing agent. In Section 6.5, I explain how the two truth-concern lines of classical Daoism, that is, Lao Zi's second truth-concern line and Zhuang Zi's first truth-concern line as addressed above manifest themselves in the "double-truth" account of Ji Zang, a Chinese Buddhist thinker, in a philosophically significant way. In the last section, Section 5.6, I highlight and formulate the significant points of these lines in the two classical Daoist figures' truth-concern approaches which, in my view, make substantial contributions to our understanding and treatment of the philosophical concern with truth.

6.1 TRUTH PURSUIT AS *DAO* PURSUIT IN *DAO-DE-JING*

In the following discussion, I first briefly explain the general identity of the *dao* in the *dao* pursuit as delivered in the *Dao-De-Jing* text; in so doing, as one effective way to enhance the understanding, I also give an engaging evaluative discussion of a substantially different interpretation in this connection. I then explain how it is for the *dao* pursuit to be essentially the *truth* pursuit in the *Dao-De-Jing*.

6.1.1 Identity of the *Dao* and the *Dao* Pursuit

It is known that one central strategic goal of classical Daoism is to understand and capture the *dao* (道) or pursue the *dao*. Now what is the *dao*? There is much literature with extensive and diverse views on the issue in philosophical, religious, and Asian studies of Daoism. Due to the nature and goal of this monograph book and the purpose of this section, I will not carry out a survey of such extensive and diverse views here; rather, primarily, I will directly and explicitly explain my approach to the issue, demystifying the identity of the *dao*, for the sake of the central subject of this section concerning the relation between the truth pursuit and the *dao* pursuit; nevertheless, in so doing, I do engage with one different but reflectively interesting interpretative approach for the sake of enhancing our understanding and treatment of the issue. By “directly” I mean this: my subsequent characterization of the identity and characteristic features of the *dao* in this and next sections on Lao Zi’s truth-concern resources is directly based on a holistic reading of the Chinese original of the *Dao-De-Jing*² in the context of philosophical Daoism as a whole, rather than chiefly relying on the second-hand literature such as certain (English) translations some of which include either unconvincing interpretations or incomplete paraphrases to be explained below. By “explicitly” I mean that I endeavor to present my explanation in a clear and intelligible manner, rather than in a mystifying and elusive way. That is, my specific strategy is this: I first highlight the identity and characteristic features of the metaphysical *dao* in summary terms and refer the reader to the relevant textual sources in the *Dao-De-Jing*; to enhance the understanding in an engaging way, I then explain the identity and basic features of the *dao* through directly and explicitly engaging with a substantially different but philosophically interesting interpretative approach suggested by Chad Hansen.

In contrast to some characterizations that set out to mystify the *dao* in the literature, my goal here is to demystify the identity and characteristic features of the *dao* and explain how Lao Zi’s account of the *dao* is philosophically interesting and engaging. The *dao* is not something mystical beyond the

human understanding but primarily the metaphysical *dao*, as characterized by Lao Zi in the *Dao-De-Jing*³ in the following senses. The *dao* as the origin and root of the universe is fundamental;⁴ the *dao* manifests itself in all particular (natural) things in the universe/nature (as individualized *daos*), which are naturally generated by the *dao*, and is thus universal everywhere;⁵ the *dao* is the one unifying force running through the whole universe in the above two senses; the *dao* as the power is inherent in nature (in each thing of the universe) rather than transcendent beyond and above nature;⁶ the *dao* as the source is never exhausted;⁷ the *dao* as a whole is nature (“*zi-ran* 自然” as a noun designating this natural world as a whole) in the above senses combined); the *dao* as the way of nature is the way of *yin-yang* complementary interaction to seek harmonious balance;⁸ the *dao* as the way of existence regarding time is eternal;⁹ the *dao* as the way of existence regarding mode evolves itself and keeps changing dynamically;¹⁰ the *dao* as the way of development is natural (“*zi-ran* 自然” as adjective: so of itself without being excessive) as the *dao* is nature.¹¹ In this way, the metaphysical *dao* is not something like the platonic Form beyond and above, but consists in, particular things in the universe; all particular things in this natural world (i.e., the *wan-wu* 萬物, ten-thousand things), of which human beings and the human society are parts, are manifestations of the metaphysical *dao* as individualized-particularized *daos* within them giving them their powers.¹² The *yin-yang* (陰陽) way of thinking bears on the classical Daoist understanding of the “non-dualist” relationship between the metaphysical *dao* and its manifestations in the *wan-wu*, or *de* (德) in a broad sense, to this extent: their relationship is essentially *yin-yang* complementary at the metaphysical level in the sense that the *dao* and the *wan-wu* are not separate and independent of each other but interdependent, interpenetrating and interactive with regard to metaphysical constitution and function, although the force and existence of the metaphysical *dao* cannot be simply reduced to the sum of (the forces and existences of) the *wan-wu*. Epistemologically speaking, the metaphysical *dao* can thus be (partially) known or understood in our thought and language through capturing the *wan-wu*.¹³ The metaphysical *dao* is thus not something mystical, which neither metaphysically exists beyond and above this natural world nor epistemologically goes beyond human understanding. In our pretheoretic terms, the *dao* is the universe as nature (or this natural world) and its way, instead of something mystical beyond nature; to capture/pursue the *dao* is to understand and capture the way things are (to be) in nature. It is also important to note that capturing/pursuing the *dao* in human society does not necessarily imply conforming to a prefixed path; the point is that any path *per se* that the *dao*-pursuing agent is currently paving is expected to capture or be in accordance with the dynamic way things are in nature. Daoism takes capturing and modeling on the *dao* as the fundamental mission of the

human being in their reflective inquiry. As Lao Zi emphatically points out: “The human being models (*fa* 法) him/herself upon earth; earth models itself upon heaven; heaven models itself upon the *dao*; the *dao* models itself upon what is natural.”¹⁴ In this way, the *dao* pursuit is the most fundamental *dao* concern of classical Daoism.

As one effective way to enhance the understanding of the identity of the *dao*, let me give an engaging evaluative discussion of a substantially different interpretation, i.e., Chad Hansen’s one as given in his (1992 and 2003). In a previous note on the phrase “metaphysical *dao*” in contrast to another saying “the metaphysics of the *dao*,” for the sake of illustration and the subsequent engaging discussion given here, I address Hansen’s case of using them. Indeed, Hansen talks about both: in his 1992, he talks about “metaphysical *dao*” in a negative and critical way, while, in his 2003, he talks about “the metaphysics of *dao*” in a positive and endorsing way. Hansen’s relevant remarks are thought-stimulating and reflectively interesting; it is also especially philosophically engaging when he explores the issue here through addressing relevant resources in the Western philosophical tradition and contemporary philosophy; nevertheless, I disagree to his conclusions and arguments in these two connections for the following considerations. As for the “metaphysical *dao*,” Hansen treats it as a metaphysical object whose “metaphysical” concern results from “a set of Western or Indian assumptions—specifically the assumption that language and mind have an essentially descriptive role and structure” so that any characterization of Lao Zi’s concern with capturing the way of how the “metaphysical object” is would “twist Laozi into a celebration of language’s inability to describe some mystical reality”;¹⁵ as Lao Zi “targets directly the traditionalist Confucian theory” which is to “advocate positing a social, conventional form of discourse to guide behavior,” Lao Zi “has no motivation both to start treating the role of language as representing reality and then denying that representation is possible.”¹⁶ I find this claim together with its surrounding explanation both problematic and unconvincing. First, it is problematic because the argument here explicitly or implicitly resorts to a dual conflation: (1) one cannot dismiss the reflective value of one fundamental issue concerning language, thought and reality just because one *ad hoc* “representational” approach to the issue fails (given that it is the case of “Buddhist argument” or “Western argument,” for the sake of argument): the failure of one *ad hoc* approach to an issue amounts to neither the insolvency nor the insignificance of the issue; (2) one idea or issue that was historically suggested in a certain philosophical tradition (either Buddhist tradition or Western tradition) does not necessarily mean that it is intrinsically or conceptually bound with that tradition only and thus fails to be the human common spiritual wealth. Second, the conclusion is highly unconvincing both because the textual evidence of the *Dao-De-Jing* strongly shows

Lao Zi's "metaphysical" concern with the *dao* as the fundamental ultimate reality and because the metaphysical resources in the *Dao-De-Jing* further suggests a philosophically interesting and engaging "nondualist" approach to the issue of the relation between language, thought and reality. Third, it is arguably incorrect to conclude that any characterization of Lao Zi's concern with capturing the way the "metaphysical object" is would "twist Laozi into a celebration of language's inability to describe some mystical reality": Lao Zi neither claims nor celebrates the human language's inability to capture the *dao* as the ultimate reality, a point to be explained in the next subsection; Lao Zi actually positively affirms the significant role played by the language engagement with the ultimate reality while alerting us to the limit of any finite language engagement; such a two-sided approach is not something mysterious but can be well explained in terms of relevant resources in contemporary philosophy of language: a speaker can successfully make her "rigid" designation of an object as a jointly-designated referent through a communication link and thus "descriptively" capture the object in this connection and to this extent. Fourth, as explained in the preceding chapters on the truth-concern approaches in the *Yi-Jing* philosophy and classical Confucianism, and in view of the profound influence of the *Yi-Jing* philosophy on classical Daoism and of the need of direct engagement of classical Confucianism' concern with the metaphysical foundation for human morality, Lao Zi does have his motivation through this channel to be deeply concerned with the fundamental issue of the relation between language, mind and reality. Fifth, last but not least, even if his contemporary classical Confucians had no concern about capturing the fundamental way things in the natural world are (assuming this for the sake of argument, though it is untrue as explained before), a profound thinker like Lao Zi can be deeply and independently motivated by the fundamental character of the metaphysical *dao* as the ultimate reality and the significant and tremendous explanatory role played by the fundamental "way-things-are-capturing" understanding.

As for his "metaphysics of *dao*" account, Hansen takes it that "Daoism begins...when the performance *dao* [as the concrete pattern of human behaviors] becomes a focus of theory";¹⁷ using Brandom's conceptual resources concerning "entry and exit transitions with the world,"¹⁸ Hansen thinks that Lao Zi, and more generally speaking, Chinese metaphysics, "inclines just as strongly to the exit-action end of the "transitions with the world," which "addresses how conceptions fits with the project of guiding human action.... we need not infer that Daoists must be referring to a reality in a classical Western (e.g., Parmenidean) sense—as something independent of or transcending sense experience, conceptions, and beliefs....We needn't assume that meta-passages [in the *Dao-De-Jing*] about the nature of *dao* must be about ultimate reality (or ultimate source or creator of reality)."¹⁹ As I see

it, the difficulty with this account does not lie in its “perspective” dimension, i.e., Hansen’s concern and focus on the “performance-way-concerned” perspective which itself can be rendered “eligible” in the sense that it does point to and capture some aspect or layer of the *dao* (this natural world) as a whole; rather, the problem lies in his “guiding-principle” dimension which indiscriminately celebrates the “performance”-aspect of the *dao* as a whole and the “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective while dismissing some other perspectives that point to and capture other aspects of the *dao* some of which is more fundamental than its “performance” aspect in its human-society part in the sense to be explained. Let me explain why and how.

Methodologically speaking,²⁰ one substantial difficulty with Hansen’s account here is this: when defending its own “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective (given that it is “eligible” in the sense that it does point to and capture some aspect or layer of the *dao* as a whole), the account dismisses or rejects some other perspectives that are also “eligible” in the sense that they point to and capture some other aspects or layers of the *dao* (as the natural world as a whole), as Lao Zi’s own approach includes both pragmatic “exit-side” perspective through which to talk secondarily about the human-performance *dao* and semantic “entry-side” perspective through which to talk primarily about the natural world together with its fundamental principle. Indeed, *within* the “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective, and relative to this specific perspective, it can be stated that things are not “independent” and “we needn’t assume that meta-passages [in the *Dao-De-Jing*] about the nature of *dao* must be about ultimate reality”; however, on the other hand, what the pragmatic “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective gives are only “partial” truths in the sense that the addressed human-pragmatically-oriented “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective is only a finite and local perspective, which itself is not a multiple-perspective-combined perspective complex, not to mention a complete account, and which itself needs the due guidance.

That is exactly where, not only Lao Zi strongly needs and does have his “transcendental” metaphysical vision of looking at the metaphysical *dao* as the ultimate reality in the aforementioned sense, but also we as interpreters strongly need a “transcendental” interpretation as a fundamental vantage point, from which we can see the boundary and limit of such a “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective as one finite and local perspective and thus can have an adequate methodological guiding principle regarding the due relationship between the “phenomenon”-aspect-concerned perspective and other “eligible” finite and logical perspectives. As indicated above, the textual evidence of the *Dao-De-Jing* text quite clearly and strongly shows such a “transcendental” vantage point as well as the aforementioned multiple perspectives, instead of taking one single finite perspective only. At this point,

there is a serious need to emphasize this: such “transcendental” vantage point that renders the metaphysical *dao* “independent of or transcending [human] sense experience, conceptions, and beliefs” is neither intrinsically nor conceptually “Western” but part of the human common wisdom wealth, whether some specific versions of it were historically suggested in some articulate or distinct ways in this or that philosophical tradition.

One might respond this way: why don’t we take the “performance-*dao*” perspective to be a guiding principle, instead of a naturalist “transcendental” interpretation as an adequate guiding principle? Here we need to look at which one would provide a best-explanation vantage point. First, the human-pragmatic “performance-*dao*” guiding principle cannot provide a reasonable explanation of the relevant fundamental things: among others, (1) this interpretative line cannot explain the origin of this world so as to capture Lao Zi’s underlying insight in this connection; (2) without the “independent” foundation and criterion that are beyond human control, this interpretation line *per se* can hardly escape from its running into a kind of radical “anything goes” relativism and thus fails to do justice to Lao Zi’s account as a whole. In these two connections, similar to the case of engaging evaluation of the Hall-Ames approach as given in the ending section of the previous chapter, there is the need to further look at how the “performance-*dao*” approach is related to the two fundamental common norms that are arguably shared, and need to be observed as guiding norms, by the debating parties that intend to be philosophically engaging and relevant.

In the following I explain why and how the “performance-*dao*” interpretative approach arguably both prescriptively needs to and descriptively does (no matter how much its advocates would like to recognize) resort to the two fundamental norms, the “same-natural-world” norm (as one prominent, significant and fundamental manifestation or variant of the “same-object” norm) and the “way-things-are-capturing” norm.

First, we consider the case of the “same-natural-world” norm with the “performance-*dao*” approach. As explained before, “the same-natural-world norm” or “the common-world norm” is that, either when we reflect directly on this natural world or when we reflect on the metaphysical foundation, source or direction of the adequate ways of these fundamental human concerns, we (debating parties) all talk about the same natural world while talking about it differently: through distinct perspectives that point to and focus on different aspects or layers of it, and with the due understanding of the identity of the natural world of which we as humans and the human society are parts, whose existence and development as a whole are independent of how humans think of it and beyond the humans’ control, and whose unifying “global” fundamental principle any “local” principles of its parts are in accordance with. Indeed, the “same-natural-world” norm is especially relevant to

the metaphysically-related context of philosophical exploration and plays its fundamental explanatory role for cross-tradition or cross-approach engagement in philosophy. That is the case in the current engaging discussion of the “performance-*dao*” approach. Descriptively, if the “performance-*dao*” interpretative approach actually recognizes that the “performance-*dao*” is part of the natural world (as suggested in some relevant passages in Hansen 1992 and 2003),²¹ and from the point of view of the principle of charity in philosophical interpretation, the author (or Lao Zi under his “performance-*dao*” interpretation) does set out to talk *primarily about* this same surrounding natural world as the one about which their engaging dialogue partners set out to jointly talk, though they talk about this same natural world differently (or *secondarily about* different aspects of the same natural world: in Hansen’s case, , the “performance-*dao*” aspect).²² At this point, two notes are due. First, the “same-natural-world” norm neither implies nor is intrinsically related to the thesis to the effect that “reality must not change”.²³ Second, some expressions in the presentation of the pragmatist “performance-*dao*” approach (in Hansen 1992 and 2003) do seem to have the author commit himself to a kind of new dualism that is intended to artificially separate the performance *dao* from the natural-world *dao* as a whole: “Independently of any actual flux in the world itself, our systems of guidance attach to the world in constantly changing ways depending on conventional, and therefore changeable, practice.”²⁴ If the author really intends to talk about some different world from this natural world on which we live together and *of which humans and their behaviors (thus the “performance-*dao*”) are parts*, that would not only make him commit to the foreign unwanted and unjustified form of dualism, but also an insult to the author, instead of a praise, in two connections: first, that would amount to saying that what the author talks about is a radically different world that is irrelevant to what their debating partners are talking about; second, what Hansen has said about this radically different world would be at most fictionally interesting while sounding clever and fancy. Thus, prescriptively, for the sake of the “performance-*dao*” approach’s philosophical relevancy and reflectively engaging character (if any) and of avoiding the radical “anything goes” relativism, this approach need or should set out to talk primarily and eventually about the same natural world as that which its engaging dialogue partners are talking about.

Second, we consider the case of the “way-things-are-capturing” norm with the “performance-*dao*” approach. As indicated in Section 1.3 where the engaging background about distinct approaches to the issue of truth in studies of Chinese philosophy is introduced, essentially taking a revisionist attitude towards the pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth, Hansen takes a “no (semantic) truth” thesis which treats truth (if any) as a pragmatic notion that plays the role.²⁵ Along the engaging evaluation line in treating the Hall-Ames-style pragmatist approach in this connection as given in Section

5.4.2 of the previous chapter, we can raise the following engaging question: when the Hansen-style pragmatist approach treats truth (if any) as a pragmatist notion, would that mean that such a kind of “pragmatist” approach together with its “revisionist” claim of the pragmatist notion of truth can really escape from the regulation and guidance of the fundamental “way-things-are-capturing” norm? As explained above, this norm is fundamentally and intrinsically implied or presupposed in people’s basic mental lives in two connections or at two levels. At the “folk” or “base” level, there is no exception in the case of the Hansen-style pragmatist approach that the norm is fundamentally and intrinsically *presupposed* in any agent’s believing (as one rudimentary mental activity of human beings): in normal cases of statements (except of the “pretension” case), believing what is said (primarily) means (or *is*) believing that what is said captures/connects to the way (given that it is a kind of “performance” way, to be further targeted below) the addressed thing is, although Hansen treats the term “believe” as one of the alleged “Western” elevator terms (along with such terms as “know,” “reason,” “true,” “represent,” and “refer”).²⁶ Then what seems to be at issue is whether, at the reflective level, the “way-things-are-capturing” norm constitutes one basic conceptual foundation even for the “performance-*dao*” approach as it explicitly takes a “revisionist” attitude towards people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth and subscribes to a “pragmatist” notion of “truth”. One thing is certain: Hansen’s approach is also seeking capturing the “performance” way the things (in what is called “phenomenal” world) are within the scope of the “performance”-aspect-concerned perspective; to this extent the “performance-*dao*” approach is already regulated and guided by the “way-things-are-capturing” norm. Actually the case is stronger here: if my diagnosis of how the “performance-*dao*” approach is fundamentally regulated and guided by the “same-natural-world” norm is correct, the “performance” way (if any) human things are is fundamentally *part of* the way things in the natural world are: it is not merely *part* of the way things in the natural world are; it is *part of* the way of the unifying natural world; the “performance” way (if it is one “due” way) human things are is neither the “status-quo” way nor the “anything goes” way human things are but is fundamentally guided and regulated by the fundamental way the unifying natural world is to the following extent: the former is fundamentally in accordance with the latter without violation and fundamentally “manifests” the latter through the former’s various specific manifestations which are sensitive to diverse contexts and situations and which might be not derivable or reducible to each other but fundamentally jointly unified by the latter. In this way, capturing the way things in the natural world in a holistic way are (as we can learn from the truth-concern resources in the *Yi-Jing* philosophy, as discussed in Chapter 2) not only covers capturing the “human-performance” way (if it is a “due” way as part of the way this unifying and unified nature world is) but guides it fundamentally

in accordance with the fundamental principle of this unifying natural world. That is one main reason for why Hansen's "no (semantic) truth" thesis (as one central part of his interpretative account of philosophical Daoism, specifically speaking, and of classical Chinese philosophy, generally speaking) cannot hold.

