

**A critical intervention in the humanist debate  
on the Anthropocene from a Daoist perspective**



A painting of a classic representation of the 'Three Vinegar Tasters' from an unknown master painter in China.

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*On recognizing an imbedded anthropocentrism in humanism by bridging Daoist criticism on Confucian's concept of humanity following a, by humanistic canon unrecognized, Daoist influence on Martin Heidegger's thought of Being*

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**Mentor:** Dr. M. Schreurs

**Reader:** Dr. W. Seekles

**Examiner:** Prof. dr. L. ten Kate

**Author:** Waiman Ko

**Student number:** 90017

On the cover, a classic representation of the 'Vinegar Tasters' is shown. The three men represent Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism founders who just tasted the 'essence of life' after dipping their fingers in the pot. Confucius makes a sour face; his intent is to think of ways to make life taste better. Buddha makes a bitter face while observing his thoughts and emotions on the taste. For Lao Zi, it tastes 'sweet' because he accepts the taste of vinegar as it is. Critics argue that the painting favors Daoism due to this insinuated superiority. However, in Chinese philosophy, Daoism is not favored but put in synthesis with the other two traditions. Lao Zi is not smiling because the essence of life is 'tasty', but he is experientially learning the essence of life being 'tasty' as is. Therefore, interpreting the smile as sweet and superior is a misunderstanding judgement disregarding the Daoist observation of vinegar's *Being*. Source picture: <http://www.edepot.com/graphics/vinegartastersgold.jpg>

## Chapter 65 – Dao De Jing<sup>1</sup>

In the old days, those who were adept in the Tao,  
did not use it to make people clever,  
but to keep them silly.  
If the people have too many ideas, it will be difficult to control.

Truly: to control a country through ideas, is  
robbing the land;  
to leave that, the land prospers.

Those who are always aware of this opposition take  
her also as a yardstick.  
Always being able to apply the correct standard,  
that means possessing the inscrutable inner strength.  
That dark inner strength, how deep it is not, and how  
far-reaching he is!  
He takes things onto the road of return,  
to allow them to go along with the large throughput.  
(Schipper, 2010, p.153)

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Schipper from Chinese to Dutch. This chapter has been heavily criticized by scholars due to its insinuation of ‘keeping people ignorant’. Within its context, this text actually concludes a call for humans to be in harmony with the *Dao* (Way) and their inner strength *De* (a moving force from within themselves that comes forth from Dao). Chapter 65 calls for a more humane civilization that respects the laws of nature, not just laws born out of human techné (Schipper, 2010, p. 152) because human techné leads to cultured craftiness, ruse and deceit (De Voigt, 2011, p.247). This is what the author, Lao Zi, of the Dao De Jing means with ‘too many ideas makes it too difficult to control’. The meaning of chapter 65 is that in Heideggerian words humans should live with the existence of a *Being* of nature instead of defining nature as an instrument to Mankind. I chose this chapter due to the hyper moral belittling misunderstanding by Confucian and other – anthropocentric – critics. They have used this chapter to blackguard Daoism, while the chapter is a critical perspective on human act. Consequences of mass hyper moral behavior are seen as well towards German philosophers Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk and Meister Eckhart in their attempts to think through what humanity beholds. I find this behavior dogmatic in anthropocentric thinking and that it sabotages critical and reflective thinking. Insofar, I implicate that hyper moral behavior, as a consequence of anthropocentrism, sabotaged self-critical thinking in humanism in the past and will continue to so in the Anthropocene debate.

## Introduction

During my study at the University for Humanistic Studies (UvH) in The Netherlands; I found one thing very peculiar. There were seldom humanistic insights from Asian philosophies or religions in my curriculum. Did this insinuate that Asians do not know or have humanism? What about the confrontational dialogues between the - very humanist - Confucianism and nature-based Daoism? Could we compare it with Jan van Praag's Dutch modern humanism versus nihilism? Why do we 'have to' make meaning of our lives? Why do we 'regret' if we have missed opportunities in life? Why do we have to 'become' something and not just 'be'?