6.1.2 The Dao Pursuit as the Truth Pursuit

As discussed in Section 1.2 of Chapter 1, the reflective concern with truth in philosophy has its various aspects and dimensions. One important dimension of the philosophical concern with truth consists in the reflective concern with its indispensable, central explanatory role in philosophical inquiries. This point is highlighted by a comprehensive thesis of truth centrality concerning its explanatory role ("TCER" thesis for short), which can be formulated, in a semantic-ascent way via explicitly using the term "truth," as follows:

(TCER) The Thesis of Truth Centrality Concerning Explanatory Role: The concept of truth plays its indispensable, central explanatory role in philosophical inquiries.

Traditionally, in the Western philosophical tradition, such an indispensable and central explanatory role has been treated as an explanatory norm that regulates and explains one (central) goal of philosophical inquiries. This view can be highlighted and formulated by a thesis of "truth as (strategic) normative goal" ("TNG thesis" for short) as follows:

(TNG) The concept of truth is an explanatory norm to regulate and explain one goal of philosophical inquiries.²⁷

Although the TNG thesis as presented above has yet to be clarified, many think that there is some reasonable point of the TNG thesis that is considered prescriptively adequate.

Given the nature and function of the TNG thesis as given before and my account of the nature and mission of the *dao* concern of philosophical Daoism are right, the *dao*-pursuing mission of classical Daoism in the above sense is essentially a kind of truth-pursuit mission, which can be delivered in terms of a Daoist way of presenting the TNG thesis ("TNG^D thesis" for short) as follows:

(TNG^D) The Daoist reflective way of presenting the explanatory-reduction version of the thesis of truth centrality as a strategic normative goal:

Capturing *dao* ("*dao*" designates the way things are) is an explanatory norm to regulate and explain one central strategic goal of philosophical inquiries;

or, simply:

The *dao* pursuit is an explanatory norm to regulate and explain one central strategic goal of philosophical inquiries.

Several explanatory notes are due. First, the distinction between use and mention needs to be paid attention to in this context. The phrase “the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version” is *mentioned only in contrast to* “the semantic-ascent version” which is a by-default version in the Western tradition but whose counterpart can be hardly found in the literature of classical Chinese philosophy; nevertheless, *here* the phrase “the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version” is *used* to refer to what it is supposed to refer to, i.e., its content to the effect that capturing the way things (as due objects of philosophical studies) are is taken as an explanatory norm to regulate and explain one central strategic goal of philosophical inquiries. In this way, what the Daoist way of presenting the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version presents is such a content, instead of presupposing the presence of (the counterpart of) the semantic-ascent version in classical Chinese philosophy.

Second, one might object: isn't the Daoist understanding of *dao* so different from some typical or representative understanding of reality or the way things are in the West that the preceding so-called Daoist reflective way, (TNG^D), of presenting the TNG thesis actually talks about something else? As explained before, our pretheoretic understanding of truth and the TNG thesis themselves do not intrinsically commit themselves to any *ad hoc* ontological account or elaboration of what counts as reality that would render truth objective or non-epistemic (as specified in Section 1.1.3) and therefore their metaphysical commitment is minimal in this connection. Rather, the TNG thesis is compatible with, and allows for, various reflective ways of presenting it given that these various ways are reflective ways of talking about the way things are—the Daoist way of talking about the *dao* is one of these ways. It is noted that, although, practically speaking, a thesis or account concerning truth (capturing *dao*) might be put forward together with (or with due implication of) some ontological claims concerning what counts as reality (*dao*), the thesis or account is actually a *combination* of a thesis *of truth* itself *and* an ontological view of what counts as reality (*dao*). It is important to notice that, theoretically speaking, a thesis or account *of truth* cannot be conflated with an ontological doctrine of what counts as reality (*dao*). A *Daoist elaboration* of (TNG^D) into a *metaphysically-loaded* account is not the same as (TNG^D) *per se* but actually the *combination* of a Daoist way of presenting the TNG thesis via (TNG^D), which is ontologically neutral concerning what counts as the (non-epistemic and thus objective) *dao*, *and* a Daoist metaphysical account of what counts as *dao* without conceptually conflating each with the other.

Third, related to the point of the preceding remarks, it is also noted that we might as well replace the Daoist reflective way of talking about the way things are with one Chinese pretheoretic way of talking about the way things are via such folk phrases as “*shi-shi-qiu-shi*” (實事求是), as addressed in Section 1.4 of Chapter 1. A reflective way of talking about “*qiu-dao*” (求道) and a folk way of talking about “*shi-shi-qiu-shi*” are both distinctive Chinese ways of delivering the point of the TNG thesis.

Fourth, while some contemporary Western philosophers like Davidson actually subscribes to the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version of the TNG thesis in an implicit and indirect way,²⁸ classical Daoism explicitly and directly delivers the point of the thesis through its characteristic *dao*-pursuing version that captures the crux of the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version of the thesis. Now one issue emerges: given that classical Daoism’s *dao*-pursuing strategic goal captures the point of the TNG thesis through (TNG^D) and thus that the *dao* pursuit in classical Daoism is the truth pursuit in the way as captured by the point of the TNG thesis, does classical Daoism make any substantial contribution through (TNG^D) to our reflective understanding of the truth concern? Now it is time to explore merits (if any) of each of the two characteristic versions of the TNG thesis.

Generally speaking, each of the two versions of the TNG thesis has its own merits (and actual or potential disadvantages in contrast to the other’s merits). The semantic-ascent version talks about truth in an economic and convenient way by using a one-word term “truth” with merely one syllable instead of using some multiple-syllable phrases like “[a certain truth bearer] in accordance with [a certain] fact.” Another merit of the semantic-ascent version is this: what is (or is supposed to be) shared, or something common, stable, definite, constant, unchanged and universal, in all concrete and particular states of (*various truth bearers*’) *corresponding to the ways things are in the world* is highlighted and emphasized in terms of one word “be true” or “truth” via such semantic ascent. In the philosophical context, this approach actually reflects a general being-aspect-concerned orientation of Western tradition: it tends to focus on the being aspect of an object of study, that is, the aspect of the object that is stable and invariable, unchangeable, definite and constant—i.e., the being aspect; when what is involved is to capture what is stable, constant and invariable among a number of objects of one kind, this orientation thus tends to focus on what is shared, common and thus universal among them. A reflective perspective that is intended to capture such an orientation to look at an object of study or a number of objects that are somehow related might as well be called “the being-aspect-concerned perspective.” In this way, one can say that, besides the aforementioned consideration for economy and convenience, the semantic-ascent version of the thesis as strategic normative goal more or less reflects such a being-aspect-concerned

orientation or perspective. If the first merit is more or less instrumental in character, the second merit is quite substantial in nature. In contrast, one merit of the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version is that it delivers the substantial content of truth pursuit in an explicit, straightforward and illuminative way. Another merit is this: the key phrase, “capturing the way things are,” not merely delivers the substantial content of truth pursuit but also implies or points to the concrete and particular aspect of truth pursuit. Generally speaking, there is some distinct aspect(s) between the way one thing is and the way another thing is; therefore, generally speaking, the way of capturing the way one thing is different from that way of capturing the way another thing is. One certainly cannot say that this version thus loses sight of, or is inconsistent with, the general and universal aspect of truth pursuit: the phrase “capturing the way things are” is an abstract and generalization: what is common among many different truth bearers is that they *capture the way things are*. Notice that the apparent singular term “way” used in the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version actually covers both ways: one might as well say that it is used both as a collective noun to cover various particular ways things are and as an abstract term to capture the general character or shared dimension of all these particular ways. In this connection, given the specified meaning of “(metaphysical) *dao*” in classical Daoism as characterized before, the Daoist *dao*-pursuing way of presenting the TNG thesis, as a variant of the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version in regard to content, hits the point of the unification of both ways. If my preceding discussions of the distinction between the two versions of the TNG thesis and of their respective merits in regard to orientation are correct, I treat this as one substantial contribution by Daoism to our reflective understanding of the truth concern in philosophical inquiries.

There is one more merit of the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version that is already briefly addressed in one note on (TNG^P): while the semantic-ascent version by default suggests a nonagent thing as a “truth bearer” like a sentence, statement, belief or proposition, the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version suggests, or at least is compatible with, the human agent as a primary truth bearer in a certain context to this extent: it is eventually the human agent who “understands” or “captures” the way things are in the world and thus who generates, possesses and unifies various true beliefs and thoughts that she actually has. It is noted that the *dao* pursuing is not limited to a “static” understanding of the world; it also includes the agent’s dynamic understanding and her implementing the understanding via her action that is regulated by *wu-wei* (無為 acting without being against dynamic nature). The point and significance of this merit will be further explained in Section 6.4 below when Zhuang Zi’s relevant point is discussed.

In the following, to further understand and illustrate the truth pursuit in the *Dao-De-Jing* (that is, how the Daoist classic text raises some reflectively interesting issues in this connection and how it responds to these issues in certain reflectively interesting ways if any), let me give a case analysis of one passage in the *Dao-De-Jing* that raises some philosophically interesting issues concerning the truth/*dao* pursuit. The passage is from Chapter 54 as follows (my translation):

修之於身，其德乃真；修之於家，其德乃餘；修之於鄉，其德乃長；修之於國，其德乃豐；修之於天下，其德乃普。故以身觀身，以家觀家，以鄉觀鄉，以國觀國，以天下觀天下。吾何以知天下然哉？以此。

Cultivates virtue within oneself as a whole body and it
 thus becomes authentic (true) [*zhen* 真];
 Cultivates virtue in one's family and that thus becomes to overflow;
 Cultivates virtue in one's village and it thus becomes long-lasting;
 Cultivates virtue in one's state and it thus becomes abundant;
 Cultivates virtue in the world and it thus becomes universal.
 Therefore, look at the oneself by virtue of the oneself;
 Look at the family by virtue of the family;
 Look at the village by virtue of the village;
 Look at the state by virtue of the state;
 Look at the world by virtue of the world.
 How do I know the world as it is?
 By virtue of this.

As I see it, there are four interesting points concerning the truth pursuit in this short passage. First, Lao Zi here both implicitly makes his metaphysical point concerning truth nature as well as explicitly makes his epistemological point concerning truth means in line with our pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth. In the second part of this citation, Lao Zi explicitly raises the issue of *how to know* the world as it is (*he-yi-zhi-tian-xia-zhi-ran* 何以知天下之然); the criterion or means by virtue of which one can know that, according to Lao Zi, is to examine (*guan* 觀) the object of knowledge (whether it is the human being oneself or family or state or other things in the world) by virtue of the way the object *is* in the world. (Surely, it is controversial due to some epistemological difficulties well known in the Western tradition; nevertheless, for a classical Daoist like Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, one can somehow know the world as it is through, say, joint functions by various knowing organs which are not limited to those intersubjective ones like our senses and intellectual mind.²⁹ In so doing, with the dual meaning of *zhi* (知 knowing as the process of knowledge and what is known as the result of knowledge), Lao Zi as a matter of fact makes his metaphysical point concerning truth nature which is to be possessed by

the result of knowing: the resulting knowledge captures the world as it is (*zhi-tian-xia-zhi-ran* 知天下之然). Note that, in so doing, Lao Zi does not use any one-Chinese-character counterpart, if any, of the one-word term in Western phonetic languages (say, “true” or “truth” in English)—as a semantic-ascent linguistic means of indicating truth nature—to deliver his insight concerning the truth/*dao* pursuit. This is exactly one point that this essay is intended to make: the truth concern, generally speaking, and the truth pursuit, specifically speaking, are not necessarily related to any *ad hoc* semantic-ascent linguistic means whose meaning depends on its due paraphrase explanation.

Second, it is interesting enough to note that the Chinese character “*zhen*” (真), whose current usage in modern Chinese has made it become a by-default one-character Chinese counterpart of English term “truth” or “true,” does appear in the first statement in the cited passage: “Cultivates virtue within oneself and it [one with virtue] thus becomes genuine / true [*xiu-zhi-yu-shen qi-de-nai-zhen* 修之於身, 其德乃真]”; the other occurrence of the character “*zhen*” in the *Dao-De-Jing* is in Chapter 21: “[*Dao*] Deep and far off, there is the essence within; The essence is highly authentic / true [*qi-jing-shen-zhen* 其精甚真], and there is evidence within.” Now what is at issue is how to understand and interpret the meaning of “*zhen*” in the above contexts. It seems that “*zhen*” is open to two distinctive interpretations in the foregoing contexts. One way is to interpret “*zhen*” as a noun-like expression meaning *what really is*.³⁰ Another way is to interpret “*zhen*” as a predicate meaning *reaching or capturing the way things are*. It is arguably right that the latter interpretation provides a better explanation than the former does for several considerations. First, grammatically speaking, it is clear that “*zhen*” functions as a predicate expression, instead of a noun-like expression, in the above two first-order reflective contexts; they are used to assign a certain attribute to the subjects. Second, it is also clear that the latter interpretation is most close to, or almost the same as, its basic modern sense (i.e., capturing or fit fact or reality), while there is an obvious gap between the former interpretation and the basic modern sense; the former interpretation thus owes us an explanation of why there is such a substantial meaning gap between the sense of “*zhen*” here and its basic modern sense. Third, the latter interpretation is much in accordance with the fundamental mission of *dao* pursuit (to understand and capture the *dao* as the way things are) of the *Dao-De-Jing*. Indeed, the logical subject of *zhen*, or the *zhen* bearer, in these two cases is neither the linguistic sentence or statement nor the propositional content of thought or belief; but, at least in the context of the Daoist classic *Dao-De-Jing*, it is arguably right to say that “*zhen*” is used to indicate something like *reaching or capturing (a high level of) the way things are*. In the case of Chapter 54, only when virtue is cultivated within oneself [via *wu-wei*], the alleged virtue *becomes* virtue, which, one can say, means *shang-de* (上德 genuine virtue, a kind of high level of spontaneous virtue) (the *Dao-De-Jing*,

ch. 38) and which is thus a kind of the way the genuine human virtue is. In the case of Chapter 21, the *dao* as essence and power of *wan-wu* “highly” reaches the very way the nature is, which *is* the *dao*. In this way, although the ancient usage of the term “*zhen*” here is distinctive from its primary modern usage as a counterpart of “true” and “truth,” what it delivers is essentially along the same line as what our pretheoretic understanding of truth is to deliver, that is, (the truth bearer) capturing the way things are. To this extent, it is not implausible or too odd to translate the two occurrences of “*zhen*” in the *Dao-De-Jing* into “true,” instead of “genuine” in the former case and “authentic” in the latter case. It is noted that the thesis of the *dao* pursuit as the truth pursuit of capturing the way things are is established on the basis of examining the nature of the *dao* pursuit and its relation to our pretheoretic understanding of truth, instead of being based on what “*zhen*” means in the *Dao-De-Jing*. Therefore, even if the former interpretation of “*zhen*” is correct, that would not constitute a refutation of the thesis. Nevertheless, as discussed above, it is arguably right that the latter interpretation provides a better explanation of the meaning of “*zhen*” in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing* that is in accordance with the pretheoretic understanding of truth.

Third, another interesting issue concerning the truth pursuit raised in the passage is that of the truth of human morality. From Lao Zi’s point of view, human morality in terms of human virtue, as indicated by the term “*de*” used in the narrow sense in the *Dao-De-Jing*, is not something like fixed floating entity that can be imposed upon the moral agent from outside but is cultivated “within and through [the moral agent] oneself as a whole body” (*xiu-zhi-yu-shen* 修之於身). In accordance with the broad sense of “*de*” referring to manifestations of the metaphysical *dao*, or individualized *daos*, in particular things, *de* as human virtue is the manifestation of the metaphysical *dao* in human beings regarding morality, which renders human beings having “power.” In this sense, from Lao Zi’s Daoist point of view, it is not only that the truth of a moral judgment, say, “Mary is a moral person with virtue,” has its objective basis that consists in its capturing the way the moral agent is regarding her cultivated virtue within; it is also that the truth of the moral agent’s virtue itself has its objective basis that consists in its following or “modeling itself on” (*fa* 法) (Chapter 25) the *dao* in the way of *wu-wei* (a Daoist way of presenting the point of capturing the way things are in this context). (It is noted that the latter insight above actually provides a due basis for explaining how it is possible for human virtue to possess truth, an issue that is induced by Lao Zi’s idea “[human virtue] thus becomes true [*qi-de-nai-zhen* 其德乃真]” in his first statement of the cited passage, as mentioned in the preceding second point.) In this way, Lao Zi’s *dao*-pursuing approach does not exclude but intrinsically includes the moral-truth pursuit in the above sense.

Fourth, the foregoing second and third points are actually related to another interesting issue concerning the truth pursuit in philosophy, i.e., the issue of

due truth bearers, as already more or less addressed in the preceding discussions of the two points. The crux of the issue is this: given that truth nature consists in capturing the way things are, whether due (primary) truth bearers can be only such mental things with conceptual contents as thoughts and beliefs and their linguistic expressions like sentences and statements or can also be other human things like the human agent herself as a whole, and how those aforementioned truth-bearer candidates if any are related. Lao Zi indirectly makes his positive point concerning this issue as he favorably talks about both kinds of truth bearers. Let me further address the issue of the human agent as a truth bearer in the next section where I discuss how another important classical Daoist philosopher, Zhuang Zi, explicitly addresses the issue in his account of the true agent and true knowledge.

Before moving onto the subject of the next section, let me give a brief summary of the central point that I have endeavored to make in this section. As explained before, through an explanatory reduction of the truth property to what the term “truth” is used to really talked about along the lines of people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth, the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version of the TNG thesis hits the point in regard to exactly what counts as an explanatory norm to regulate one central strategic goal of philosophical inquiries. In so doing, the explanatory-reduction version of the TNG thesis has another significant role in capturing a due cross-tradition understanding of the nature and scope of the truth concern in different philosophical traditions: it would help us identify and characterize the truth concern in Chinese philosophical tradition in view of classical Daoism. Although the trademark version of the TNG thesis is its semantic-ascent version especially in the Western tradition, and although the semantic-ascent version does have its merits, the paraphrase-explanatory-reduction version of the thesis is more illuminative and explicitly gives the crucial content of people’s pretheoretic understanding of truth. The *dao* pursuit of classical Daoism is essentially the truth pursuit in general terms, though it is presented in classical Daoism in a characteristic way. To further understand and illustrate the truth pursuit in the Daoist classic text *Dao-De-Jing*, I have given a case analysis of one passage from Chapter 54, which explicitly or implicitly makes some philosophically interesting points concerning the truth pursuit in philosophy.

6.2 HOW SEMANTIC TRUTH OF THE “UNSPEAKABLE” IS POSSIBLE

In this section, I examine the issue of how (semantic) truth of the alleged “unspeakable” is possible through re-examining the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing*, which is delivered by its opening statements consisting of the first and second six-character statements in its first chapter. The opening

message of the *Dao-De-Jing* is to be understood in the whole context of this Daoist classical text, and in view of the relevant conceptual resources concerning the relationship between truth and reference introduced in Chapter 1 for the sake of enhancing our understanding.

In classical Chinese philosophy, the ultimate reality, such as the metaphysical *dao* in the classical Daoism, is sometimes labeled “the unspeakable,” which is considered to be “unspeakable” in the sense that the *dao* itself can be neither talked about nor describable; we have to ponder it in silence. Such an understanding results from a widely-circulated interpretation of certain sayings and passages in the texts of classical Daoism, Lao Zi’s *Dao-De-Jing* and Zhuang Zi’s *Zhuang-Zi*; one of the most oft-cited textual passages is the opening statements of the *Dao-De-Jing*. Now, if the ultimate reality, the metaphysical *dao per se*, is “unspeakable” in the foregoing sense, the very “semantic” notion of truth would be simply inapplicable: as no language expression (as means or medium) can make it to capture the way the ultimate reality itself is, the semantic truth of the ultimate reality as the “unspeakable” seems to be just impossible. At this point, several clarifications are due. First, by “semantic truth” I mean the notion of truth that has been explained in Chapter 1. Second, although, with the specification in Chapter 1, it is not necessary to use “semantic truth” but “truth,” the phrase “semantic truth” instead of mere “truth” is emphatically used to highlight the engaging character of the issue under examination here: what is addressed is neither the so-called “metaphysical truth” nor some other kinds of nonsemantic “truth,” both of which would have the discussion either trivial or irrelevant or less engaging. If truth is claimed to be metaphysically the same as the “unspeakable” ultimate reality, then there is no issue of how the truth of the “unspeakable” is possible as they are simply the same; if truth is taken to mean something other than semantic truth, then, for one thing, it would be irrelevant to the notion of truth and the truth concern under examination in this writing; for another thing, it would be less engaging from the vantage point of philosophy of language concerning the “semantic” relationship between language, thought and reality.

The issue is philosophically interesting and significant. If the semantic truth for the ultimate reality as the “unspeakable” is impossible, one’s understanding and thought on the ultimate reality is neither accessible nor evaluable nor open to criticism. What is rendered worse is that this would happen not merely to others but also to oneself: without language as a means and medium, one’s own thought on the ultimate reality *per se* is neither accessible nor thinkable to oneself; this would eventually lead to self-deception. We thus need a philosophically interesting and illuminate explanation of how the semantic truth of the alleged “unspeakable” is possible. In the following, I intend to spell out one of Lao Zi’s fundamental insights in the *Dao-De-Jing*

on the relation between the ultimate concern with the eternal *dao* (*chang-dao* 常道) and its truth-pursuing language engagement. By “the truth-pursuing language engagement of an ultimate concern” I mean any reflective endeavor to capture (reach or characterize) the way the ultimate reality is through language. It is often believed that, in the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing*, Lao Zi makes his sharply negative claim in this connection to the effect that any language engagement is doomed to fail to capture the genuine *dao*. I intend to show that, instead of indiscriminately giving a negative claim against any language engagement of the ultimate concern, in the first six-character statement, Lao Zi reveals a two-sided transcendental insight which, on the one hand, positively affirms the role of the language-engaging finite point of view in capturing the ultimate concern and, on the other hand, alerts us to the limitation of the finite point of view and emphasizes the transcendental dimension of the *dao* as the ultimate concern; furthermore, in the second six-character statement, through a semantic ascent of talking about the name of the *dao*, Lao Zi delivers essentially the same message, though in a certain distinct way that is philosophically interesting. In this way, instead of indiscriminately rejecting language engagement, Lao Zi delivers his two-sided insight in his opening statements which gives his own answer to the issue of how the semantic truth of the alleged “unspeakable” is possible.

Lao Zi’s central point here is not something mysterious. Rather, it is a kind of “magnified” version of the “double reference” character of the basic language employment: instead of individual particular objects around us as referents of ordinary names in our daily linguistic practice, it addresses the ultimate reality, the metaphysical *dao*. In plain words, Lao Zi’s two-sided vision concerning the truth-pursuing language engagement is this: when something is said about the *dao*, on the one hand, the *dao*, the ultimate reality, as a whole can be talked about and designated via the name “*dao*” or some other designators used in the *Dao-De-Jing*, and, on the other hand, when one talks about the *dao* as whole, in view of one’s current purpose and focus, one can at the same time point to (i.e., talk specifically about) and characterize what is considered to be some specific part(s) of the *dao* and make “further comments” on the *dao* with regard to the alleged specific part(s) of the *dao*. In this way, naturally, there is the issue of whether one’s statement that delivers such “double-reference” characterization of the *dao* is (semantically) true or false.

In view of this line of thought, in the subsequent discussion, my organizational strategy is this. First, in section 6.2.1, I give an analysis of one traditional paraphrase in English that delivers one prevailing standard interpretation, and then I explain my paraphrase of the first six-character statement of the opening passage. Second, in section 6.2.2, in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing*, I spell out Lao Zi’s two-sided transcendental insight revealed

in the first statement. Third, in section 6.2.3, I then explain how, in some philosophically interesting way, Lao Zi delivers essentially the same message in the second six-character statement via a semantic ascent of talking about the name of the *Dao*.

6.2.1 An Analysis of One Standard Interpretation of the Opening Statement

One of Lao Zi's most fascinating teachings in the *Dao-De-Jing* is the first pair of 12-character poetized aphorisms in Chapter 1:

(1) *Dao-ke-dao-fei-chang-Dao* (道可道非常道);³¹

(1*) *Ming-ke-ming-fei-chang-Ming* (名可名非常名).

which, according to one standard, or the most prevalent, interpretative translation, is paraphrased as follows:

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way;
The name that can be named is not the constant name.³²

or

The *Dao* that can be told of [in language] is not the eternal *Dao*;
The name that can be named [in language] is not the eternal name.³³

or

A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.
A name that can be named is not a constant name.³⁴

or (in a “pragmatically”-oriented way)

Way-making (*dao*) that can be put into words is not really way-making,
And naming (*ming*) that can assign fixed reference to things is not really naming.³⁵

In this section, I focus on the first six-character aphorism, that is, (1), on the *dao*, which is also called “the (first) opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing*” in this article. As far as the first opening statement is concerned, in one crucial connection under discussion, the preceding standard interpretation might even assume *the* standard paraphrase. In his article “On the Opening Words

of the Lao-Tzu,"³⁶ Herrlee Creel reviews twenty-nine English translations of the opening passage. Among them, as Creel sees it, the standard pattern is used in fourteen translations, if some rearrangement and some use of synonyms are tolerated. As I see it, all those twenty-nine translations examined in Creel's article seem to share the same core structure regarding the opening statement to the effect that the *Dao* (used as a noun) that can or may be *dao* (used as a verb) is not the *chang-Dao*.³⁷

It is often thought that what the opening statement reveals is a fundamental Daoist fundamental insight that is strikingly similar to that of Wittgenstein's well-known idea about the spoken and the unspoken: language expressions or formulations, or what is captured within language, cannot really capture what those expressions or formulations aim to say; the genuine *dao* has to be captured in a way that is beyond language. It is often said that in Lao Zi's case, contemplation of the *dao* in silence requires sharply distinguishing the eternal *dao* from what can be formulated or captured in (by or through) language,³⁸ for the two are simply opposed to each other. This view clearly has a bearing on the linguistic structure of the standard English translations cited previously:

(2) The *Dao* that can be told of or formulated (in language) is not the eternal *Dao*;

That is, as it literally says, the so-called *dao* that can be told of is not the eternal *dao* or is not the genuine *dao* when the eternal *dao* is identified as the genuine *dao*; whatever can be told of in language is not the genuine *dao*. In other words, the genuine *dao*, as an ultimate concern, simply cannot be captured through language; any language engagement with the genuine *Dao* is doomed to fail to capture the genuine *dao*. Note that this kind of paraphrasing implies that the first appearance of the term "*Dao*" used as noun in the opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing* does not refer to or designate the genuine *dao*.

I doubt if the preceding standard interpretation of the opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing* captures the comprehensive point of what is delivered there, although it does partially capture the point to the extent I will explain below. Let me begin with a comparative analysis of the language structures of the standard translation and the Chinese original. The standard interpretation is essentially a negative paraphrase concerning whether or not the *Dao* can be captured through language. The message delivered by the standard translation in English, (2), can be paraphrased back into the following (ancient) Chinese expression:

(2') *ke-dao-zhi-Dao-fei-chang-Dao* (可道之道非常道);

in which “*ke-dao-zhi-Dao*” (可道之道) is the Chinese counterpart of the complex noun phrase “the *Dao* that can be told of,” which consists of a noun and its attributive clause.

Now one question is whether or not, and to what extent, the statement (2), or its Chinese counterpart (2’), is an adequate paraphrase of the original statement (1). Let us examine the paraphrase in two aspects: syntax and semantics. That is, we shall examine: (a) whether or not the syntactic dimension of such a paraphrase accords with the syntactic structure of the Chinese original; (b) whether or not the semantic dimension of such a paraphrase, or its meaning, accords with the meaning of the Chinese original which, according to the principle of charity, needs to be coherent with other relevant fundamental insights revealed in the *Dao-De-Jing*.

The paraphrase (2), in my opinion, fails in both aspects. As far as the syntactic aspect is concerned, (2) does not have the same linguistic or syntactic structure as that of (1). To see the difference between the paraphrase (2), or (2’), and the Chinese original (1), let us compare the Chinese counterpart (2’), “*ke-dao-zhi-Dao-fei-chang-Dao*,” of the statement (2) with the Chinese original (1). In the Chinese original, “*Dao-ke-dao-fei-chang-Dao*,” as a matter of fact, is a conjunction which consists of two conjunct claims rather than one: the first one is “*Dao-ke-dao*” asserting that the *Dao* can be talked about in language, while the second one is that what has been characterized in language is not, or cannot exhaust, the eternal *Dao*³⁹—which might be paraphrased back into the following Chinese expression: “[*suo-shu-zhi-Dao* 所述之道] *fei-chang-Dao*.” That is, a complete presentation of the two correlative messages in the context of the first six-character statement might well be given in Chinese this way:

(3) *Dao-ke-dao, dan-suo-shu-zhi-Dao-fei-chang-Dao* (道可道, 而所述之道非常道);

or its paraphrase in English:

(3’) The *Dao can* be talked about in language, but the *Dao* that has been talked about in language is not the eternal *Dao*;

or, more exactly,

(3’’) The *Dao can* be reached in language, but the *Dao* that has been characterized in language is not identical with, or does not exhaust, the eternal *Dao*.

One thing is clear: in (1), the Chinese original “*Dao-ke-dao*” (道可道) is a positive message delivered via a positive assertive statement, whereas in (2)

or (2'), the positive assertive statement is turned into a complex noun phrase "the *Dao* that can be told of," which consists of a noun and its attributive clause,⁴⁰ and then makes its negative contribution to the alleged meaning of the opening statement with the notion that the *Dao* that can be told of is *not* the eternal *Dao*.⁴¹ To this extent, the difference in the syntactic structures of (1) and (2) do make some substantial difference in their meanings. This also provides one reason why I think that, semantically speaking, (2) fails to capture what (1) delivers. Here one can see why and how a certain difference in syntactic structure bears on some difference in semantic dimension, although I cannot generally or systematically discuss this issue here for the sake of space and topic.

Now let us see why (2) fails in the semantic connection for semantic reasons that are independent of the aforementioned syntactic structure. One clear textual fact is that, throughout the *Dao-De-Jing*, Lao Zi himself talked about the genuine *dao*—the ultimate concern pursued. His language practice in the *Dao-De-Jing* shows his own language engagement with the ultimate concern. Lao Zi talked even about the eternal *Dao* (*chang-Dao*)—exactly in the opening statement. One might object that, although Lao Zi talked about the eternal *dao*, he emphasized that he could not clearly characterize the eternal, infinite *dao* as the origin of all things in the universe.⁴² Fair enough. However, note that the second appearance (as a verb) of the character "dao" in the opening statement does not merely mean being characterized in descriptive language; rather, it covers a variety of language-engagement activities, including direct reference through rigid designators. One can easily find that the genuine *dao*, or even its eternal, constant and infinite dimension, is reached in language in various ways in the *Dao-De-Jing*: In the bottom-line case regarding naming, it is rigidly designated either through direct reference (without via description) or through description⁴³ by such rigid designators or descriptive (rigid-) designator as "*Dao*," "*chang-Dao*"⁴⁴ or "*Da*" (大).⁴⁵ In this way, Lao Zi's own language engagement with the genuine *dao* would either render him incoherent with himself if (2) is correct, or render (2) inadequate if Lao Zi himself is coherent with himself and if one seriously considers the relevant textual evidence in the *Dao-De-Jing*. By the principles of charity and of best explanation, I tend to think that Lao Zi's language engagement with the genuine *dao* in the *Dao-De-Jing* is essentially coherent, and thus I consider (2) as a semantically inadequate interpretation.

Moreover, one would point out that the paraphrase (3), (3') or (3'') adds up something that does not appear in (1). Indeed, in comparison with the Chinese original (1), the paraphrase (3) brings back something that is omitted in (1):⁴⁶ it completes the second claim of (1) with its omitted subject. As suggested above, the paraphrase (2) also provides the logical subject of the second claim of (1), albeit by dissolving the first claim of (1), "the *Dao* can be told of in

language,” and turning the sentential claim into a complex noun phrase, that is, “the *Dao* that can be told of.” In contrast, the restored logical subject of the second conjunct claim in (3) is not “the *Dao* that can be told of” in the standard interpretation, but rather “the *Dao* that has been described or characterized” (*suo-shu-zhi-Dao*). One might ask why the logical subject of the second claim of (1) should be the latter rather than the former. Let us consider the issue from two angles.

First, why does it seem to be inadequate to take “the *Dao* that can be told of” (*ke-dao-zhi-Dao*) as the logical subject of the second claim? There are two reasons. (i) If (2) is correct, the first appearance in the context of the term “*dao*” is not used to designate the *dao* or the genuine *dao*; but it seems very odd that Lao Zi would use the term “*dao*” to designate something other than the *dao* when the term as a noun first appears in the *Dao-De-Jing*. (ii) If my discussion in the preceding paragraph is correct, the first appearance of the character “*dao*” is indeed used to designate the genuine *dao*, and thus “the *Dao* that can be talked about” also designates the genuine *dao*. Then something incoherent would happen. Given that the eternal *dao* is (one dimension or layer of) the genuine *dao*, (2) would make Lao Zi claim that the genuine *dao* is *not* the genuine *dao*.

Second, why does it seem to be adequate to take the logical subject of the second claim of (1) as the one provided in (3)? We first need to make clear what “*chang-Dao*” (the eternal *dao*) means. In my view, what “*chang-Dao*” denotes is not something that is separate from the (genuine) *dao* as a whole but one dimension or layer of the *dao*: its eternal and infinite dimension that consists in the *dao* going on forever and transcending any finite manifestations of the *dao* in *wan-wu* (萬物 ten-thousands of particular, concrete and individual things of the universe) in the course of its developing and changing process. One who is familiar with the *Dao-De-Jing* can easily find that, in the classical text, Lao Zi uses the character “*dao*” in several different senses in its total seventy-three appearances. One might thus ascertain that those different senses indicate that, metaphysically speaking, *there are* different *daos* involved there, such as the so-called ontological-origin *dao*, law-like *dao*, moral-principle *dao*, performance *dao*, and so forth. As a matter of fact, Lao Zi did not talk about different *daos*; rather, he talked about the same *dao*, but one with different dimensions, layers, facets or manifestations. Those different dimensions or layers might be finite or infinite in character, but all of them are parts of the genuine *dao* rather than something separate from the *dao*. The *dao* as a whole is the unity of the infinite and the finite, the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the temporary, and so on. In some of the literature, one can find one trend in which the infinite and eternal dimension of the *dao* has been exclusively emphasized so that this dimension of the *dao* is simply taken as the exclusive defining-character of the genuine *dao*.

I consider this viewpoint as a one-sided understanding of Lao Zi's insight into the *dao*. From the Daoist point of view, any definite descriptions and characterizations of the genuine *dao* are finite in character in view of the infinite and eternal dimension of the *dao*. In other words, what such descriptions and characterizations have captured in language are the finite parts of the *dao*. As I will discuss in the third section below, even Lao Zi's own characterizations of the *eternal dao* or the eternal dimension of the *dao*, say, in Chapters 14 and 25, are considered finite in character in the sense that what such characterizations capture do not exhaust the eternal *dao*. So the *dao* that has (so far) been described or characterized in language (*suo-shu-zhi-Dao*) is not the eternal *dao* in the sense that the former is not identical with the latter, and the former does not, and cannot, exhaust the latter, rather than in the sense that the former is not part of the genuine *dao* or that the former has nothing to do with the latter. Note that, as discussed above, the *dao* that can be talked about or reached in language is the genuine *dao* rather than the bogus *dao*. Also note that, when the term "*dao*" as a verb means a variety of ways of *reaching the dao in language* that includes rigid designation through direct reference but is not limited to descriptive characterization in (partially) finite way; at least the *dao* that can be rigidly designated through direct reference can be, or be identical with, the eternal *dao*. In this way, what is not the eternal *dao* is not the *dao* that can be *reached in language* (*ke-dao-zhi-Dao*) but *the Dao that has (so far) been described or characterized in language* (*suo-shu-zhi-Dao*).⁴⁷

6.2.2 Lao Zi's Two-Sided Transcendental View: Eternal *Dao* and its Language Engagement

As the preceding discussion shows, the primary concern of this essay is by no means merely with how to linguistically translate the fascinating opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing* but with how to understand one of the most fundamental Daoist insights in the *Dao-De-Jing*, which I think is relevant and significant to current philosophical inquiry. The fundamental insight delivered via the opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing* is a two-sided transcendental view. On the one hand, it positively affirms the role of the language-engaged finite point of view in capturing the *dao*; on the other hand, it alerts us to the limitation of the finite point of view and emphasizes the transcendental dimension of the *dao* as the ultimate concern. In the following, let me further explain Lao Zi's point in his opening statement.

The central message is this: In the opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing*, Lao Zi delivers both a positive point of view and a negative point of view, as explicitly highlighted in the paraphrase (3), rather than merely a negative one, as set forth in traditional paraphrases like (2). Lao Zi's guiding principle

underlying such a balanced insight is his *yin-yang* methodological vision that highlights the complementarity between two seemingly opposing but interdependent and interpenetrating forces.⁴⁸ In the first assertive claim of the opening sentence, “*Dao-ke-dao*,” Lao Zi presents a positive point of view which asserts the possibility and adequacy of the language engagement with the *dao*: There is no part or dimension of the *dao* that cannot be *reached* through language; or any part or dimension of the *dao*, or even its eternal dimension, *can* be somehow talked about or reached in language. Note that, as suggested above, there is an important difference between the phrases “being reached” and “being (descriptively) characterized”: the former, as emphasized in the last section, covers a variety of ways to talk about the *dao* through language, far more than what the latter denotes. For example, among others, rigid designation through direct reference falls under the former but not under the latter, though the latter does include descriptive designation as I will explain in the subsequent section. The *dao* that can be talked about or reached through language *is* (part of) the genuine *dao* rather than something else. Still, the preceding point does not amount to saying that the *dao* that has been characterized through language would be identical with, or could exhaust, the eternal *dao*. First, because the eternal *dao* goes on forever and keeps changing to transcend its own finite dimension, anything that has so far been (descriptively) characterized in language about the *dao* only captures the finite part of the *dao* that presents itself in a certain finite way. Second, a linguistic expression or formulation that is used to describe and characterize something is limited and confined. In this aspect, however, the proposed view here is quite different from certain traditional views. Some argue that any language expression must totally fail to capture the *dao* and that the *dao* can be captured only through contemplation in silence. The paraphrase (2) suggests this, claiming that the *dao* that can be spoken of *is not* the eternal *dao*, anything that is open to the possibility of being expressed in language *is not* the genuine *dao*.

In this regard, A. C. Graham’s view seems to be much more moderate when he explains why there is the trouble with words: “The trouble with words is not that they do not fit at all but they always fit imperfectly; they can help us towards the Way, but only if each formulation in its inadequacy is balanced by the opposite which diverges in the other direction.”⁴⁹ The interpretation presented here is even more moderate than Graham’s to this extent: It is not the case that the language engagement *always* fits *imperfectly*. That really depends on which part, dimension, or layer of the *dao* is set out to be captured in language engagement and on what kind of language function is at issue. Let me explain why.