I considered myself a Dutch modern humanist, but also as a Chinese Dutchman with Chinese parents, raised in the Netherlands with Chinese culture and philosophies such as Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism and raised in Dutch society with Dutch culture and philosophies like Christianity and secular humanism. As the UvH-curriculum honed my reflective skills, I saw conflicts and untaught similarities, among these philosophical and cultural differences. Some reflections started to become unbearably hypocrite in my own identity and philosophical thought, but to ignore my Chinese roots with a Dutch-German philosophy of vice versa was simply not possible nor something I wished for. Thus became a self-urged distress to understand and reconcile my identity at the UvH, while studying – and practicing - Chinese martial arts, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Chinese philosophy privately. Inevitably, critical questions on humanism – and Chinese culture - were bred, like: we call our humanism inclusive, but just how inclusive is it really? We call humanism dynamic, but is this not with a narrowed idealism? Why do 'useful' things, scientific findings and philosophical concepts need 'to be *made* and *become*' humanist? We fancy to cut and fit humanity-enhancing concepts of other life philosophies into our own. But if it does not fit, we call it a philosophical movement of humanism. Is this not imperialistically arrogant? Thus, dare I say that in these humanist patterns, there is a dogmatic behavior that we do not and let not be criticized?

An ability to self-criticize our normative culture is what I consider one of the most valued virtues of humanism. And it is due to this virtue that I have found a safe space to overthink and philosophize with others at the UvH on thinking beyond the 'me, myself and I'. One of these humanist lessons is that beyond the 'me', there is the 'other', but the difficulty of understanding the other is that we are not gifted with the knowledge and experiences of the other. So, we are condemned to hermeneutically view the other's

perspective from our frames of references. But what about empathy, the ability of feeling the situation of the other? It is necessary to have experienced the similar or same kind of feelings and situations to be able to empathize. Imagining the other's situation is subject to your own normativity, emotions and feelings that could only hope to guess the feelings of the 'other'. Therefore, self-critical thinking to see through your subjectivism of the other's situation and understanding the reality of the 'other' is necessary to think beyond the 'me' and to transcend your own normative culture. And yet, all of this stays relatively limited to yours and the other's thinking.

This is why I do not believe in a one-size-fits-all philosophy. I think a single philosophy is not capable, no matter how dynamic and broad, to contemplate the fullness of human beings and their world. I do believe that we can get ever-closer to elastic core principles of what we like humans to be, think what humans are and want what humans should become. By knowing that for every 'me' is an 'other' to another, we are able to share experiences, feelings and thoughts. We are able to self-criticize our behaviors from our own reality and relate to the other's reality or perspective. This is also why I do not find it a good cause to instrumentalize and commercialize spiritual practices such as meditation and yoga in deconstructed and instrumentalized forms of medical-scientifically legitimized quantifiable, and only therefore, 'useful' mindfulness. In Eastern philosophies, traditional spiritual practices do not fix 'mindless' problems in ten sessions. They are considered life-long instrumental practices to help become more spiritual, to help be more in tune with a reality beyond humans, but not as solutions to problems. To be and feel connected, if not transcendently with other *beings* is a mode of relating. Yet, in the western world, these mindfulness practices are mainly considered useful because they are medical-scientifically proven. Not to become more fully human and as a way to place yourself in a reality, but as solutions to western problems of 'thoughtless minds' and 'stress reductions' using proof of the enlargement of the neocortex (the brain area for self-reflection) and lowered blood values of stress hormones. Herein lies the danger of framing scientific results as ideologic interpretable data for an 'ethically' enhanced self-ego that distances itself from others who do not do these spiritual practices. In other words, deconstructed quantifiable results from these spiritual practices are expected, projected and legitimized as reasons for people to exalt themselves instead of learning to feel connected to *others*. Thus, these spiritual practices are instrumentalized for self-ego enhancement instead of being used for spiritual means. Recent results from a study at the University of Amsterdam on the enhancement of empathy by brief