First, if a language engagement does not pretend to be exhaustive or conclusive regarding the *dao* but rather takes a finite point of view, it is

reasonable to say that what has been captured in language in that case does fit adequately. For example, one might focus merely on a certain aspect or development stage of the *dao*. When a language engagement takes a finite point of view, what is needed is not to reject such a language engagement *per se*, or such a finite point of view *per se*, but to hold a transcendental insight simultaneously, which would alert us to the limitation of the finite point of view and its due scope. Second, capturing something in language does not necessarily mean imposing a definition or formulation with a certain fixed format, meaning or usage. For instance, in contrast to mere description and descriptive designation, rigid designation through direct reference is one way to reach the genuine *dao*, as Lao Zi's own language-engagement practice shows. Moreover, language engagement, as suggested in the preceding discussion, does not necessarily, and does not in many cases, take the form of a linear chain of reasoning typically in deductive inference; an oft-cited charge against language engagement in this aspect fails to do justice to that fact.

6.2.3 *Dao* and Its Names: Language Engagement via Semantic Ascent

I consider that the second six-character statement of the opening passage of the *Dao-De-Jing* delivers essentially the same message as that delivered by the first six-character statement in a certain philosophically interesting way. As a matter of fact, various interpretations of the opening message seem to reach one agreement: There is a close, coherent and parallel connection between the first and second six-character statements. Indeed, the first six-character statement, staying with the second six-character statement, seems to serve as a semantic reminder for the latter: the name (the first appearance of the “*ming*” 名) is the name of the *dao* (the first appearance of the term “*dao*”), and the constant name (*chang-Ming* 常名) is the constant name of the eternal *dao* (*chang-Dao*). Nevertheless, there seems to be some tension between the prevailing standard interpretation discussed above and the agreed sense of the terms “*chang-Ming*” in the second six-character statement: If the standard interpretation is right to the effect that any language engagement with the *dao* must fail, the constant name (*chang-Ming*) could not be the linguistic name of the eternal *dao*; for, according to the standard interpretation, the *dao* that can be told of in language is simply not the eternal *dao*. One immediate apparent advantage of the preceding interpretation of the opening sentence in view of the meaning of the second six-character statement is this: it does make sense to talk about the constant name of the *dao*; for the genuine *dao* can be talked about in language, say, by means of its constant name. Nevertheless, two questions remain: given the preceding interpretation of the first opening statement and some coherent connection

between the first and second six-character statements in the opening passage of the *Dao-De-Jing*, how does the second six-character statement as a whole deliver essentially the same message of the first opening statement in a distinct way? Does such a distinct way go with something philosophically interesting?

As presented at the outset of the first section, the prevailing standard interpretation paraphrases the second six-character sentence

(1*) *Ming-ke-ming-fei-chang-Ming*

into

(2*) The name that can be named is not the constant name.

(2*') can be paraphrased back into the following (ancient) Chinese expression:

(2*') *ke-ming-zhi-Ming-fei-chang-Ming* (可名之名非常名),

in which “*ke-ming-zhi-Ming*” (可名之名) is the Chinese counterpart of the complex noun phrase “the name that can be named.”⁵⁰ Following the similar strategy to that in examining the first six-character sentence in the first section, we can realize what kinds of serious difficulties go with (2*) regarding its syntactic structure and thus its subsequent semantic implication. For the sake of space, I omit the similar syntactic analysis; we can tentatively restore the complete structure of the second six-character statement this way:

(3*) *Ming-ke-ming, er-suo-ming-zhi-Ming-fei-chang-Ming* (名可名, 而所名之名非常名);

or its literal paraphrase in English:

(3*') The name can be named, but the name that has been named is not the constant name,

which consists of two conjunct claims rather than one. At this point, there is a serious need to elaborate the meanings of the first claim “the name can be named (*Ming-ke-ming* 名可名)” and then of the logical subject, “the name that has been named (*suo-ming-zhi-Ming*),” of the second claim, both of which seem to be ambiguous or even odd.

It is known that there are three kinds of naming activities in language practice: (1) *descriptively* assigning a name to an (*any*) object or thing⁵¹ that meets the descriptive content associated with the name; in this case, the

solely descriptive name denotes whatever does fit the description; (2) rigidly, through direct reference (without via description), assigning a name to a certain specific object or thing that does not necessarily meet the descriptive content (if any) associated with the name; in this case, the name rigidly designates that specific referent through direct reference; and (3) rigidly, and descriptively, assigning a name to a certain specific object or thing that necessarily meets the descriptive content associated with the name; in this case, the name rigidly designates and denotes the referent. There are thus three kinds of names in regard to their naming functions: (1) descriptive names, such as “the first important Daoist philosopher” (it could be Yang Zhu or Lao Zi or Zhuang Zi or whoever meets the descriptive content of this descriptive name); (2) rigid designators via direct reference, such as “*Dao*” used by Lao Zi in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing*; (3) descriptive (rigid-)designators, such as “*Da*” in Chapter 25 and “*Yi*” in Chapter 14, which were used by Lao Zi himself and can be reasonably assigned to the *Dao* in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing*. Note that the third kind of naming activities or the third kind of names, descriptive designators, might go with a certain metaphysical commitment to the nature of the designatum to the effect that the designatum necessarily and/or uniquely possesses a certain property that is descriptively characterized by the descriptive designator; people use such descriptive designators in certain contexts (say, in certain philosophical contexts). Although there are some significant, and philosophically interesting, distinctions between the names in the (ancient) Chinese ideographic language and the names in phonetic language, the aforementioned three basic naming functions have also been evidently played by Chinese names, generally speaking, and, more specifically, by the Chinese character “名” (as a verb “*ming*” and as a name “*Ming*”) in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing*. At this point, it is worth emphasizing: There is no doubt that the *Dao-De-Jing* text, or Lao Zi himself, did not use those contemporary explanatory and conceptual resources like the ones that explicitly distinguish three kinds of naming functions. The point is that, to enhance our understanding of the ancient thinker and his text, some sophisticated ideas and insights in the *Dao-De-Jing* could be presented in some unambiguous, nonparadoxical and consistent way through resorting to those resources, though, partially due to lack of such resources two thousand years ago, some of those ideas had to be delivered in some ambiguous terms and in some paradoxical ways.

In the *Dao-De-Jing*, the Chinese character “*ming*” / “*Ming*” has altogether twenty-four appearances in ten chapters: Chapters 1, 14, 21, 25, 32, 34, 37, 41, 44, and 47. The appearance of “*Ming*” in Chapter 44 is used to mean “fame,” and the appearance of “*ming*” in Chapter 47 is used as the pseudonym of another Chinese character that shares the same pronunciation and tone meaning “understand”; these two appearances thus can be disregarded for the

purpose here. Examining the remaining twenty-two appearances of “*ming*” / “*Ming*” in regard to naming and names, one can find that Lao Zi makes two types of different or even seemingly inconsistent claims on whether the *dao* could be named or whether the *dao* could have its names: On the one hand, Lao Zi, as widely highlighted and long celebrated in the literature, claims that the *dao* cannot be named (cf., Chapters 14 and 25) and that the *Dao* does not have names (cf., Chapters 1, 32, 37 and 41); but, on the other hand, Lao Zi also claims that the *dao* can be named (also see Chapters 14, 21 and 25) and that the *Dao* does have its names (cf., Chapters 1, 21 and 32).

The traditional or standard interpretation discussed before considers only the first type of claims as delivering Lao Zi’s genuine ideas in this regard and simply dismisses the seriousness of Lao Zi’s second type of claims.⁵² In my opinion, this view fails to give a complete account of Lao Zi’s line of thought in the aspect, which is fundamentally guided by the ancient wisdom revealed in the *yin-yang* model of complementary interaction. Essentially going along with his insight in the first six-character statement in the opening passage, Lao Zi’s line of thought in the second six-character statement (or generally speaking, on the issue of language engagement with the *dao* via naming) also consists of a two-sided transcendental view. (1) On the one hand, when claiming that “*Ming-ke-ming*,” Lao Zi positively affirms the role of the language engagement with the *dao* via names in capturing the *dao*: (i) it is presupposed in “*Ming-ke-ming*” that the *dao* can be named [rigidly designated] by the constant name “*Ming*” (such as “*Dao*”); and (ii) it is explicitly and positively claimed that the *dao* can be further [descriptively] named [designated by certain descriptive designators]: in other words, the [constant] name of the *dao* can be further named [i.e., further descriptively paraphrased by certain descriptive designators]⁵³. (2) On the other hand, when claiming that “*fei-chang-Ming*,” Lao Zi warns us that any descriptive names [descriptive designators] regarding certain characteristic finite aspects, dimensions or layers are not identical with the constant name of the *dao* that names [rigidly designates] the wholeness or infinite dimension of the *dao*; in this way, Lao Zi alerts us to the limitation of the finiteness of any descriptive designators and emphasizes the transcendental dimension of the *dao* that transcends any finite aspects of the *dao* itself and any finite stages of its infinite development. In this way, the second six-character statement of the opening passage delivers essentially the same message as that delivered in the first six-character statement, though through a semantic ascent and in a distinct way.

Indeed, as suggested by my preceding references to other chapters of the *Dao-De-Jing* regarding how the names of the *dao* and their naming functions come into play in the text, Lao Zi’s message in the second six-character statement needs to be understood in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing* as well as in the context of the whole opening passage. Though also resorting to the textual evidence in the other relevant chapters as given above, I consider Chapter 14

of the *Dao-De-Jing* a good illustration, and an illuminating textual support, of the preceding interpretation of the two-sided transcendental view delivered in the second six-character statement. Now let us give a close look at Chapter 14:

視之不見，名曰夷；聽之不聞，名曰希；搏之不得，名曰微。此三者不可致詰，故混而為一。其上不皦，其下不昧。繩繩不可名，復歸於無物。是謂無狀之狀，無物之象，是謂惚恍。迎之不見其首，隨之不見其後。執古之道，以御今之有。能知古始，是謂道紀。

Watched but not (entirely) seen, its name is “*Yi*” (夷 “the Minute”);
 Listened to but not (completely) heard, its name is “*Xi*” (希 “the Rarefied”);
 Clutched but not (thoroughly) gotten, its name is “*Wei*” (微 “the Subtle”).
 These three cannot be exhaustively pursued (*bu-ke-zhi-jie* 不可致詰),
 And so are merged into one.
 Its top is not bright, and its bottom is not dark.
 Infinite and boundless, it cannot be named (*sheng-xi-bu-ke-ming* 繩繩今不可名):
 It reverts to nothingness;
 This is what is called “the shape without shape” and “the image with no thing”;
 This is what is called “the vague and elusive.”
 Greet it and you will not see its head;
 Follow it and you will not see its back.
 Hold on to the *Dao* of old in order to master the things of the present;
 One can thus know the primeval beginning,
 This is what is called “[capturing] the thread of the *Dao*.”⁵⁴

At the outset of Chapter 14, based on three characteristic dimensions of the *Dao*, Lao Zi assigns three distinct names, “*Yi*,” “*Xi*” and “*Wei*,” to capture the three characteristic dimensions: (1) the dimension of the *dao* that can be, and is, watched but cannot be entirely seen (from any finite time-space point), (2) the dimension of the *dao* that can be, and is listened to but cannot be completely heard (from any finite time-space point), and (3) the dimension of the *dao* that can be, and is, clutched but cannot be thoroughly gotten (from any finite time-space point). Note that each of the three characteristics of the *dao* consists in a two-sided story: On the one hand, (parts of) the *dao* can be, and is, positively reached and captured by the human beings via finitely descriptive names besides via rigid designators through direct reference [such as the name “*Dao*” which “ever remains with the *Dao* from the time of old until now” (Chapter 21)]; however, on the other hand, the *dao* cannot be exhaustively pursued or inquired into (*bu-ke-zhi-jie*) in these three dimensions; why? For, in all three dimensions (the-*Dao*-being-watched, the-*Dao*-being-listened-to, and the-*Dao*-being-clutched), there are “infinite and boundless” aspects that “cannot be named” descriptively in definite and finite terms or cannot be given an exhaustively descriptive name (in this aspect “the *Dao* is

hidden and thus have no [exhaustively descriptive] name” (Chapter 41)); so, the-*Dao*-being-watched, the-*Dao*-being-listened-to, and the-*Dao*-being-clutched go respectively with the aspects that cannot be “seen,” “heard” and “gotten” (from any finite time-space point). Due to the positive side of the story, the three characteristics of the *dao* can be descriptively captured via such descriptive names as “*Yi*,” “*Xi*” and “*Wei*”; on the other hand, exactly due to the negative side of the story, the positive activity of descriptively naming and the partially positive descriptive contents of those names are compromised by partially negative descriptive contents (“the Minute,” “the Rarefied” and “the Subtle”) of the names. Interesting enough, by means of the aforementioned distinction between three kinds of naming functions and of names, those names, “*Yi*,” “*Xi*” and “*Wei*,” need to be considered as *descriptive designators* but neither *solely descriptive names* nor *rigid designators via direct reference*: (1) On the one hand, Lao Zi intends to use the three names to capture some describable characteristics of the *dao* via the descriptive implications of the three names, and so the names are descriptive in nature ; (2) on the other hand, the characteristics are considered as some unique ones possessed exclusively by the *dao*; Lao Zi intends to use the names to capture the unique characteristic dimensions of the genuine *dao*; and so, though with their descriptive contents, those descriptive names also rigidly designate (the aforementioned characteristic dimensions of) the genuine *dao* rather than something else. To highlight the latter point, along with Lao Zi’s line here, it might be adequate and illuminating to rephrase these descriptive designators “*Yi*,” “*Xi*” and “*Wei*” in terms of “*Yi-Dao*” (夷道), “*Xi-Dao*” (希道) and “*Wei-Dao*” (微道) respectively.

Generally speaking, as discussed before, the metaphysical *dao* as the ultimate reality is not something God-like or Platonic-Form-like that exists beyond and above the nature-universe; the *dao* has to manifest itself through *wan-wu* in the universe (many particular, concrete individual things in the nature); each of the latter, though being finite, constitutes a manifestation of the genuine *dao*. This renders the *dao* metaphysically impossible to be *absolutely* “hidden” and “infinite” but reachable, describable and (descriptively) namable. Due to its fundamental metaphysical character in this connection, “*Dao-ke-dao*”: the *dao* not only can be rigidly designated through direct reference by means of such rigid designators as “*Dao*,” as highlighted in Chapters 1, 21 and 25, but also can be descriptively designated by means of descriptive designators, as highlighted in Chapters 1, 14, 25 and 34; in other words, its rigid designator can be descriptively paraphrased by means of descriptive designators, as highlighted in the claim that *Ming-ke-ming* in Chapter 1.

The preceding discussion shows that, to understand Lao Zi’s message delivered in the second six-character statement of the opening passage, one needs to comprehend it in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing* text and with a

prerequisite understanding of Lao Zi's message in the first six-character statement. With this holistic understanding, we might well further paraphrase

(3*) The name can be named, but the name that has been named is not the constant name into the following in English:

(3**) The name [the constant name—rigid designator] can be further named [further descriptively paraphrased by the descriptive designator], but the descriptive designator is not identical with the constant name [that is, what the descriptive designator descriptively designated cannot exhaust what the constant name rigidly designated].

There is one methodological point which the preceding discussion is intended to suggest regarding studies of Chinese philosophy and contemporary philosophy. If my paraphrase of the opening passage is right, some conceptual and explanatory resources explicitly presented in contemporary philosophy are needed to have a complete and coherent understanding of Lao Zi's line of thought as delivered in the opening passage. In this way, at least as far as some philosophically interesting ideas and views in Chinese philosophy are concerned, resorting to certain conceptual and explanatory resources developed in contemporary philosophy is not a choice with mere marginal value but a must to have a complete and coherent understanding of those ideas and their philosophical implications. Again, the point here is not that the relevant ancient thinkers in the Chinese philosophical tradition already had command of some contemporary conceptual and explanatory resources used here but that their ideas could be clearly delivered in a non-paradoxical way and in more sophisticated terms that would enhance our understanding of the ancient thinkers' ideas and avoid unnecessary confusion and losing sight of their due philosophical significance.

It is noted that, although Lao Zi provides some important insight or vision regarding the relation between the ultimate concern and its language engagement or, more generally speaking, between thought and language, he certainly does not exhaust the truth in this connection. The whole issue is far more complicated than Lao Zi, or any ancient thinkers, could conceive two thousand years ago. Also note that a thorough understanding of the relation between thought and language is certainly not philosophers' privilege; much work has yet to be done in this arena, through philosophical and interdisciplinary scholarship on the nature and function of language and the relation between thought and language.⁵⁵

In summary, in the preceding discussion of this section, I have endeavored to explicate the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing* by giving a critical examination of one prevailing standard interpretation of the opening passage and explaining my suggested paraphrase in the context of the *Dao-De-Jing*.

I intend to show that, instead of indiscriminately giving a negative claim against any truth-pursuing language engagement of the ultimate concern, Lao Zi reveals his two-sided transcendental insight: (1) In the first six-character statement, Lao Zi positively affirms the significant role of the language-engaging finite point of view in capturing the *dao* and, on the other hand, alerts us to the limitation of the finite point of view, emphasizing the transcendental dimension of the *dao* as the ultimate concern; (2) in the second six-character statement, through a semantic ascent of talking about the name of the *dao*, Lao Zi delivers essentially the same message, though in a distinct way that is philosophically interesting: on the one hand, Lao Zi positively affirms the role of the language engagement of the *dao* via names (the constant name—the rigid designator—and the descriptive designators) in capturing the *dao*; on the other hand, he alerts us to the limitation of the finiteness of any descriptive names (descriptive designators) and emphasizes the wholeness and infinite dimension of the *dao* that transcends any finite aspects of the *dao* itself and any finite stages of its infinite development. Such a transcendental insight itself is delivered through Lao Zi's own truth-pursuing language engagement in the opening passage and other ones in the *Dao-De-Jing*.

Lao Zi's point in this connection of his truth-concern approach as suggested in the *Dao-De-Jing* can be formulated in term of the following thesis as a distinct perspective elaboration of people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding or truth (through its perspective elaboration of the axiomatic thesis concerning what truth consists in, [ATNT], as explained in Section 1.1.1):

The ultimate-reality-capturing thesis through capturing its distinct aspects while without exhausting it ("URC" for short):

(URC) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of capturing distinct aspects (manifestations) of the way the ultimate reality (the *Dao* as nature) is (to be) while simultaneously talking about the ultimate reality, the understanding of truth nature via the ultimate-reality-capturing perspective elaboration of (ATNT) can be elaborated into the following thesis:

One can talk about and capture the ultimate reality (the *Dao* as nature) through capturing its distinct manifestations (distinct aspects of the way the ultimate reality is) while without exhausting it.

6.3 ZHUANG ZI'S STRATEGIC METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH IN TRUTH/DAO PURSUIT

In this and next sections, I focus on two significant truth-concern lines of another central figure in classical Daoism, Zhuang Zi, which are

philosophically interesting and significant and can contribute to our understanding and treatment of the philosophical issue of truth in two connections. The first line is Zhuang Zi's general methodological strategy in treating various reflective issues, as suggested in the central inner chapter, Chapter 2 "*Qi-Wu-Lun*" (<齊物論>, *On The Equality of Things*), of the *Zhuang-Zi*, which is essentially a kind of objective perspectivism and whose central point arguably presupposes people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding of truth. The second line is Zhuang Zi's account of truth-pursuing agent. In this section, I examine the first line of Zhuang Zi's truth-concern approach; in the next section I discuss the second line.

Zhuang Zi's general methodological strategy in treating various specific reflective issues is highlighted in one key passage (might as well be called "*dao-shu-qi-wu* 道樞齊物" passage) in Chapter 2 of the *Zhuang-Zi* whose excerpt is this:

物無非彼,物無非是。自彼則不見,自知則知之。故曰:彼出於是,是亦因彼。...是以聖人不由而照之於天,亦因是也。是亦彼也,彼亦是也, ...彼是莫得其偶,謂之道樞;樞始得其環中,以應無窮。... 故曰:莫若以明。⁵⁶

Everything has its *that* aspect and its *this* aspect. One cannot see the *this* aspect of a thing if one looks at the thing from the perspective of the *that* aspect; one can see the *this* aspect if one looks at the thing from the perspective of the *this* aspect. Therefore, one can say that the *that* and the *this* come from each other. ... Thus, the sage is not limited to looking merely at the *this* or *that* aspect [from the finite point of view] but captures [all the aspects of] the thing in the light of nature. The *this* is also the *that*, and the *that* is also the *this*. ...When the *this* aspect and the *that* aspect cease to be viewed as opposite, it is called "the pivot of taking a *dao* point of view" *dao shu* 道樞; one's capturing the pivot is like one's standing at the center around which all things revolve in endless change: one can deal with endless change from the *dao* point of view. ... Therefore, it is said that the best way to look at things is in the light [of nature].

Zhuang Zi's strategic methodological approach here can be understood as a kind of *objective perspectivism*⁵⁷ that constitutes his basic methodological guiding principle in treating various reflective issues under his examination.⁵⁸ Instead of "any perspective goes," Zhuangzi bases relevance and eligibility of a perspective (given an object of study) upon whether it points to some aspect that is really or "objectively" possessed by the object. At this point, Zhuang Zi captures and highlights one of the crucial points of people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding of truth, as explained in Section 1.1.3: truth is *nonepistemic* and thus "objective" in the following sense: (1) a truth bearer *is made true by its truth maker* (as the way the addressed object is), no matter what kind of ontological status the truth maker has, rather than *is ascribed truth by an epistemic agent*;

and (2) there is a way that the object *objectively* is such that it is not the case that “anything (any perspective) goes,” and we can all talk about that same object even though we may say different things about it (concerning distinct aspects of the object via distinct perspectives). It is noted that Zhuang Zi’s strategic methodological approach is also intrinsically related to the “double-aboutness” character of people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth. As explained in Section 1.1.3, the “double-aboutness” character of people’s pretheoretic understanding is this: given an object as a whole (i.e., with its various attributes) under examination, in *capturing a certain way the object is*, the truth bearer is *both* holistically about the object as a whole *and* at the same time specifically about the specific certain way of the object;⁵⁹ this significant feature is intrinsically related to the “double-aboutness” character of our thought on an object of thought and the “double-reference” character of the basic language employment to the effect that, given an object, something is said of the object. In my view, Zhuang Zi is the first thinker who explicitly addressed the “double-aboutness” character of thinking about objects and who also made his thoughtful evaluative comments on it.⁶⁰

So to speak, there are two levels of Zhuang Zi’s aforementioned strategic methodological approach: one is the “descriptive” level at which Zhuang Zi addressed and described the “double-aboutness” character of thinking about objects, while the other is the “evaluative” level at which Zhuang Zi made his “prescriptive” evaluative comments on the “double-aboutness” character of thinking about objects, surely in his own terminology and conceptual resources. As far as the “descriptive” level is concerned, Zhuang Zi explicitly made two observations, <1> and <2> below, and at least implicitly had another observation, <3> below.

- <1> Every object has its various aspects, i.e., its “this” (or “this-such”) and “that” (or “that-such”) aspects, in generalized terms; what distinguishes Zhuang Zi’s way from layman’s way is that he uses generalized reflective language (“this-such” and “that-such” aspects of objects) to present this common-sense understanding. It is noted that, although the Chinese original terms “是” and “彼” can be just literally translated into “this [aspect]” and “that [aspect],” here and below I give their contextual paraphrase translations, “this-such aspect” and “that-such aspect” to address and highlight two interpretative points in this context: first, via “this” and “that,” *distinct aspects* of an object are designated; second, these distinct aspects of the object are “knowable” and thus presented as “such and such” while being demonstratively designated via “this” and “that.”]
- <2> *Thus* [different persons, or the same person at different times] taking “this (this-such)”-aspect-concerned and taking “that

(that-such)"-aspect-concerned perspectives are "generally" or "wholly" about the *same* object (as a whole) while focusing on (being specifically about) its distinct "this" and "that" aspects respectively.

- <3> Another "observation," which results from the foregoing observations <1> and <2>, is this (if it is not explicitly and straightforwardly said, it can be implicitly but quite clearly inferred): whether one takes the "this-such"-aspect-concerned perspective or the "that-such"-aspect-concerned perspective in focus on "this" or "that" aspect of an object, one who is aware of <1> and <2> would at the same time have one's [minimal] awareness of one's thinking/talking about the object as a whole that has its multiple aspects (although not necessarily realizing the exact identities of other aspects than "this" or "that" aspect in one's current focus); that is, one would at the same time have one's "more or less" or minimal going-beyond-"this-such (or that-such)"-perspective awareness of the co-presence of multiple aspects of an object.⁶¹

It is noted that the recognition of <1> and <2> above would be quite common sense or straightforward in nature to the extent that any normal human beings can relatively easily reach and recognize these observations (or through their own minimal reflection on their own practice of thinking and talking about objects, even if they would not be consciously aware of them immediately); the recognition of <1> and <2> thus does not need the "sage's cultivated insight," which is indeed in need and thus explicitly addressed when Zhuang Zi made his evaluative remarks, as <1> and <2> are just description and recognition of what occur in people's daily practice of thinking and talking about objects; what distinguishes Zhuang Zi's treatment of these observations at the "descriptive" level from laymen's lies in his quasi-reflective language in terms of "this" and "that" discourse and his further evaluative reflective at the "prescriptive" level.

At the "evaluative" or "prescriptive" level, based on his foregoing observations at the "descriptive" level, Zhuang Zi made two "evaluative" points. First, based on the foregoing observation [that is, each thing has its various aspects, and thus distinct "this-such"-aspect-concerned perspective and "that-such"-aspect-concerned perspectives are "wholly" about the same object as a whole while being "specifically" about the "this-such" aspect and "that-such" aspect of the object respectively], one can legitimately (or is allowed to) and furthermore have reason to take a finite perspective (as one's current working perspective sensitive to one's current focus and purpose) to look at one aspect to which the finite perspective points: one can look at its *this-such* aspect, from a *this-such*-aspect-concerned perspective, and sees it as a *this-such*, and one can also look at its *that-such* aspect, from a *that-such*-aspect-concerned perspective, and sees it as a *that-such*; although, from each finite perspective,

other perspectives may appear incompatible, the basic metaphysical foundation is this: various aspects, the *this* aspect and the *that* aspect, ontologically depend on each other; various (eligible) perspectives, the *this*-aspect-concerned perspective and the *that*-aspect-concerned perspective, thus complement each other.

Second, for the purpose of looking at the connection of various aspects of a thing and/or of having a comprehensive understanding of the thing, and also in view of the foregoing observation <3> (i.e., one who is aware of the observations <1> and <2> would not only have one's capacity but does have one's minimal awareness of the wholeness of the object), Zhuang Zi also encourages people to look at things from a *higher* and broader point of view which *transcends* various finite points of view; in this way, those different aspects cease to be viewed as opposite or incompatible but complementary.⁶²

With the understanding of the foregoing strategic methodological points of Zhuangzi's objective perspectivism, one can effectively understand Zhuang Zi's substantial approaches to a range of specific reflective issues (in metaphysics,⁶³ epistemology,⁶⁴ philosophy of language,⁶⁵ etc.) under his examination. Zhuang Zi's basic methodological strategy can be labeled (in his own terms) a strategy of "*dao-shu-qi-wu* 道樞齊物" (*dao* pivot that equalizes things), which constitutes the guiding-principle core of his "transcendental" naturalism in general.

Indeed, in view of the purpose of this chapter, the preceding characterization of Zhuang Zi's perspectivism (as his general methodological strategy) is presented with the emphasis on its "semantic" character concerning the relation between language and thought: it is intrinsically connected with the "double-aboutness" character of people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding of truth. In my view, Zhuang Zi's strategic methodological resources as examined above can make substantial contribution to our understanding and treatment of the philosophical issue of truth in two connections. First, the foregoing strategic methodological points of Zhuangzi's objective perspectivism can provide an insightful methodological guidance on the issue of how to look at the relationship between various dimensions, and their related projects, of the philosophical concern with truth. My own general methodological approach as presented and explained in Section 1.5 of Chapter 1 is related to my interpretative understanding of, and thus partially inspired by, Zhuang Zi's general methodological insight. Second, as indicated above, Zhuang Zi is perhaps the first thinker who explicitly addresses and makes reflective remarks on the "double-aboutness" character of thinking about objects and also gives his thoughtful evaluative comments on it.

It is noted that Zhuang Zi's truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity is fundamentally in accordance with Lao Zi's truth-concern line of capturing

the *dao* as the ultimate reality via language engagement, as highlighted in the opening statement of the *Dao-De-Jing*; from the point of view of philosophical interpretation (whether or not, historically speaking, Zhuang Zi as a historical figure was after or before Lao Zi as a historical figure), Zhuang Zi's truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity can be viewed as a significant elaboration of Lao Zi's truth-concern line of capturing the *dao* as the ultimate reality via language engagement concerning its underlying fundamental methodology. The reason is this. As shown in the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing*, instead of indiscriminately giving a negative claim against any truth-pursuing language engagement of the ultimate concern, Lao Zi reveals his two-sided transcendental insight: on the one hand, Lao Zi positively affirms the significant role of the language-engaging finite points of view in capturing the *dao* through various finite language expressions that capture various aspects or layers of the way the *daos* (as various and diverse manifestations of the *dao*) are, and, on the other hand, alerts us to the limitation of the finite point of view and emphasizes the transcendental dimension of the *dao* as the ultimate reality. Being kindred in spirit in this connection but in a more general methodological terms, on the one hand, Zhuang Zi emphasizes the "eligibility" status of all those finite perspectives which do capture some aspects or layers of the way things are (either the natural world as a whole or an object under examination as a whole) and which thus can be taken as current working perspectives by the agents sensitive to their current purposes and focus (via distinct finite "this"-aspect-concerned and "that"-aspect-concerned perspectives in various finite language expressions); on the hand, he also encourages people to take a higher "transcendental" vantage point of the *dao* pivot and see the limits and connections of various finite perspectives. It is thus no wonder that Zhuang Zi's truth-concern line in this connection and Lao Zi's truth-concern line of capturing the *dao* as the ultimate reality via language engagement jointly manifest themselves in Ji Zang's Buddhist "double-truth" account, to be explained in Section 6.5 below.

6.4 ZHUANG ZI'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRUTH-PURSUING AGENT

In the previous sections of this chapter, when I give a general characterization of the *dao* concern as the truth concern of philosophical Daoism, via examining the relevant resources in the *Dao-De-Jing* text, and a case analysis of one passage of the text, both discussions end with one point that is somehow related to Zhuang Zi's account of the truth-pursuing agent, which in my view constitutes one significant contribution by Daoism to our understanding and treatment of philosophical concern with truth. Indeed, to have a due understanding of

Zhuang Zi's account of the truth-pursuing agent, one needs to first understand his general methodological strategy. Now, with Zhuang Zi's general methodological strategy being explained in the preceding section, we move on to this topic.

In the following, to enable the reader to have a close look at Zhuang Zi's original narrative account of the true agent and true knowledge, I first provide several of the most relevant passages from Chapter 6 "*Da-Zong-Shi*" (<大宗師>) with some explanatory paraphrases in bracket parentheses; and then I give an interpretation of Zhuang Zi's relevant points in the context of classical Daoism and of his whole thought, especially in view of his general methodological strategy as characterized before. Now let us take a close look at how Zhuang Zi makes his point in the text.

知天之所為，知人之所為者，至矣。知天之所為者，天而生也；知人之所為者，以其知之所知，以養其知之所不知，終其天年而不中道夭者，是知之盛也。雖然，有患。夫知有所待而後當，其所待者特未定也。庸詎知吾所謂天之非人乎？所謂人之非天乎？且有真人，而後有真知。

The one who knows what *tian* [天; heaven as nature] does and what the human does has reached the utmost. The one who knows what *tian* does lives with *tian*. The person who knows what the human does uses the knowledge of what one knows to support the knowledge of what one does not know, and one thus completes one's natural [*tian*] span of life without dying young half way {completely following the *dao* without failing half way}. This is knowledge in its greatness. However, there is one difficulty. Knowledge must have what it waits for {as its objective basis} and may then be made applicable, and what it waits for is changeable. How can I know that what I call "*tian*" is not really the human, and what I call "the human" is not really *tian*? {The key to overcoming this difficulty is that} one needs to first become a true agent [*zhen-ren* 真人] and then have true knowledge [*zhen-zhi* 真知] [which would be sensitive to what is changeable].

何謂真人？古之真人，不逆寡，不雄成，不謨士。若然者，過而弗悔，當而不自得也。若然者，登高不慄，入水不濡，入火不熱。是知能登假於道也若此。

What is meant by a "true agent"? The true agent in ancient times did not reject {but was sensitive to} what is little, did not brag about achievements, and did not scheme things [against being natural]. A man like this would not regret it when missing something and would not be complacent when making achievements. A man like this would not feel frightened when climbing high places, would not feel soaked when entering the water, and would not feel hot when going through fire {he would not be restricted by apparent limits but would

transcend them with his vision}. Such is the knowledge by which one can climb all the way up on the course of the *dao*.

古之真人 ... 以知為時 ...。...以知為時者，不得已於事也...。...天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。

The true agent in ancient times ... regarded knowledge as a product of time. ... To regard knowledge as a product of time means that he needs to respond to situations and changes as if he could not keep from doing so. ... The person who is called a true agent renders *tian* and the human in accord instead of one overcoming the other.

Indeed, given that the English term “true” is used here in line with our pretheoretic understanding of truth, it does not appear immediately plausible to talk about “the true agent” or translate “*zhen-ren*” as “the true agent.” For we usually consider the bearer of truth to be such mental things as thoughts and beliefs or their linguistic expressions (sentences and statements). (This may be why some translators avoid translating the term “*zhen*” in “*zhen-ren*” as “true” and instead choose alternative locutions, such as “authentic” or “genuine.”) However, considering that the truth (nature) as conceived in people’s pretheoretic understanding of truth consists in (the truth bearer) capturing the way things are, it should be neither implausible nor odd to talk about the true agent. For it does make sense to say that the subject (or even the primary subject in a certain sense, to be explained below) of *capturing the way things are* is the human agent, or the thinking creature, instead of some nonthinking thing.⁶⁶ But, at this point, two further questions emerge. First, does Zhuang Zi’ talk about (“mention”) “*zhen-ren*” in the sense of “*zhen*” as conceived in people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth? Second, given that it is plausible or does make sense to interpret Zhuang Zi’s talk about “*zhen-ren*” as the talk about “the true agent” in this context, is there any serious reflective need or any theoretic merit to highlight the conception of the *true agent* as Zhuang Zi does? Or would this be just a kind of innocent and insignificant rhetoric locution?

As for the first question, it is arguably correct to say that, in this context, Zhuang Zi relates “true knowledge” with “the true agent” and uses “*zhen*” in both case along the same line with people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth, that is, capturing the way things (the way Heaven, the human, etc. are) are. For the *dao*-pursuing is the fundamental mission of a *zhen-ren*, whether she is spontaneously or reflectively fulfilling this mission; and the *dao* pursuing is the Daoist version of capturing the way things are. One might object in this way: it is how such a person (*zhen-ren*) acts that defines what is *zhen* (that is, the notion of *zhen* here is

a subjective-agent-concerned existential notion of “truth” as a property of *zhen* persons in the sense that a true person is true to herself); *zhen-zhi* is thus predicated on *zhen-ren*. There is one serious difficulty with this kind of “metaphysical” or existential understanding of “*zhen*” in interpreting classical Daoism. If how a true person acts and what she knows simply defines what is true, an immediate question is this: what is the (metaphysical) identity condition of such a true person by which a true person distinguishes herself from other kinds of persons? If one does not intend to mystify but demystify the identity condition of a true person, one has to admit that such an identity condition is at least logically (and arguably metaphysically) prior to how she does and what she knows. Isn’t such an identity condition intrinsically related to *her* (*capacity of*) *capturing the dao*, or in more metaphorical terms, her following and floating with the *dao* instead of the *dao* floating with her)? In this way, at least in the context of classical Daoism, the claimed “metaphysical” or “existential” notion of truth, if it is reflectively interesting, needs to be understood on the basis of the cross-categorical “way-things-are capturing” understanding of truth; in this sense, the latter is primary while the former (if any) secondary.

With the foregoing explanation, I thus intentionally translate “*zhen*” in “*zhen-ren*” into “true” in the following sense to deliver one point of Zhuang Zi’s account: the bearer of the truth nature, or the subject of capturing the way things are (i.e., capturing the *dao*), can be and is, the human agent in a certain sense, and this kind of the truth bearer and other kinds of the truth bearer (the propositional content of belief or its linguistic expression) are about the same kind of truth property that is fundamentally in accordance with our pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth, instead of two different kinds.

The second question above is more reflectively interesting: is there any serious reflective need or any theoretic significance in highlighting the conception of the *true agent* as Zhuang Zi does? My answer is positive. I think this is exactly where Zhuang Zi’s account of the true agent and true knowledge would make some significant contribution to our understanding and treatment of the philosophical concern with truth. One crucial claim of Zhuang Zi’s account in regard to the relation between the true agent and true knowledge is this: “One needs to first become a true agent [*zhen-ren*] and thus has one’s true knowledge [*zhen-zhi*].” The point of Zhuang Zi’s claim and its significance needs to be placed in the textual context and in view of his whole thought. The passages around the claim show that Zhuang Zi addresses some related metaphysical and epistemological issues in that context. First, metaphysically speaking, the object of knowledge is changeable; true knowledge of the object thus needs to be regarded as product of time in accordance with change of the object; but it is the human subject, instead of thought or its linguistic expression as the definite

and stable result of previous knowing process, who can be directly sensitive and respond to distinct situations and changes. Second, epistemologically speaking, it indicates how to achieve knowledge at its greatness that is comprehensive and holistic (say, unified knowledge of both Heaven and the human, and coordinated knowledge of various aspects of the object). It is the human subject, instead of piecemeal individual beliefs and their linguistic expressions *per se*, who can autonomously and creatively transcend the limitations of piecemeal individual beliefs and their linguistic expressions and unify her various individual beliefs into a holistic, comprehensive and coordinated understanding of the way things are.⁶⁷ Thus she can overcome some epistemological difficulties that can be hardly overcome by looking at piecemeal individual beliefs and their linguistic expressions alone. In this sense, to this extent, and for the sake of achieving true knowledge that captures various aspects of the changing world in a holistic way, one needs to first become a true agent who can be sensitive and respond to distinct situations, changes and complexity (or the changing, dynamic, and becoming aspect of the thing as the object of knowledge).