five-minute mindfulness meditation exercises (Ridderinkhof, De Bruin, Brummelman, & Bögels, 2017) did not show improvement in empathy in people with high levels of autistic or narcissistic traits. “The mindfulness exercise even decreased empathy among narcissistic individuals.” (ibid, p.264). Gebauer et al. (2018) examined the contradiction of the ego-quieting hypothesis of yoga and meditation with the psychological universal self-centrality principle (SCP). The SCP-principle, first formulated by philosopher and psychologist William James (1907), renders any skill-practice self-central and the principle states that self-centrality breeds self-enhancement. The experiments by Gebauer et al. (2018) concluded that the SCP-principle applies to yoga and meditation as well; meaning that mind-body practices actually exalts the self and boosts agentic narcissism. Part of their methods based expertise on the years of practice and actual knowledge of the meditation concepts. But what if the participants have been following commercialized Yoga or meditation classes, for a long time, to exalt themselves? Would this frame not let the SCP-principle win by default? Should we interpret these results as ‘body-mind practices boost narcissism’ or as a frame in which the specific results did not find the quieting-ego principle the traditions teach? In another 2018 study, Kreplin, Farias & Brazil have shown that meditation is likely to have a positive but relatively limited effect in making “individuals feel or act in a substantially more socially connected, or less aggressive and prejudiced way” (p.8). This *prosociality* as they call it, may not be cultivated through meditation itself, but to the bias, beliefs and expectations of the meditation teacher and participants. From these results, an interpretation can be made that their examined meditation methods enhance *prosociality* in a zero-to-limited way. But what is not considered is that the ‘theoretical mist’ and ‘moral beliefs and bias’ from the religious traditions the practices were taken are essential elements or frames in which the meditation is performed. This dissonance in understanding spiritual practices, from an analytical perspective and not from an associative perspective as hinted by the last study, is an example of what I mean by viewing things from an ‘instrumental’ perspective and judging them by this instrumental framed value.

It would be true that analytical thinking is the greatest western contribution to Eastern spiritual practices, if not the ‘un-useful’ spirituality is stripped of its ‘meaning-*fullness*’ by the chosen frames of the analytic methodology. In other words, western analytical thought decides what is useful and whatnot, disregarding the value put on meaning-*fullness* in those spiritual practices by Eastern thought. Traditional Eastern thought has absorbed Western cognitive rational thinking as a means to extract and mold philosophies from their mystic

religions and traditions. Some examples are works of Zen-Buddhism Master Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253 CE) and Buddhist philosopher Daisaku Ikeda (1928- CE) who have contributed greatly in making Buddhism understandable for the Western world. But a mutual understanding of Western and Eastern humanity-seeking has not been met in their respective philosophical discourses. The spiritual practices are kept within the Western and Eastern discourses they are subject to, even though every 'me' and 'other' considers the spiritual practices as helpful for a better humanity.

Extrapolating this insight to the Anthropocene debate, I will make a daring implication that professor and humanist philosopher Harry Kunneman (2017) did not fully awaken from anthropocentrism as he claimed to be. From a Daoist perspective, he is right to call humanity a life principle that precedes humanness. But to call this principle 'humanity' is anthropocentric in itself. I wish to say that his 'new' insight is revolutionary for humanism, but how revolutionary is it really if humanists live in their own metaphysical world? This is not to demean a professor whom I utmost respect or to smudge Enlightenment values I greatly hold dear. What I try to implicate is that this insight is not a semantic issue on the word 'humanity', but that it is a fundamental dogmatic humanist way of thought that holds dangers of ignorant arrogance and narcissism. Humanists see no other world than one perceived with human powers and capabilities, through human eyes and with humanized values. It shackles humanists in a thinking that the entire world is the human world. A reality in which humanity is the same as humanness and that humans are in a supraposition compared to other life forms and its environment. The parallel confrontation between Daoism and Confucianism taught that the world is bigger than humans themselves. But for modern humanism, I wonder if we have a counterpart who can criticize its exalted ego. And so, I wish to re-iterate this critical insight to other humanists. By understanding and dialogizing with another's philosophy, we may actually gain better understanding and reflection on our own humanity and humanness. In parallel, Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism have been in philosophical discussion with each other since 350 BC. These interlocutions produced wonderful insights on the human mind, its position in the world and the relativity of humanity and humanness. My bet is that Eastern philosophies, due to their interlocutions and philosophical discourse of *relating to nature* instead of the Western philosophical discourse of *relating to the other human*, have gained insights that could enhance our humanity-concept in the Western philosophical tradition by addressing the issues of anthropocentrism. Their insights may help to

fundamentally criticize the – humanist - notion that humans live in their own meaning-given and self-centered world.