In this way, through his conception of the true agent and his account of the relation between the true agent and true knowledge, and in view of his “*dao-shu-qi-wu*” methodological strategy, we can say that Zhuang Zi actually emphatically holds a unifying approach that includes (instead of excluding) the dynamic dimension/aspect/layer of the truth concern involved in philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology. One reason that Zhuang Zi’s point is significant is this. (1) From the point of view of philosophy of language, his point calls our attention to, or emphasizes, the unifying treatment of both semantic and pragmatic dimensions of the linguistic truth bearer that involves the speaker’s intention and her situated uses as well as rigid designation and intersubjective-sense concern, instead of the semantic dimension alone. (2) From the point of view of metaphysics, his point calls our attention to, or emphasizes, the unifying treatment of the becoming aspect as well as the being aspect of the object of knowledge, instead of the being aspect alone, for the sake of a holistic understanding of various correlative aspects of the way things are. (3) From the point of view of epistemology, his point calls our attention to, or emphasizes, the unifying treatment of the dynamic as well as stable layers, instead of the stable layer alone, of the whole process of capturing and pursuing the way things are; in this way, Zhuang Zi emphasizes a holistic unifying understanding instead of piecemeal knowledge alone.⁶⁸ Zhuang Zi’s view thus enlarges and enriches the reflective concept of capturing the way things are (in view of one traditional “piecemeal correspondence” treatment) through his conception of the true agent.⁶⁹

One might ask: isn’t it not merely innocent but also more conceptually effective to talk about the propositional content of a belief or its linguistic expression alone as the truth bearer? Would Zhuang Zi indiscriminately

render absolutely superior the order of first becoming a true agent and then achieving true knowledge? Although Zhuang Zi does not directly provide his response to such reflectively interesting questions in the text, one can base on the point of Zhuang Zi's general methodological strategy in treating various reflective issues (as explained in the previous section) and the basic point of Daoist thought about the metaphysical *dao* (as characterized in the previous section) to provide an adequate elaboration of the due implication of his general methodological strategy to the current issue. As emphasized above, the crux of Zhuang Zi's claim needs to be placed in the textual context and his whole thought which would help us identify for which sake and for what purpose Zhuang Zi takes a certain perspective. From the foregoing discussion, one can see that Zhuang Zi intends to emphasize a unifying treatment without neglecting the pragmatic dimension of the belief or linguistic truth bearer, the becoming aspect of the object of true knowledge, and the dynamic layer of the process of capturing the way things are. It is important to note that the fact *per se* that one looks at or even focuses on the becoming aspect and takes a becoming-aspect-concerned perspective as one's working perspective (or part of one's working perspective complex) does not imply that one would deny other eligible perspectives as eligible. It also does not imply that one has an inadequate guiding principle that renders one's current working perspective absolutely superior while the other eligible perspective ineligible or absolutely inferior.⁷⁰ Generally speaking, Zhuang Zi is certainly not so unintelligible that he could fail to realize the being aspects of things: a thing always keeps its own certain identity at any stage of its changing process before, or unless, this thing turns into something else; changes do not happen in chaos but follow certain ways, and the *dao* is considered as one fundamental and unifying way throughout the universe. Specifically speaking, in the cited passages where Zhuang Zi gives his account of the true agent and true knowledge with emphasis on a unifying treatment of both semantic and pragmatic aspects involved in the truth concern, it is arguably correct that Zhuang Zi implicitly presupposes the presence of the semantic, being and relatively stable dimension/aspect/layer involved in the truth concern. Moreover, both Zhuang Zi's own reflective practice and his general "*dao-shu-qi-wu*" methodology are not merely compatible but consistently suggest that, for another sake, one needs to first have one's true knowledge [*zhen-zhi*] and thus become a true agent [*zhen-ren*]: given the wisdom-generating role and character-cultivating role played by one's true knowledge (including moral knowledge as well as intellectual knowledge), one needs to first achieve or resort to true knowledge for the sake of becoming a true agent. In so doing, one is able to have a (more) comprehensive understanding of the world and cultivate oneself in the right direction and with adequate guidance. Zhuang Zi's own teachings *per se* would help people fulfill this. One important implication of Zhuang Zi's "*dao-shu-qi-wu*" methodological strategy in treating the issue of

the truth/*dao* concern is this: given that the *dao*-pursuing enterprise has stable and dynamic aspects, the unchanging and changing aspects, and the being aspect and becoming aspect, they are metaphysically equal in the sense that they metaphysically depend on each other and are *yin-yang* complementary; the becoming-aspect-concerned perspective and the being-aspect concerned perspective in our journey of pursuing truth/*dao* are methodologically equal in the sense that both are relevant, indispensable and *yin-yang* complementary for a holistic unifying understanding of the issue.

In this way, Zhuang Zi's contribution also lies in his general methodological insight that can be extended or applied to how to look at the relation between various dimensions, and their related projects, of the truth-concern enterprise in philosophy. My positive account of truth, to be presented in the last chapter, is related to my interpretative understanding of, and thus partially inspired by, Zhuang Zi's general methodological insight. In sum, Zhuang Zi's contribution to the truth-concern enterprise in philosophy is dual: one is his substantial contribution to the project that is concerned with the unifying truth-pursuing agent dimension of the truth concern; the other lies in his general methodological contribution to how to look at the relation between various dimensions of the truth concern.

6.5 FROM TWO DAOIST TRUTH-CONCERN LINES TO JI ZANG'S BUDDHIST "DOUBLE TRUTH" ACCOUNT

It is known that the most prominent and philosophically interesting version of Chinese Buddhism is *Chan* 禪/*Zhen* Buddhism, a kind of secular Buddhism, which is a combination of *Mahayana* Buddhism via its middle-way school⁷¹ and philosophical Daoism after the former spread to China. It is not accidental but intrinsically related to some internal resources on both sides that are kindred in spirit in some basic connections. The "double-truth" account of Ji Zang (吉藏 549–623), a Chinese Buddhist philosopher in the middle-way school, shows its allied link to two truth-concern lines of philosophical Daoism, i.e., Lao Zi's truth-concern line of capturing the ultimate reality via language engagement, and Zhuang Zi's truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity concerning the agent-purpose-sensitivity and the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy. So to speak, on the one hand, some central points of the foregoing two truth-concern lines of classical Daoism manifest themselves through Ji Zang's "double-truth" account in a more explicit and straightforward "truth-mention" language, although in Buddhist terminology; to this extent, we can say that they make joint contribution to the issue of truth in the context of classical Chinese philosophy. On the other hand, Ji Zang's "double-truth" account shows how, in the fundamental truth-concern connection, some relevant internal resources of the middle-way

school of *Mahayana* Buddhism made due preparation for the development of *Mahayana* Buddhism after it spread to China, resulting in *Chan* Buddhism as its combination with the “local” philosophical Daoism. Actually, these two points constitute two major considerations for including the topic of this subsection in this chapter on the truth concern resources within classical Daoism. In the following, due to the nature of this writing and space limit, and given that the reader has the basic working knowledge of Buddhism, I focus on examining Ji Zang’s “double-truth” account, in view of its allied link to the aforementioned two truth-concern lines of classical Daoism, without giving a systematic preliminary introduction to various basic ideas of Buddhism but only addressing its directly relevant resources.

Let me examine portion by portion one central passage from Ji Zang’s *Er-Di-Zhang* (二諦章) as follows.⁷²

此三種二諦。竝是漸捨義。如從地架而起。何者。凡夫之人。謂諸法實錄是有。不知無所有。是故諸佛。為說諸法畢竟空無所有。言諸法有者。凡夫謂有。此是俗諦。此是凡諦。賢聖真知諸法性空。此是真諦。此是聖諦。令其從俗入真捨凡取聖。為是義故。明初節二諦義也。

The three levels of twofold truth represent the principle of gradually discarding [one-sidedness and distinction], as one builds a framework from the ground. How does it come? The ordinary people say that all things, as true records tell, are being, without realizing that they are nonbeing. The Buddhas thus would say that all things are empty and void. [At the first level, when it is said that all things possess being, it is ordinary people who say so. This is the common-sense truth or ordinary truth [at the first level]. However, the sages truly know that all things are empty in nature. This is the truth in the higher sense or the sage truth [at the first level]. In this way, people advance from the common-sense truth to the higher-sense truth; they discard the ordinary truth while accept the sage truth. This is the way to explain the first level of twofold truth.

According to the double-truth account, there are two kinds of truth: truth in the common sense, and truth in the higher sense; they both exist at three different levels, and the truth in the higher sense at the lower level become the truth in the common sense at the higher level. That is, there are three levels of double truth. (1) At the first level, the folk people take all things as really *you* 有 (having being, existent) and know nothing about *wu* 無 (having no being, nonexistent), while the Buddhas⁷³ have told them that actually all things are *wu* (nonbeing) [based on the three fundamental signs of being—nothing permanent] and empty. For example, from our common-sense point of view, there are a lot of things around us in the world: there are stones, trees, dogs, etc.; to this extent, we as folk take all those things as *you* (having being) and thus all are *you* (existent/having being). Now the Buddhas would

tell that actually all these things are *wu* (nonbeing) in the sense that nothing is permanent: anything you pick up in the world cannot exist forever and cannot permanently keep its identity.⁷⁴ In this way, at the first level, it is the truth in the common sense to say that all are *you*, while it is the truth in the higher sense to say that all are *wu*. Both are truths, but one is in the common sense while the other is in the higher sense.

次第二重。明有無為世諦不二為真諦者。明有無是二邊。有是一邊無是一邊。乃至常無常生死涅槃。亦是二邊。以真俗生死涅槃是二邊故。所以為世諦。非真非俗非生死非涅槃不二中道。為第一義諦也。

Next comes the second level. At this level, both the view regarding things as being and the view regarding things as nonbeing are explained as the common-sense truth, whereas the nonduality view [regarding things neither as being nor as nonbeing] is considered as the higher-sense truth. The second level of twofold truth shows that being and nonbeing are two extremes, with being as one while nonbeing as the other. From this point of view, claiming permanence versus claiming impermanence, and claiming the cycle of life-death versus claiming *Nirvana* are both two extremes [one-sidedness]. Because the higher-sense truth versus the common-sense truth at the first level and claiming the cycle of life-death versus claiming *Nirvana* are both two extremes, they are common-sense truth [at this level]. Claiming-neither-the-higher-sense-truth [at the first level]-nor-the-common-sense-truth [at the first level] and claiming-neither-the-cycle-of-life-and-death-nor-*Nirvana* are the middle path without duality; this is the higher-sense truth [at the second level].

At the second level which is higher than the first level, however, to say that all things are *you* (having being) is one-sided, but to say that all things are *wu* (nonbeing) is also one-sided. They are both one-sided. So, at this level, the truth in the higher sense at the first level becomes merely the truth in the common sense at the second level. At this level, the Buddhas would say that what is *you* (having being) is simultaneously what is *wu* (nonbeing) [that is, in our more accessible terminology, everything has both its being aspect and nonbeing aspect], which is the truth in the higher sense at the second level and which is the middle truth at the second level.

次第三重。二與不二為世諦。非二非不二為第一義諦者。前明真俗生死涅槃二邊。是偏故為世諦。非真非俗非生死非涅槃不二中道。為第一義。此亦是二邊。何者。二是偏不二是中。偏是一邊中是一邊。偏之與中。還是二邊。二邊故名世諦。非偏非中乃是中道第一義諦也。

Next comes the third level. At this level, both claiming duality and claiming nonduality are the common-sense truth, whereas claiming-neither-duality-nor-nonduality

is the higher-sense truth. It has been explained above that the higher-sense truth versus the common-sense truth at the first level and claiming the cycle of life-death versus claiming *Ninana* are both two extremes and one-sided, and they thus constitute the common-sense truth; in contrast, claiming-neither-the-higher-sense-truth [at the first level]-nor-the-common-sense-truth [at the first level] and claiming neither-the-cycle-of-life-and-death-nor-*Nirvana* are the middle path without duality; and they thus constitute the higher-sense truth [at the second level]. But these two are also two extremes [at the third level]. Why? For [at the second level] claiming duality is one-sided while claiming nonduality is middle. But [at the third level] claiming one-sidedness is an extreme and claiming the middle is also an extreme. Claiming one-sidedness and claiming the middle [at the second level] are two extremes [at the third level]. Because being two extremes, they are called “common-sense truth” [at the third level]. Only claiming neither-one-sidedness-nor-the-middle can be regarded as the middle path, the higher-sense truth [at the third level].

Now, at the third level, to say that the middle truth consists in what is not one-sided (that is, what is both *yo* and *wu* or what is neither *you* nor *wu*), mean to make distinctions. From the point of view of the third level (the highest level), the truth in the higher sense at the second level is merely the truth in the common sense because such a truth still presupposes, or simply commits itself to, distinctions which are usually expressed and fixed by (relative) predicates in our language and thus block us to realize the three fundamental signs of being (for example, generally speaking, the distinction between *you* and *wu*; specifically speaking, various distinctions expressed by relative predicates in our language); people thus cannot reach *Nirvana* that consists in and of *Tathata* (Suchness) and *Sunyana* (Nothingness or Emptiness).⁷⁵ The truth in the higher sense at the third level (i.e., the truth in the highest sense) is achieving *Nirvana*. In this way, the truth in the higher sense at the third level consists in saying that all distinctions are themselves one-sided: things are neither *you* nor *wu*, neither not-*you* nor not-*wu*, and the middle path is neither one-sided nor not-one-sided.

As stressed before, Ji Zang’s “double-truth” account shows its allied link to two truth-concern lines of philosophical Daoism, i.e., Lao Zi’s truth-concern line of capturing the ultimate reality via language engagement, and Zhuang Zi’s truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity concerning the agent-purpose-sensitivity and the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy. Let me first explain how Ji Zang’s “double-truth” account shows its allied link to Lao Zi’s truth-concern line of capturing the ultimate reality via language engagement. In the previous Section 6.2, we can see that, as highlighted in the opening message of the *Dao-De-Jing*, instead of indiscriminately giving a negative claim against any truth-pursuing language engagement of the ultimate concern, Lao Zi reveals his two-sided

transcendental insight: on the one hand, Lao Zi positively affirms the significant role of the language-engaging finite points of view in capturing the *dao* through various language expressions that capture various aspects or layers of the way the *daos* (as various and diverse manifestations of the *dao*) are; on the other hand, Lao Zi alerts us to the limitation of the finite point of view and emphasizes the transcendental dimension of the *dao* as the ultimate reality. Being kindred in spirit in this connection but in an explicit and straightforward “truth-mention” language, Ji Zang emphasizes the (partial) truth status of all those common-sense truths and the higher-sense truths at all the three levels, which capture distinct aspects or layers of the way things in this impermanent world and can be delivered via finite language expressions, other than achieving *nirvana* and thus capturing the highest-sense truth, although they are partial and finite.

As indicated before, Zhuang Zi’s truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity is fundamentally in accordance with Lao Zi’s truth-concern line of capturing the ultimate reality via language engagement; from the point of view of philosophical interpretation (whether or not, historically speaking, Zhuang Zi as a historical figure was after or before Lao Zi as a historical figure), Zhuang Zi’s truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity can be viewed as a significant elaboration of Lao Zi’s truth-concern line of capturing ultimate reality via language engagement in the connection of fundamental methodology. It is thus no wonder that Zhuang Zi’s truth-concern line in this connection manifests itself in Ji Zang’s “double-truth” account together with Lao Zi’s truth-concern line of capturing the ultimate reality via language engagement. Indeed, both think that, besides the highest truth, there are other constructive perspectives (in Zhuang Zi’s terms, those finite and partial but eligible perspectives that capture some aspects possessed by the object of study) or truths (in Ji Zang’s terms, those common-sense truths and the higher-sense truths at lower levels that are still truths that instead of being just nonsense or absolutely false); in so doing, both think that, though giving the “eligibility” status to those finite eligible perspectives or “truth” status to those nonhighest truths, one still needs to go beyond those finite perspectives or partial truths to pursue a comprehensive understanding of things (or the highest truth). In other words, both Zhuang Zi and Ji Zang try to do justice to finite eligible perspectives or lower-level truths besides the ultimate understanding or the highest truth; it is not the case for both that there is only one *par-excellence* super perspective or absolute truth while all others are nonsenses. In other words, kindred in spirit with Zhuang Zi’s truth-concern line of perspective-sensitivity, in Ji Zang’s Buddhist terms, one can capture a certain “this” or “that” aspect or layer of the way things in this impermanent world are (to be), thus achieving a partial truth, for the sake of being sensitive to one’s purpose/focus while striving for achieving *nirvana* (the highest truth) and [through the “*nirvana*-highest-truth” vantage point] recognizing the (partial)

truth status (eligibility) of those common-sense truths and the higher-sense truths at various levels that capture distinct aspects or layers of the way things in this impermanent world are and thus their limits and complementarity for a complete understanding.

In this way, some central points of the foregoing two truth-concern lines from Lao Zi's and Zhuang Zi's Daoist approaches manifest themselves through Ji Zang's "double-truth" account in a more explicit and straightforward "truth-mention" language, although in Buddhist terminology; to this extent, we can say that, through his "double-truth" account, Ji Zang together with Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi makes his joint contribution to the issue of truth in the context of classical Chinese philosophy.

6.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE TRUTH-CONCERN APPROACHES OF CLASSICAL DAOISM

In this ending section, I highlight and formulate the significant points of these lines in the two classical Daoist figures' truth-concern approaches which, in my view, make substantial contributions to our understanding and treatment of the philosophical concern with truth.

Based on the foregoing discussion, let me highlight several contributing points of the truth-concern approaches of classical Daoism under examination, through formulating their "perspective" dimensions as distinct perspective elaborations of the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic thesis of the nature of truth (ATNT):

(ATNT) The nature of truth (of the truth bearer) consists in (the truth bearer's) capturing the (due) way things are,

either via the basic schema thesis of truth-nature perspective elaboration, (STNEP):

(STNEP) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of the purpose P , the understanding of truth nature can be elaborated in E , where P is replaced by a certain purpose and E is replaced by a certain statement or formulation that gives the elaboration of (ATNT) for the sake of P , or via a schema thesis of truth centrality concerning its explanatory role:

(STCER) The concept of truth, as characterized by (ATNT), plays its indispensable central explanatory role which, in view of P , can be elaborated in E , where P is replaced by a certain purpose or focus and E is replaced by a certain statement or formulation that gives the elaboration of the central explanatory (ATNT) for the sake of P .

The philosophical interest and significance of the truth-concern lines of classical Daoism under examination can be formulated and highlighted as the following theses, each of which constitutes a significant reflective perspective elaboration of people's pretheoretic understanding of truth via either the (STNEP) schema or the (STCER) schema.

The significant points of Lao Zi's truth-concern lines can be summarized in terms of the three theses based on (ATNT) via (STNEP) or (STCER), i.e., "the *dao*-capturing thesis concerning people's pre-theoretic understanding of truth," "the Daoist reflective way of presenting explanatory-reduction version of the thesis of truth centrality as a strategic normative goal," and "the ultimate-reality-capturing thesis through capturing its distinct aspects while without exhausting it" as follows.

The dao-capturing thesis concerning people's pretheoretic understanding of truth ("DP" for short)

(DP) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of capturing the way things are in terms of the effective resources concerning the *dao* as the way things are, the understanding of truth nature via the *dao*-capturing perspective elaboration of (ATNT) can be elaborated into the following thesis:

The nature of truth (of the truth bearer) consists in (the truth bearer's) capturing the *dao* (as the way things are).

The Daoist reflective way of presenting the explanatory-reduction version of the thesis of truth centrality as a strategic normative goal ("TNG^D" for short)

(TNG^D) The concept of truth, as characterized by (ATNT), plays its indispensable central explanatory role as an explanatory norm for the sake of regulating and explaining one central strategic, the truth pursuit, of philosophical inquiries goal in terms of the resources concerning the *dao* (as the way things are); the understanding of the truth centrality as a normative goal can be elaborated into the following thesis:

The *dao* pursuit is an explanatory norm to regulate and explain one central strategic goal of philosophical inquiries.

The ultimate-reality-capturing thesis through capturing its distinct aspects while without exhausting it ("URC" for short)

(URC) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of capturing distinct aspects (manifestations) of the way

the ultimate reality (the *dao* as nature) is (to be) while simultaneously talking about the ultimate reality, the understanding of truth nature via the ultimate-reality-capturing perspective elaboration of (ATNT) can be elaborated into the following thesis:

One can talk about and capture the ultimate reality (the *dao* as nature) through capturing its distinct manifestations (distinct aspects of the way the ultimate reality is) while without exhausting it.