Humanists should not stop self-criticizing themselves; it is a great virtue to be able to reflect. Neither should they stop criticizing others, as it is a great virtue to be free to think, but humanism does need to realize that it has hypocrite and hyper moral tendencies. Historically seen, it is an undeniable fact that the main philosophical discourse in humanism is an anthropocentrism with the human as an *animal rationale* (the rational-analytical thinking animal), one that has condemned nearly all other non-metaphysical western philosophies and has blackguarded philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>2</sup>, Martin Heidegger<sup>3</sup> and Peter Sloterdijk<sup>4</sup> who dared to point at humanism's mistakes. I must conclude that whenever humanism feels threatened, it bares hyper moral fangs. Whenever humanists do not see criticism on humanity (or humanitas) and humanization as constructive criticism, that is when they demonize the others as immoral, as failure, as useless, as danger. It begs a question that puts a mirror in front of humanists in the debate on the Anthropocene: “can we only live in a fully human-defined Anthropocene world or are we unwilling to horizontalize our relationships with other *beings* in a pre-metaphysical world?” By writing this thesis, I hope to implore humanists to self-criticize our humanity, humanness and humanism beyond our own frames. I implore us to understand, listen to and discuss with each other, in the effort of finding core principles of humanness and humanity. I implore us to see the benefits of one another's insights not only as useful, but also as meaning-*full*. I think this is the way to find out what it means to be human. Not by self-definition, but by observation.

I want to thank my mentor Dr. Martien Schreurs wholeheartedly in supporting my years-long journey with his positive enthusiasm. I also want to thank Dr. Wike Seekles for her patience and altruistic mindset. And lastly, I want to thank my girlfriend Jennifer for her absolute support.

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<sup>2</sup> nihilism and thought on nature

<sup>3</sup> ridiculed by scholars on his thought of proposing humans as ‘shepherds of *Being*’ and on antimetaphysics

<sup>4</sup> lynching by Jürgen Habermas on Sloterdijk's assumed human breeding program

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# H1 Background

## 1.1 Inducement and motivation

In the current debate on the Anthropocene, most humans are increasingly convinced that their current behavior with Earth's resources is unsustainable. The Anthropocene, coined by a Nobel prize-winning scientist Paul Crutzen, is an era in which Man has a lasting effect on the environment. Although the term 'Anthropocene' is not official yet, as it does not meet geology requirements, it is being taken over by several scientific research fields: climate sciences, biology, ecology and human sciences to discuss the negative impact of the *anthropos* (human) on the planet says humanist philosopher Wouter Achterberg (1994, p.20). In human sciences, it points to a doubt of what Man was, is and to be (ibid, p.20). This philosophical reflection and the consequence of the Anthropocene has led to a fiery debate on anthropocentrism.<sup>5</sup> Anthropocentrism holds the definition of centering humans in the universe as the only object with intrinsic value, the only being that consciously values and all other things are subject to the needs, wants and wishes humans have (Achterberg, 1994, p.4). So, anthropocentrism is the philosophical reflection and consequence of the debate on the Anthropocene. Dutch humanist philosophers such as Henk Manschot, Wouter Achterberg, Hans Achterhuis and Harry Kunneman have made attempts to reconcile Mankind with nature by addressing the philosophical discussion on humanism's anthropocentrism (Achterberg, 1994; Achterhuis, 1990; Kunneman, 2017; Manschot, 2010). All of them attempt to place intrinsic value beyond the sphere of Mankind, so that not only Mankind but also other animals and plants have intrinsic value. By making other beings valuable, they should gain protectable ethical interest. However, I find that their argumentation mostly motivate ecocentrism through the interests of the *Anthropos* (human). For example, intrinsic value is to be given to animals and plants because it cannot only be humans who have intrinsic value (Kunneman, 2017). But this 'equal parties'-logic means that humans – already - have intrinsic value, while ecosystems, animals and plants need to gain and be approved of intrinsic value by humans' sensibility and receptivity of values (Achterberg, 1992). Thus the origin of this advancement in ecocentric thought is actually anthropocentrically motivated. This implicates that the previous argumentation does not fully transcend anthropocentrism. Humanism needs to transcend anthropocentrism to horizontalize the power relations it has