The significant points of Zhuang Zi's truth-concern lines can be summarized in terms of the following two theses, i.e., "the perspective-sensitivity thesis concerning the agent-purpose-sensitivity and the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy" and "the truth-bearer-agent thesis concerning the truth-pursuing agent's unifying role" as follows.

The perspective-sensitivity thesis concerning the agent-purpose-sensitivity and the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy ("PS" for short)

(PS) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of being sensitive to an agent's certain purpose/focus and capturing a certain "this" or "that" aspect of the way things are (to be) while recognizing the eligibility of various perspectives (if any) that really point to "this" or "that" aspect of the way things are, the understanding of truth nature via "perspective-sensitivity" perspective elaboration of (ATNT) can be elaborated into the following thesis:

One is expected to capture a certain "this" or "that" aspect of the way things are (to be) for the sake of being sensitive to one's purpose/focus while (through the vantage point of "*dao* pivot that equalizes things" 道樞齊物) recognizing the eligibility of available perspectives that really point respectively to "this" and "that" aspects of the way things are and thus their limits and complementarity for a complete understanding.

As explained in Section 6.5, Zhuang Zi's methodological vision in this connection is essentially shared and embodied in the methodological point of the "double-truth" account suggested by Ji Zang, a Chinese Buddhist who has contributed to the development of Buddhism in China through combining the core idea of Buddhism with some relevant resources of classical Daoism. From the point of view of philosophical interpretation, the following basic point of Ji Zang's "double-truth" account can be viewed as a derivative thesis, (PS-JZ), from Zhunag Zi's perspective-sensitivity thesis concerning the agent-purpose-sensitivity and the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy:

(PS-JZ) One can capture a certain “this” or “that” aspect or layer of the way things in this impermanent world are (to be), thus achieving a partial truth, for the sake of being sensitive to one’s purpose/focus while striving for achieving *nirvana* (the highest truth) and [through the “*nirvana*-highest-truth” vantage point] recognizing the (partial) truth status (eligibility) of those common-sense truths and the higher-sense truths at various levels that capture distinct aspects or layers of the way things in this impermanent world are and thus their limits and complementarity for a complete understanding.

The truth-bearer-agent thesis concerning the truth-pursuing agent’s unifying role (“TBA” for short):

(TBA) With (ATNT) as the primary elaboration-guiding axiomatic basis, for the sake of specifying the identity of the truth bearer in the context that needs to emphasize the truth-pursuing agent’s indispensable unifying role in capturing the way things are, the understanding of the primary bearer of nonlinguistic truth can be elaborated into the following thesis:

The primary truth bearer is the truth-pursuing agent.

In the remaining part of this section, I summarize and highlight two connections (i.e., respectively regarding the *truth-nature dimension* and the *explanatory-role dimension* of the philosophical concern with truth) in which the truth-concern approaches in classical Daoism under examination can contribute to, and enhance, our understanding and treatment of the philosophical concern with truth. The points to be highlighted are either already addressed in the above discussion or have yet to be explicitly elaborated.

As far as the *truth-nature dimension* of the philosophical concern with truth with regard to the nature of truth is concerned, the classical Daoist “*dao*-concern” approach has made its reflectively interesting contributions that I render significant for our contemporary exploration of the nature and status of nonlinguistic truth. Among others, here I plan to highlight four connections in which the classical Daoist “*dao*-concern” approach can contribute to our understanding of the truth-nature dimension of the philosophical concern with truth. The first three have been already addressed explicitly in the proceeding discussion and thus briefly highlighted below, while the fourth one has yet to be explicitly explained before and thus will be elaborated a bit more.

First, the philosophical concern with truth, as explained in Section 1.4 of Chapter 1, does not necessarily present itself in one single fashion, i.e., the *manifest* approach that explicitly and directly concerns itself with a range of questions in the meta-discourse such as “What is truth?” and “What is

the *raison d'être* of the truth predicate in our language?”. Rather, the philosophical concern with truth can present itself in distinct ways in different philosophical traditions, which are sensitive to their distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their related underlying collective mentalities (if any). It would be quite superficial, and thus would miss the point, to identify and recognize the philosophical concern with truth exclusively in virtue of whether it would adopt the same “manifest” fashion and whether one can find a predicate that would be exclusively and exactly the same counterpart of the truth predicate in, say, English. In this way, the philosophical concern with truth in classical Daoism, as presented in the *Dao-De-Jing* and the *Zhuang-Zi*, illuminates one representative case. The current case analysis explains how the philosophical concern with truth in classical Daoism presents itself in a distinct *recessive* way. This situation is related to a general Chinese cultural and linguistic background around that time as well as some characteristic “recessive” features of classical Daoism’s own teachings. In Section 1.4 of Chapter 1, I analyze how some distinctive features of the linguistic expressions of truth in the Chinese ideographical language and the Western phonetic language (like English) bear on the ways in which the philosophical concern with truth presents itself respectively in the Chinese and Western philosophical traditions.

Second, what has made the case of the philosophical concern with truth in classical Daoism philosophically interesting does not lie merely in its role as an effective illuminating case of how such significant concern in philosophy can present itself in a distinct way but in its treatment of the truth-nature dimension of the philosophical concern with truth. It is philosophically interesting in its “recessive” treatment of the issue of truth status. As explained in Section 1.2 of Chapter 1, two major questions concerning the issue of truth status in the truth-nature-concerned project of the philosophical concern with truth are these: (1) “Which fundamental methodological attitude towards our pre-theoretic understanding of truth needs to be adopted, a non-revisionist one or a revisionist one?” and (2) “Is truth substantive or deflationary?” Classical Daoism makes its characteristic “recessive” approach to the question in the following way. Classical Daoism clearly takes its nonrevisionist approach in this manner: it reflectively elaborates the pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth into the axiom-like notion of *dao* pursuing; this is both for the sake of its substantive content to identify the fundamental mission of reflective inquiries of Daoism and for the sake of its substantive explanatory role: classical Daoism also firmly takes it that the *dao* pursuit substantively identifies the fundamental mission of philosophical inquiries and play a substantive explanatory role in identifying a normative goal of philosophical inquiries. In this way, in the classical Daoist recessive approach, the two questions become two sides of one coin that mutually resort to each

other and are intrinsically related. Putting the substantial point of views aside, one can see that what makes the Daoist approach philosophically interesting in view of methodological strategy is its “recessive” character. It does not directly argue for the adequacy of its approach in the meta-discourse; rather, it “silently” reveals its positions concerning the two questions by showing how the result of such positions effectively function and has its explanatory force in its own reflective practice. It is noted that the foregoing characterization of the classical Daoist approach to the issue of truth status is a philosophical interpretation of how a Daoist thinker would respond on the basis of those conceptual and explanatory resources as given in the *Dao-De-Jing* and the *Zhuang Zi*, instead of a purely historical description.

Third, to the extent as explained in Section 6.4, Zhuang Zi’s notion of the true agent is a significant contribution to the issue of truth bearers with regard to the truth-nature dimension of the philosophical concern with truth. I do not plan to repeat what has been already explained before in this connection but highlight one point that is related to the next connection in which the classical Daoist contributes to our understanding and treatment of the truth-nature dimension of the philosophical concern with truth: i.e., the truth-agent account is intended to emphasize a unifying treatment of distinct but complementary aspects of nonlinguistic truth in the way as explained in Section 6.3.

Fourth, the classical Daoist approach to the issue of truth bearers prompts us to think about another related issue: how to adequately formulate our axiom-like pretheoretic “the way-things-are capturing” understanding of truth. Typically, in the Western philosophical tradition, such an axiom-like pretheoretic understanding of truth is characterized in a “piecemeal-correspondence” way that takes the truth bearer exclusively as the individual piecemeal sentence or proposition or belief. Let us look at some representative formulations in this fashion. William Alston presents the following formulation as the core thesis of his alethic realism:

A statement (proposition, belief...) is true if and only if what the statement says to be the case actually is the case.⁷⁶

Susan Haack presents the follow formulations as the core principle concerning truth:

[A] proposition is true just in case it is the proposition that p, and p...⁷⁷

I call such a formulation a “piecemeal formulation.” If such a piecemeal way is viewed as the most basic, exclusive way of formulating people’s basic pretheoretic understanding of truth, one difficulty with it would be this: it cannot capture the holistic aspect of nonlinguistic truth as captured by people’s pretheoretic understanding of truth. (Indeed, as explained before, when such

a formulation is suggested as one perspective elaboration of people's basic pretheoretic understanding of truth in view of a certain purpose and focus, it is desirable and needed.) Given that a Zhuang-Zi-style Daoist notion of truth bearers is open to various truth-bearer candidates, and given that the core identity of the *dao* is the way things are, a formulation of the most basic point of our pretheoretic understanding of nonlinguistic truth that gives a due elaboration of the Daoist relevant points can be this:

The nature of truth (of the truth bearer) consists in (the truth bearer's) capturing the way things are.

This formulation allows various identities of truth bearers: it is compatible with either a piecemeal elaboration or a holistic elaboration. The reader can see that this formulation is actually the formulation (AT),

(AT) A true statement (or sentence, or belief, or...) captures the way things are,

which is proposed to deliver people's basic pretheoretic "way-things-are capturing" understanding of truth.

As far as the *explanatory-role dimension* of the philosophical concern with truth is concerned, the relevant insights and treatments of classical Daoism has suggested that there is another important connection in which the substantive concept of truth, as captured by people's pretheoretic understanding of truth, can play its indispensable explanatory role but which has been either implicitly denied (by the aforementioned NTCP thesis and NTCP thesis* in Section 1.3 of Chapter 1) or has yet to receive due attention (to my knowledge). This important connection can be viewed as another significant perspective elaboration of the comprehensive thesis of truth centrality concerning its explanatory role, i.e., the TCER thesis:

(TCER) Truth (or the concept of truth) plays its indispensable, central explanatory role in philosophical inquiries,

as examined in the previous chapter where I discuss its two perspective-elaboration subtheses, i.e., the thesis of truth as a (strategic) normative goal (the TNG thesis) and the thesis of truth as an explanatory basis (the TEB thesis). The currently addressed explanatory role played by the substantive notion of truth consists in its effectively serving as one important cross-tradition-understanding basis in view of one jointly-concerned central norm or pursuit (i.e., the way-things-are-capturing norm) of philosophical inquiries of different traditions. This point can be highlighted by a thesis of truth as cross-tradition understanding basis, the TCTB thesis, which can be formulated as follows:

(TCTB) The notion of truth, as characterized by our pretheoretic understanding of truth, is an explanatory basis for cross-tradition understanding

of one jointly-concerned central norm and pursuit (i.e., the normative need for the truth pursuit) of philosophical inquiries of different traditions.

As a matter of fact, the TCTB thesis is already implied *partially* by the two versions of the TNG thesis, i.e., the TNG thesis as the semantic-ascent version of the thesis of truth centrality as a normative goal and the TNG^D thesis as the Daoist reflective way of presenting the explanatory-reduction version of the thesis of truth centrality as a strategic normative goal.⁷⁸

NOTES

1. It is known that the identities of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi as historical figures and their respective relations to the *Dao-De-Jing* text and the *Zhuang-Zi* text are controversial historical issues. With consideration of the nature and purpose of this book, these historical issues are not examined here; rather, throughout this book, Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi are taken as proxy figures who speak respectively for the ideas delivered by the *Dao-De-Jing* text and the *Zhuang-Zi* text. The appearances of the names “Lao Zi” and “Zhuang Zi” thus stay neutral to the controversy.

2. Primarily based on the Chinese original in Wang Bi (226–249)’s *Lao-Zi-Dao-De-Jing-Zhu* (《老子道德經註》).

3. By the phrase “metaphysical *dao*” I mean the *dao* talked about at the first-order “object” level where the general “metaphysical” nature and features of the *dao* as the fundamental or ultimate reality, as explicitly shown in the *Dao-De-Jing* text and as correctly recognized by many specialist scholars in their writings (such as Chan 1963 and Chen 1977), are captured, identified and characterized, rather than at the second-order “meta” level at which we can talk about the “metaphysics” (nature) of the *dao*, whatever it is (say, what is labeled “performance *dao*” in Hansen’s case, cf. his 1992, ch.6; 2003, 213), and/or further carry out “thinking about thinking” about the nature of the *dao* (in Hansen’s terms, Hansen 2003, 205). The metaphysical *dao* and the metaphysics of the *dao* thus do not mean the same thing: one’s recognizing the latter does not necessarily commit oneself to one’s recognizing the former, though one can talk about both, as shown in Hansen’s case, on which I will have some evaluative comments below in the main text of this section.

4. Cf., the *Dao-De-Jing*, especially, Chapters 1, 6, 21, 25, 34 and 42.

5. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 1, 25, 34, 40 and 42.

6. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapter 42.

7. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 4 and 6.

8. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 2, 42 and 77.

9. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 4 and 6.

10. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapter 1.

11. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 25 and 34. It is noted that, with the point of Chapter 38 and the other related chapters understood in the whole text of the *Dao-De-Jing*, “being natural” is not exactly the same as “being spontaneous” regarding human ways: one can act (say, cultivate oneself) with reflective efforts in a natural

(non-excessive) way, though being spontaneous or effortless [say, what Lao Zi labels “shang-de” (上德superior virtue) as being spontaneously virtuous] can be rendered highly natural. What Lao Zi labels “xia-de” (下德inferior virtue) is not exactly the same as reflective cultivation (with efforts and/or discipline) *per se* but the latter’s excessive (thus non-natural) development and/or implementation.

12. Cf., *op. cit.*, especially, Chapters 4, 5, 8, 16, 34, 37, 42, 62 and 64.

13. This point will be given more explanation in the next section.

14. *Op. cit.*, Chapter 25.

15. Hansen 1993, 204.

16. *Op. cit.*, 203.

17. *Op. cit.*, 204.

18. Cf., Brandom 1994, 233–5.

19. Hansen 2003, 207–8.

20. Though the Hall-Ames-style pragmatist approach, generally speaking, and their interpretative approach to Confucius’ idea of *tian*, *tian-ming* and *zhi-tian-ming*, specifically speaking, as examined in Section 5.1.2 and 5.4.2 in the previous chapter and the Hansen-style pragmatist approach as presented here are different in certain substantial connections, they share some similar methodological line in treating the relationship between the “(methodological) perspective” dimension and the “(methodological) guiding principle” dimension of their respective accounts to the extent to be explained below. In this way, the reader can find a more or less similar evaluation line in this connection below.

21. For example, “Laozi, no doubt, was aware of the real world...” (1992, 203); “...Daoist literature regularly draws our attention to...even more global *daos* of all natural kinds, of the world (natural and social), of nature, and so forth” (2003, 209).

22. See the relevant discussion of the “double-reference” phenomenon of the basic language employment in Section 1.6 of Chapter 1.

23. Hansen seems to assume that any talk about the same natural world as the same reality would commit itself to this thesis (see Hansen 1992, 219). However, this assumption is neither theoretically justified nor naturally convincing: we can talk about the same object (say, the same person Donald Trump) differently, even if the object has its changing or changed aspects or layers (say, so many different or even seemingly inconsistent aspects of this same person) that are pointed to and captured by distinct perspectives.

24. Hansen 1992, 219 (my emphasis in italics).

25. Cf., Hansen 1985.

26. See Hansen 2003, 210–1.

27. Or, more simply, truth-pursuing is a goal of philosophy. Various expressions of the TNG thesis can be found in the extensive literature of philosophy. Take as examples some recent expressions in the literature. Earle Conee and Theodore Sider characterize philosophy this way: philosophers “criticize each others’ ideas ruthlessly in pursuit of truth. ... Philosophy is an intellectual quest, with rigorous rules designed to help us figure out what is really true” (2005, 2–3). Adam Morton renders intrinsically related to the pursuit of truth one central kind of reasoning in epistemology, i.e., the inference to the best explanation (1997, Chapter 10). Richard Feldman explains how truth pursuit constitutes one primary goal in rational arguments (1993, Chapter 1 and 2).

As explicitly indicated at the outset, the goal here is not to explore a more comprehensive topic on the role of the truth norm in general knowledge pursuit and in our life; so this work is not to examine the issue of why truth matters in our personal and political life and its recent scholarship. Nevertheless, some recent discussion of why truth is intrinsically valuable in general knowledge pursuit would strengthen the TNG thesis concerning philosophical inquiries, though, as the above citations indicate, this thesis is more or less a received one in philosophy. In this connection, Jonathan Kvanvig's view is especially interesting and relevant. Some authors doubt about the claim that truth itself is valuable; Ernest Sosa uses the following example concerning the grains of sand to illustrate the point of such doubts (see Sosa 2007, 44–55):

At the beach on a lazy summer afternoon, we might scoop up a handful of sand and carefully count grains. This would give us an otherwise unremarked truth, something that on the view before us is at least a positive good, other things equal. This view I hardly understand. The number of grains would not interest most of us in the slightest. Absent any such antecedent interest, moreover, it is hard to see any sort of value in one's having that truth.

Engaging with this objection, Kvanvig has given a good defense of the thesis that truth is intrinsically valuable (cf., Kvanvig 2003, 40–3). He makes the distinction between pragmatic or individuated interest and purely intellectual or general interest in truth; although there are special circumstances in interest in truth, one still has a general interest in the truth, even if it is related neither to practical utility nor empirical adequacy, and even if it makes no contribution to our well-being. Although sometimes the general interest in the truth is overridden by other factors (as Sosa's case shows).

“We do have an interest in the truth, both pragmatic and purely intellectual. It is the nature of interests to lack specificity: We do not have an individuated interest in the truth of the claim that our mothers love us..., the Wyoming is north of Mexico, and so on. What we have is a general interest in the truth, and that interest attaches to particular truths in the manner of instantiation in predicate logic. The default position for any truth is that our general interest in the truth applies to it, though...there can be special circumstances involved so that the general interest in the truth is overridden by other factors [that is what happens in Sosa's example... We have arrived at the conclusion that true belief is valuable, but not in terms of practical utility [or empirical adequacy].... I claim that having the truth is preferable to that which is merely empirically adequate, and if pressed on this point, I can do little else than resort to possible cases in which one learns that one's beliefs are empirically adequate but untrue and ask whether readers share my reaction to such cases, which involves a negative affective sense of having been duped.... If the critic has something of more substance, such as a reason for thinking that the feeling of being duped is a misleading indicator of what is truly valuable, the discussion can proceed. In the absence of such reasons, I propose that the conclusion that truth is intrinsically valuable is the best explanation of the data before us, and I further propose that the fact that none of the reasons given have the power to compel assent to this conclusion does not in any way cast doubt on the cogency of the argument given” (Kvanvig 2003, 42).

Although the Sosa type doubt does not directly constitute a challenge to the TNG thesis *per se*, Kvanvig's argument does strengthen the TNG thesis in the connection that (pursuit of) truth is intrinsically valuable.

28. See my discussion of this in Section 4.4 of Mou 2009a.

29. This is a point that is explicitly made by Zhuang Zi in Inner Chapter 2 “*Qi-Wu-Lun*” [齊物論, “On Equality of Things”] of the *Zhuang-Zi*.

30. This interpretation has been taken as textual evidence for the view to the effect that the notion of truth in the *Dao-De-Jing* is a purely “metaphysical” one. See my engaging discussion on this with consideration of Chenyang Li’s view in Section 1.3.

31. To avoid the confusion, in my *pin-yin* transliterations of the (directly or indirectly) cited passages from the *Dao-De-Jing* in this section (Section 6.2), the transliteration of a Chinese character with the first letter being capital is used to indicate that the character in the relevant context of the Chinese original is used as a noun. In contrast, the transliteration of a Chinese character without the first letter being capital is used to either indicate the non-noun status of the character in the context or suspend claiming its syntactic status. That is, the transliteration “*Dao*” in contrast to “*dao*”; and “*Ming*” in contrast to “*ming*.”