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<sup>5</sup> Early sources mentioned by humanist philosopher Wouter Achterberg such as *humanisme en filosofie* [humanism and philosophy] in *Rekenschap*, 37 (1990), nr.4; P. Cliteur, *Humanistische Filosofie* [Humanist philosophy], Kok Agora Kampen, 1990; P. Cliteur & W. van Dooren (red.), *Geschiedenis van het humanisme* [History of humanism], Boom Meppel/Amsterdam 1991.

with other life forms, but is currently unable to do so due to its focus on the submission of nature for humans (Kunneman, 2017). Therefore, we may need to reflect fundamentally on the position of humanism on anthropocentrism. Is humanism, and Mankind, actually able to disposition itself from its superposition among other life forms?

High-profiled philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger and Theodor Adorno have taken part in criticizing the capabilities of humanity to understand the world. In the 1960-1970's, there are other humanism critics such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and a younger group with names as Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek en Peter Sloterdijk. Overall, these critics point out two problems with anthropocentrism: 1. 'only humans are considered of moral value and the non-human nature is not, 2. science and techné will subdue the non-human nature into instrumental values' (Davidson, n.d.). But next to his inspirator, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger has been influential on the critique on humanism due to his attempts on transcending metaphysics. An increasing amount of scholars are convinced that Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1999) and his overall criticism on humanism has been strongly influenced by Eastern thought, in particular Daoism (Stambaugh in Parkes, 1990; Pöggeler in Parkes, 1990; Lee, 2001; Froese, 2006), and more concretely his ontological and metaphysical reflections (Delaune, 2015; Sorajjakool, 2001; Vlieger, 2014). This implicates that the criticizing train of thought on anthropocentrism might not have started with Heidegger and Nietzsche, but with Eastern thought as well.

Nietzsche's and Heidegger's philosophies are immensely popular in Eastern countries like Japan and China due to their anti-rationalism and resonance with Zen Buddhism (Froese, 2006, p.5). However, in the Dutch Humanistic Canon ([humanistischecanon.nl](http://humanistischecanon.nl)), no Eastern authors nor thinkers are mentioned. This is mostly due to the inability of understanding and accepting traditional Eastern thought and religions in metaphysical and cognitive-rational frames like western philosophical traditions have been, says Belgian philosopher Patricia de Martelaere (2006). Until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, metaphysics has been considered a main theme for western rationalists due to their wish to understand the core principles of reality. But Eastern thinkers were mostly interested in living a healthy and harmonious life in accordance with the laws of nature. It is this difference in the approach to truth why spirituality - and critique on anthropocentrism - , in the sense of *relativizing* a reality, in Eastern philosophy has been more readily accepted than in Western philosophy (Schipper 2010; De Martelaere, 2006).

Simply said, rationalist Western philosophers were more eager to deconstruct and analyze the human being and his reality, instead of making sense of spirituality. Eastern ‘philosophers’ assumed the sensed world as is and related to it. This has simplistically resulted in two total different philosophical discourses of the West and the East. The West that created a meaning-given metaphysical world and the East that related to a ‘sensed’ world.

Martin Heidegger may very well be the only well-known historical philosopher in the entire Western philosophical tradition who has understood traditional Eastern thought, in particular Daoism and Zen-Buddhism (Delaune, 2005; Froese, 2006; Hsiao, 1987). In Meister Eckhart’s mysticism, Heidegger finds the term *gelassenheit* that helps him to let –human - *Being* emerge. Eastern thought catalyzed this anti-metaphysical and anti-rational exploration in his critique on humanism (1990). If Heidegger’s thought on Being (*Sein*) has been strongly influenced by Eastern thought, then we should assume that his critique on humanism and anthropocentrism<sup>6</sup> has been influenced by Eastern thought. This makes it peculiar that Heidegger’s philosophy is considered core literature on the critique on humanism, but traditional Eastern thought is not. Would it not be fair to explore this influential source of his thinking? Although the historical contexts of Eckhart, Heidegger, modern humanism, Chinese and Eastern thought completely differ from each other; I think we can find relational essences among these traditions and philosophies. I am not looking for philosophical comparisons, but for a ‘sensed’ criticism among these philosophies on Mankind’s anthropocentrism by rethinking what human Being (*Dasein*) or *human Tao* is. The essence of this criticism may be able to contemplate blind spots of Western wisdom-seeking and be extrapolated as an insight in the debate on the Anthropocene and anthropocentrism.

It is not a new thought to criticize anthropocentrism. Neither is it a new thought to compare Western philosophy with traditional Eastern thought<sup>7</sup>. Or even to acknowledge that Heidegger was strongly influenced by Daoism, even though the Humanistic Canon does not mention this critical link. But, in the critique on anthropocentrism, I found a direct source from a totally different philosophical discourse that suggests current humanism’s thought on horizontalizing power relations with other beings is not being radical enough and that humanism, due to its fundamentalized anthropocentrism, is incapable of doing so. What is to

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<sup>6</sup> Although Heidegger has never called it anthropocentrism. In his letter *On Humanism*, he did mention that his critique of *Being and Time* is basically the thought that the highest humanistic provisions of the *being* of Man do not experience the proper dignity of Man yet (Sloterdijk, 2005, p.55).

<sup>7</sup> Prof. dr. Ulrich Libbrecht (1928-2015), a Belgian Orientalist authority philosopher on Eastern and comparative philosophy, developed comparative philosophy to compare Western with Eastern traditions.

say about this critique from a humanist perspective? Will humanism reject and blackguard its critics as it has done in the past or will it be able to relate and learn, like Ulrich Libbrecht's comparative philosophy attempts to do? I find it very hard to believe that humanistic wisdom is solely gained by Western philosophy and that Eastern thought would have no considerable value. The Chinese nature-based Daoism, humanist Confucianism and cognitive-reflective Chinese Buddhism have been criticizing each other's philosophy of life since their beginning at around 350 BCE, mostly on the political and personal level of technical acting. Is there nothing to be learned from for humanistic philosophy? If Heidegger has been inspired in his critique on humanism by Eastern thought, who is considered a core Western philosopher in the Humanistic Canon, should we not explore Eastern thought more willingly? And could we not find clues in Eastern thought on the issue of anthropocentrism as well?

In this thesis, we will see a Western critique on anthropocentrism explored by German philosophers as Martin Heidegger's *Sein* (Being), Peter Sloterdijk's *affair* (hyper moralism) and Dominican theologian Meister Eckhart's *Gelassenheit* (imperturbability). Later on, we will bridge Martin Heidegger with Daoism and then view the discussion between Daoism and Confucianism on their different views on humanity and humanness. An exploration of Daoism's main principles *Dao*, *De* (inner power) and *wu wei* (non-acting) is made to open understanding for Eastern thought and how Heidegger's thought may be influenced. This will end in implications of a new perspective and insights from traditional Eastern thought for the debate on anthropocentrism and on issues with humanist philosophy.

To aid the reader, I have made a timeline schematic (fig.1) that summarizes the broadness of the thesis. The schematic summarizes couple key elements necessary in linking Heidegger's criticism on humanism to Daoist criticism, which then reflects a critique on western anthropocentrism in humanism. The timeline arrows end at the second block as that is where the current known wisdom ends. They do not necessarily comply fully as extrapolation, but should rather be understood as resonances with the essence of criticism on the exaltation of Mankind. The point being that modern humanism is, perhaps unsuccessfully, attempting to tackle anthropocentrism from within, while Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism in China have this unique history of over ~2300 years seeking wisdom on what humans should think, be and are. And that humanism could learn insights that may break bonds with anthropocentrism.