32. Lau (trans.) 1963, 5.

33. Chan (compl. & trans.) 1963, 139.

34. Ivanhoe (trans. & commentary.) 2002, 1.

35. Ames and Hall (trans. with commentary.) 2003, 77.

36. Cf., Herrlee 1983.

37. Actually, in the past three decades since Herrlee’s review in 1983, this “standard” type of interpretative translation/paraphrase, where some important partial meaning is missing (a point to be explained below), is taken for granted in quite a few writings in the literature.

38. Note that there is a seemingly nuance between “what is captured *within* language” and “what is captured *in (through or by)* language”; the difference turns out to be significant. The former means the linguistic meaning (such as *sense* in Fregean sense), while the latter can cover the referential meaning or the extralinguistic object.

39. It is not a rare case that a Chinese sentential statement omits its subject, especially in ancient Chinese. When understanding such a sentential statement, one needs to restore its subject by examining the context in which the statement appears.

40. This reformulation translation is grammatically wrong in Chinese: it is known that, unlike English, in both classical and modern Chinese, modifiers precede the terms they modify. Hansen correctly points out this and gives the following translation which grammatically fits the Chinese original “*dao-ke-dao*” but whose meaning is given in accordance with his “performance-*dao*” interpretative approach: “Speak the speakable is not constant speaking” which is further explanatorily paraphrased into “Seaking the speakable would not yield a constant performance *dao*” (Hansen 1992, 216–7). Nevertheless, later on, Hansen gives the following “standard-style” translation of the first line of the *Dao-De-Jing*: “*dao* which can be *dao*-ed is not constant *dao*” (Hansen 2003, 2009).

41. It seems that the newly excavated manuscript of the *Dao-De-Jing*, written on silk and commonly known as the “*Ma-Wang-Dui*” (馬王堆) text, provides some further linguistic evidence in this regard. In the *Ma-Wang-Dui* text, the character “*ye*” (也) is inserted respectively after “*Dao-ke-dao*” and “*fei-chang-Dao*”; the linguistic fact that the auxiliary character “*ye*” is usually used after a sentential judgment reinforces the proposal that the two expressions “*Dao-ke-dao*” and “*fei-chang-Dao*” are used to deliver two distinct but related sentential judgments.

42. Cf., e.g., Chapters 14, 21, 25 of the *Dao-De-Jing*.

43. Considering that the notions of rigid designation and of direct reference are well presented in the literature, and also for the sake of space, I will not give a detailed explanation of them here, though below I will briefly characterize them when specifying three kinds of naming functions and three corresponding kinds of names. Note that, although Kripke seems to be the first to explicitly and clearly characterize the notion of rigid designation (cf., Kripke 1980), the notion *per se* presupposes neither Kripke-style essentialism nor any other ontological commitment beyond the minimal one—the existence of what is rigidly designated. To this extent the notion of rigid designation metaphysically neutral, though, as I will indicate below, the notion of descriptive (rigid-) designation might go with certain more-than-minimal metaphysical commitment.

44. Cf., the *Dao-De-Jing*, Chapter 1.

45. Cf., the *Dao-De-Jing*, Chapters 25 and 34.

46. See Endnote 39 above.

47. One might put forward a further question: why isn't the logical subject of the second claim "the *Dao* that can be characterized in language" (*ke-shu-zhi-Dao* 可述之道) but "the *Dao* that has been characterized in language" (*suo-shu-zhi-Dao*)? Note that, due to the modality feature of what is expressed by "ke" (可 "can"), which points to the future and the potential, the *dao* that *can* be characterized in language has its open-ending character. That is, linguistically speaking, the attributive clause "that *can* be characterized" would not limit but enhance the direct-reference capacity of the term "the *dao*." Nevertheless, it is not clear if Lao Zi really thought that the *dao* that *could* be characterized in language—in the most charitable sense of "could" might include the eternal dimension of the *dao*. However, one thing is certain: the *dao* that has been characterized in language (*suo-shu-zhi-Dao*) is finite in character and so is not, cannot exhaust, the eternal *dao*—the eternal dimension of the *dao*.

48. This methodological guiding principle, in my view, is best delivered in Chapter 77 of the *Dao-De-Jing*.

49. Graham 1989, 219.

50. Similar to the case "道可道," such a "standard" way to turn the original Chinese subject-predicate statement "名可名" into a complex noun phrase "可名之名" is still taken for granted widely, including in some recent writings; for example, Creller translates it into "Naming (ming) that can name, [it is] not a constant name" (Creller 2018, 98).

51. Note that such terms as "object" or "thing" *per se* are philosophically innocent; for example, "the object of philosophical study" can simply mean anything that deserves our reflective examination without extravagant metaphysical commitment. The fact that a certain philosopher in the history of philosophy used those terms idiosyncratically with extravagant ontological commitment does not render illegitimate the practice in which we continually use those terms in their philosophically innocent ways.

52. For example, Wing-tsit Chan commented: "Lao Tzu...rejected names in favor of the nameless....To Lao Tzu, Tao is nameless," suggesting that, to Lao Zi, what is named is simply not the genuine *Dao*. Cf., Chan (compl. & trans.) 1963, 139.

53. The term "*ming*" as a verb in ancient Chinese can be used to (rigidly or descriptively) name a nonlinguistic object or descriptively paraphrase a linguistic object (say, a remark). One example of the latter case is "*mo-ming-qi-miao*" (莫名其妙) meaning that, referring to something (often to some linguistic remark;

e.g., “A remark *mo-ming-qi-miao*”), one cannot descriptively paraphrase or explain its subtlety; another is “*bu-ke-ming-zhuang*” (不可名狀) meaning that something can hardly be descriptively paraphrased or explained.

54. In several places of this translation, with only minor modifications, I borrow Chan’s versions [Chan (compl. & trans.) 1963, 146] or Ivanhoe’s version [Ivanhoe (trans.) 2002, 14]; nevertheless, there are a number of substantial differences between mine and their versions. The interested reader is encouraged to compare and contrast the three translations of Chapter 14 (and, if possible, check its Chinese original) to identify some nuances.

55. For recent rich and stimulating scholarship and the debate on the relation between thought and language, see Carruthers, P. and J. Boucher (eds.) 1998, Chomsky 1986, and Bickerton 1995.

56. The translations of the passages from the *Zhuang-Zi* here and below are mine.

57. For the term “perspectivism” *per se* and the distinction between subjective perspectivism and objective perspectivism, see the beginning note of Section 1.7 of Chapter 1.

58. For my previous detailed examination of the nature of Zhuang Zi’s perspectivism with more relevant textual citations from the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuang-Zi*, see Mou 2008c. The subsequent characterization of Zhuang Zi’s perspectivism as his general methodological strategy is a further elaboration with the emphasis on its “semantic” character concerning the relation between the language/thought through which to talk/think about an object and its aspects via perspectives, on the one hand, and the object with its aspects that are talked/thought about via perspectives, on the other hand, in view of its intrinsic connection with the “double-aboutness” character of people’s pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth and in contrast to its various “pragmatic” applications in treating a range of specific issues.

59. Given that the “aboutness” relation is characteristically presented in “reference” terms in philosophy of language, the addressed “double-aboutness” relationship can be presented in terms of “double reference” in a semantic-ascent way, as treated in Section 1.6 of Chapter 1.

60. It is noted that, to my knowledge, after the term “perspectivism” is employed to characterize Zhuang Zi’s approach in Mou 2008b, another scholar, Tim Connolly, also uses the term “perspectivism” to portray Zhuang Zi’s relevant thought (Connolly 2011); nevertheless, there are five substantial distinctions between the two uses and treatments. First, as far as their expected coverages are concerned, the former uses it to characterize Zhuang Zi’s *general* substantial methodological strategy (with its fundamental character to be addressed in the next point) instead of being limited to his treatment of knowledge, while the latter uses it to depict Zhuang Zi’s way of *knowing*. Second, as far as the nature of the project under each’s examination is concerned, the former goes with its fundamental “semantic” nature, with its thus related metaphysical concern and fundamental methodological character, in this sense and to this extent: the former addresses the general “semantic” character of Zhuang Zi’s methodology concerning the relation between the language/thought through which to talk/think about an object and its aspects via perspectives and the object with its aspects that are talked/thought about via perspectives. In contrast, the latter goes with its “epistemic” nature to the extent that it addresses the “epistemic” character of

Zhuang Zi's approach to knowledge. It is noted that the former includes the latter's concern as its "epistemological" dimension (see Mou 2008b, 416–8; also see Mou 2015b, 319–26) as well as its other dimensions such as its "metaphysical" dimension (see Mou 2008b, 416; also see Mou 2013b, 300–10) and its fundamental "semantic" dimension as emphatically explained here; indeed, the former emphatically has its "epistemological" concern on the fundamental basis concerning the relationship between the language/thought through which to talk about an object and the object that is talked/thought about in the language/thought, just as one cannot really understand the *epistemological* dimension of the *truth pursuit* without first understanding the *nonepistemic* character (see the relevant discussion in Section 1.1.3) of people's pretheoretic "way-things-are-capturing" understanding of truth. Third, as far as the textual sources and evidence they resort to are concerned, the former is based primarily on the aforementioned "*dao-shu-qi-wu*" (道樞齊物) key passage which not merely has its general methodological character in the context of the Inner Chapters of the *Zhung-Zi* but also shows the "objective" character in the aforementioned sense, while the latter does not resort to the "*dao-shu-qi-wu*" passage but focuses on some other passages addressing the way of knowing. Fourth, as far as each's understanding of the key term "objectivity" (or "objective" and "objectively") in view of Zhuang Zi's approach is concerned, the former holds (as explicitly or implicitly maintained by Zhuang Zi) that, *given an object*, there is a way that the object *objectively* is such that it is not the case that "anything (any perspective) goes," and we can all talk about that same object even though we may say different things about it (concerning distinct aspects of the object via distinct perspectives); to this extent, *given an object* (the identity of an object is understood broadly), the object with its distinct aspects *objectively* is independently of any particular perspectives; in contrast, the latter denies that "*objective* means...independent of any particular perspective" (*op. cit.*, 492, note 8). Fifth, as far as the relation between perspectivism and relativism (in a nontrivial sense) is concerned, the former is not a kind of (nontrivial) relativism in the sense of "relativism" that "[r]elativists characteristically insist...that if something is only *relatively* so, then there can be no framework-independent vantage point from which the matter of whether the thing in question is so can be established" (Baghranian and Carter 2015); in contrast, the latter takes perspectivism to be a kind of (nontrivial) relativism that would fit the above sense of "relativism" and its foregoing "relativist" understanding of "objective." (To this extent, substantially speaking, the latter might as well be classified into the category of giving a kind of (nontrivial) relativist interpretation of Zhuang Zi's thought, while the former not.)

61. The modification "more or less" here is supposed to be sensitive to various individual persons' distinct levels of thinking capacity in this connection and type identities of objects. People's "object-whole-aboutness" awareness is most obviously and directly manifested or presented when they look at and think about a physical object in eyesight, while in contrast such an awareness is less obviously or directly manifested when they think about some object not directly through senses but by means of or through a certain description (or even in a way of "reference being literally determined by description"). Nevertheless, at least in the bottom-line case concerning some middle-size physical objects, no matter at which level one's thinking/imagination capacity is (no matter how diverse people's actual levels of thinking

capacity in this connection are), one's "object-whole-aboutness" awareness is quite obviously present. I refer to this case by the phrase "one's minimal going-beyond-'this (or that)'-perspective awareness" of an object as a whole.

62. In his "Reply" article (Searle 2008) to my article discussing how Zhuang Zi's and Searle's relevant thoughts can constructively engage with each other (Mou 2008b), John Searle presents my foregoing point this way: "it seems to me that he [Mou] sometimes talks as if 'transcendental perspectivalism' would enable consciousness to rise above all perspectives and thus dispense with aspectual shape" (Searle 2008, 431). I think that Searle's evaluative comments here are partially correct and, I am afraid, partially miss one substantial part of my point. It is correct to the extent that I do think that one, any human being, has the capacity to enable consciousness to "rise above all [finite, local] perspectives"; however, it is not my view that "[one] thus [has consciousness] dispense with aspectual shape." My view does not imply that one can stay in a "no-where" position (while going beyond all finite perspectives) but this: one *can* have consciousness to *simultaneously* (cf., Mou 2008b, 408) do both: taking a certain finite perspective while being able to see the limit of one's currently taken finite perspective and its connection with some other finite perspective(s) at the same time; the latter consciousness activity requires the "perspective-transcending" capacity of consciousness. Indeed, it is not something odd or mysterious: imagine that one looks at the Sather Tower Building in front of Searle's Department building—such a look is always from a certain aspectual point of view, as Searle has correctly emphasized; however one can have one's capacity of *simultaneously* going beyond that specific finite perspective to realize its "limit" (i.e., only the aspect of the Building covered by one's current "working" aspectual point of view, instead of the others, is actually seen by one's eyesight sense) and its connection with some other eligible perspectives that points to some other aspects of the Tower.] Searle continues on the same page: "I wish to distinguish on the one hand between <1> the claim that we should always be able to rise above our local cultural prejudices and points of view, and on the other hand <2> the claim that we might have representations which had no point of view and no aspect under which the conditions of satisfaction are represented" (Searle 2008, 431; the number labels are mine). What is addressed in my article share the same sentiment as Searle's <1> in the foregoing citation, that is, "we should always be able to rise above our local cultural prejudices and points of view"; however, the view <2> (i.e., "we might have representations which had no point of view and no aspect under which the conditions of satisfaction are represented") is clearly *not* mine.

As I see it, what I label "aspectuality-transcending" capacity in my 2008b or "perspective-transcending" capacity here is largely the same as what Searle labels "imagination" capacity in the subsequent paragraphs in his "Reply" article, where Searle addresses the important role played by the capacity of the imagination in this way: "...[p]art of being able to perceive something is being able to imagine what it would look like from the other side and having a perception of something is awareness that it has another side. It need not be conscious, but you have to have the capacity to imagine its other side. It is a Background ability that if you are able to look at a tree you have to have the capacity to know that there is another side to the tree and that you could walk around the tree to see the other side. ... This capacity of the imagination is absolutely crucial to understanding moral, social and political behavior" (Searle 2008,

434). Then I am not sure to what extent Searle captures my point in this connection; for, when addressing “imagination,” he seems to use such psychologically-oriented folk terms as “imagination” to address essentially the same point as that of what I intend to deliver by using the term “aspectuality-transcending” (a more or less quasi-theoretic term). However, in view of the principle of charity in interpretation, I would not say that Searle would thus become inconsistent with himself in this connection; rather, I would attribute this to my terminology use which might lead Searle to identify my view in an unexpected way: the phrase I used in my 2008b, “aspectuality-transcending,” includes Searle’s own terminology “aspectuality” which goes with his own specification; when I borrow this term as part of the foregoing phrase, it might lead Searle to think that the addressed “aspectuality-transcending” dimension of consciousness means that “we might have representations which had no point of view and no aspect under which the conditions of satisfaction are represented.” That is one consideration for my changing the previous phrase “aspectuality-transcending” in my 2008b to the current terminology “perspective-transcending” here to deliver what is intended to capture in my account with the terms “perspective” and “transcending” / “transcendence” in their senses as specified my relevant writings.

63. For my discussion of how Zhuang Zi’s general “objective perspectivism” methodological strategy guides his treatment of a range of metaphysical issues, see Mou 2013b.

64. For my discussion of how Zhuang Zi’s general “objective perspectivism” methodological strategy guides his treatment of a range of epistemological issues, see Mou 2008b and Mou 2015b.

65. The foregoing presentation of Zhuang Zi’s general methodology with the emphasis on its “semantic” point in view of the “double-aboutness” character of the pretheoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth actually explains how Zhuang Zi looks at the semantic relationship between language, thought (via language) and world, a central concern in philosophy of language.

66. At this point, the reader can see how the true agent under Zhuang Zi’s interpretation Zhuang Zi is significantly different from the true person under Smith’s interpretation if he extends his notion of truth as a property of persons (Smith, 1980) to Zhuang Zi’s case: in the former case, the true agent is true to the way things are (the *dao*); while in the latter case, the true person is “true to oneself” (Smith 1980, 426).

67. One can further evaluate the need of the conception of the true agent in view of such reflectively interesting questions as these: (1) whether or not there is something *as a whole* that is beyond what piecemeal individual beliefs or statements can tell but that can be captured by the human agent; (2) whether or not there are things that *at least currently* cannot be descriptively captured by any particular predication expressions but that can be understood and captured by the human agent and only generally covered by “the way things are.”

68. In his recent book, Kvanvig emphasizes the value of (more complete) understanding that is achieved in a holistic way in contrast to knowledge that can be piecemeal (cf., Kvanvig, 2003, Chapter 8). Kvanvig’s point is kindred in spirit with that of Zhuang Zi’s account of the truth-pursuing agent in this connection.

69. For this author’s further discussion of how Zhuang Zi’s conception of the truth-pursuing agent can contribute to virtue epistemology in contemporary philosophy, see Mou 2015b.

70. For this author's further discussion of this methodological point, see Mou 2010b; also see the relevant part in Section 1.5 of Chapter 1.

71. There are two major schools in *Mahayana* Buddhism: the *Madhyamika* school and the *Yogacara* school (also called "the Consciousness-Only School"). The former is more influential, which is also called "the middle-way school," or "the school of emptiness," or "the Three-Treatise School." Nagarjuna (second century C.E.) is generally regarded as the founder of this school.

72. Selection (my translation) from "*Er-Di-Zhang*" Part 1 ("二諦章"卷上), *Da-Zheng-Zang* volume 45 (《大正藏》第45冊). The electronic version of the Chinese original text is available at the website of CBETA (漢文大藏經), tripitaka.cbeta.org.

73. Buddhism has a historical founder known as Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (6th century BCE). Buddha is a title, meaning the "Enlightened One". Theoretically, anyone who is enlightened is Buddha, and all beings are potential Buddhas according to Buddhism. The term "Buddha" thus has its dual sense.

74. According to Buddhism, the three fundamental signs of Being (*tri-laksana*) are these: (1) impermanence (*anicca*) to the effect that all things in this world are involved in becoming, continuation, change, and death and so all existing things are transient, and there is no permanence; (2) suffering (*dukkha*) to the effect that the most fundamental (physical and mental) phenomena of life in this world is this: every living being is subject to (physical and mental) misery; it is rooted in the very existence of all living beings in this world; (3) nonself (*anatman*) to the effect that there is no eternal and permanent soul as changeless "self" entity.

75. According to Buddhism, the root cause of the chain or of all these sufferings is Ignorance (*avidya*) (say, the ignorance of the three fundamental signs of being). From Ignorance come the craving for and cleaving to life; the individual is thus bound to the eternal *samsara*; the only hope for escape this chain of sufferings lies in replacing Ignorance with Enlightenment (*bodhi*) and achieving *nirvana*. Buddhism stresses *nirvana* in terms of *tathata* (Suchness) and *sunyana* (Nothingness or Emptiness). Suchness is the authentic state of one's Mind which captures things as they are beyond all (fixed) predications such as (fixed) existence or (fixed) nonexistence (because of nothing permanent, the most fundamental sign of the world, according to Buddhism). It transcends the ordinary senses, ideas, and definitions. It is thus called "*sunyata*," which means Emptiness, for it is empty of all the alleged permanent/fixed attributes that were imposed via usual predications.

76. Alston 1996, 5.

77. Haack 2008, 24.

78. It is noted that the TCTB thesis has yet to be completely established through the current cross-tradition examination of the case of classical Daoism alone to the following extent: as this cross-tradition examination is not claimed to exhaustively cover all the cases in various different philosophical traditions; I thus use the term "partially" in the previous passage. Nevertheless, it is arguably right that the case of classical Daoism under the current cross-tradition examination does present a strong case for the TCTB thesis.