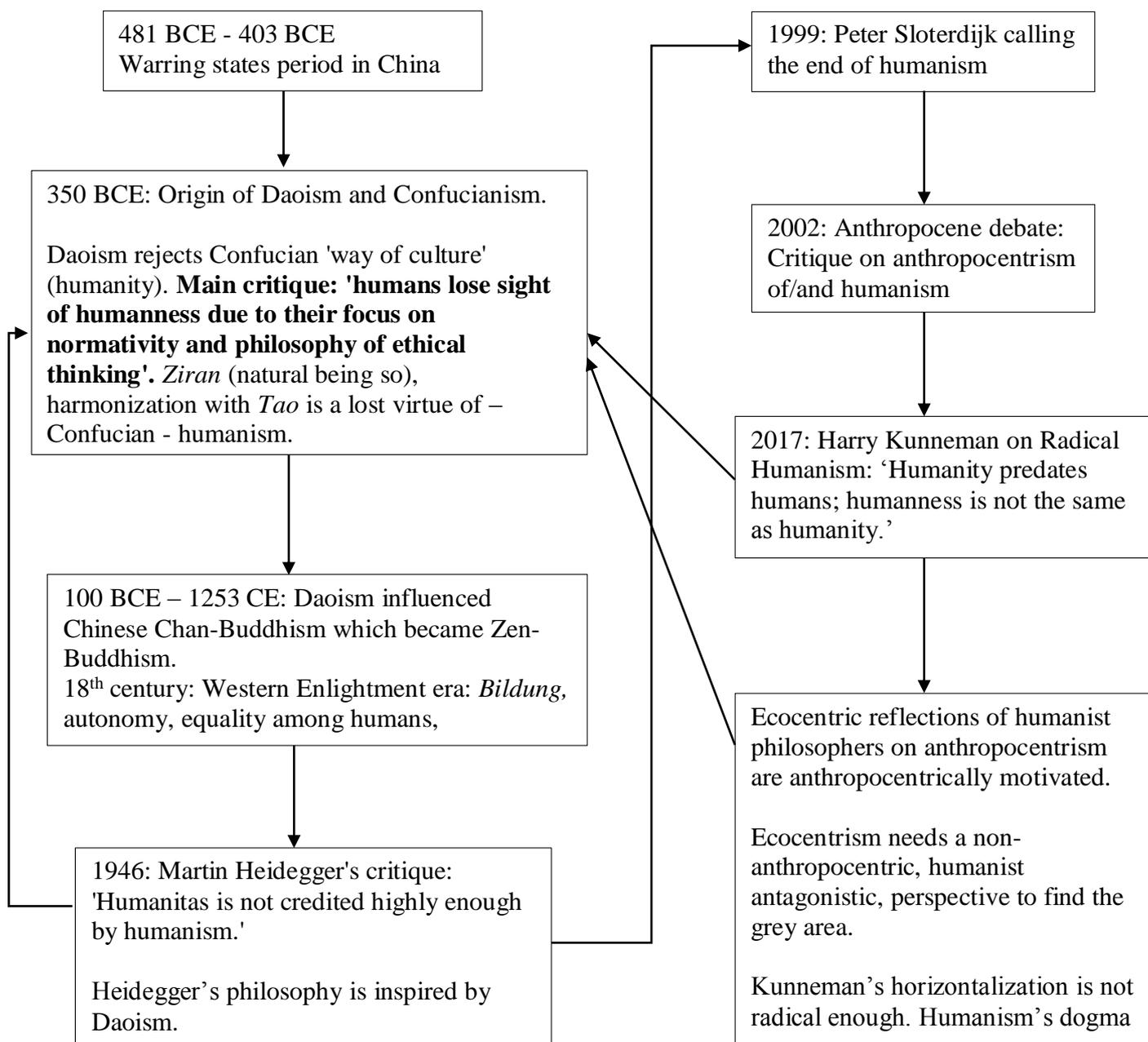


Fig 1. Timeline schematic of the core elements in this master thesis.

## **1.2 Purpose**

This text has three linked purposes: 1. to examine the position of modern humanism in their answer to anthropocentrism. 2. to illustrate a, for Humanistic Canon unknown, undeniable influential Eastern source in Heidegger's *Being*. 3. to explore the critique of Daoism on *the way of culture* of Confucianism as a parallel insight to humanist anthropocentrism. Daoist insights may help criticize an implicated underperformance of horizontalizing radicalization of humanism by humanist philosophers. More concretely, the essence of Daoism's spiritual critique on Confucian humanity concepts is extrapolated to the modern humanist, anthropocentric implicated, answer to anthropocentrism.

## **Main thesis**

How do anti-metaphysical criticisms of Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk and Meister Eckhart relate to the Daoist criticism on the Confucian concept of humanity and be interpreted as an enrichment to modern humanism's position in the debate on the Anthropocene?

## **Partial questions**

- How did the western humanism debate on anthropocentrism develop?
- How do Heidegger, Sloterdijk and Eckhart relate in their criticism on western philosophical tradition, in particular humanism?
- What kind of critique did Daoism have on the Confucian humanist *way of culture*?
- Which similarities are suggested between Heidegger's thought on *Being* and Daoist principles?
- What implications does Daoist spirituality have on anthropocentrism and humanism?

## **1.3 List of definitions**

For a better understanding of the contents, some main concepts and choices are described and explained.

## **Humanism**

Humanism has a broad spectrum from anti-religious atheist and rationalist humanism on one end to religious and spiritual humanism at the other end (Van Ijssel, 2007). I have

operationalized the term - modern or secular - humanism in this thesis as a Dutch-German humanism that bases its values on the Enlightenment philosophy such as *Bildung* (self-development), rationalism, freedom of thought and anthropocentrism. By addressing Man and the humanist as an *animal rationale* in the western philosophical tradition, an opportunity arises to position humanism in a similar parallelized debate like the Chinese traditions of humanist Confucianism and nature-based Daoism have been. But even in spiritual humanism, anthropocentrism in humanism remains an issue. Even though spiritual humanists feel spiritually connected to a cosmos or to nature, its philosophy does not assume a pure horizontal position among other life forms. However, according to Van IJssel, spiritual humanists would have the advantage of understanding connectedness to a holistic whole or to the cosmos (2007, p. 184-187). There lies a possibility to seek a beyond-*anthropos* relationship with nature that could be extrapolated to other life forms. In this thesis, the interlocutions between the humanist Confucianism and nature-based Daoism are examined to illustrate the difference between Confucian humanity and Daoist humanness. It may aid as an enrichment in the discussion on rethinking our spiritual or religious relationship with Earth.

### **Traditional Chinese thought**

Sinologists such as Jana S. Rosker (2009), Kristofer Schipper (2010) and Belgian philosopher Patricia De Martelaere (2006) agree that a Kantian or Cartesian-like systemic rationalist philosophy with an epistemology (knowledge theory) or metaphysical features has not developed in early Chinese tradition. In western philosophical – and theological - tradition, subject and object are separated domains. In Eastern thought, subject and object cannot be seen separate (Bulhof, 2005; De Martelaere, 2006). As an example, *Yin* and *Yang* are two sides of a unity but cannot be fully understood when separated. Does this mean that ‘philosophy’ is a European thing? Slovenian sinologist Jana S. Rosker argues that it means that Chinese thought actually had a different philosophical discourse “such as the method of correlative thought, and principal binary categories such as *yin yang* 陰陽, *zhi xing* 知性 (knowledge and action), *xing qing* 性情 (nature and emotion) and *jian bai* 堅白 (consistency and attribute)” if compared to the “almost technocratically delimited categorial and terminological *apparati*” western tradition (2009, p.229). Therefore, Chinese thought or Chinese philosophy needs to be understood as a different kind of wisdom-seeking, simply because its philosophies were intrinsically related while western traditions separated. Yet, in both ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ traditions, we should not forget that the love for wisdom still holds true albeit in different ways.

### **Confucian way of culture**

In the discussion between Daoism and Confucianism, the *way of culture* is mentioned for two reasons. ‘Way’ because in Chinese language and in this particular case, it is meant as a path to follow and ‘culture’ because in Daoism, it is critiqued as the anthropocentric normativity. When Daoism critiques the Confucian *way of culture*, Daoism is basically criticizing Confucian social concept of humanity (*ren*). In Confucianism, there are normative rituals to follow for every single occasion. A person with a specific ranking would sit at a specific place and behave in specific ways as the ritual would prescribe. This Confucian *way of culture* would help maintain order in human society, because everyone knows its place and thus his norms to act (Schipper, 2010). To Confucianism, behaving according to human norms is a characteristic and expression of well-developed humanity (Delaune, 2005).

### **Mysticism**

Derived from the Greek adjective *mustikos* (Latin: *mysticus*), it refers to a connection with the mysteries in which an individual is initiated and hushes (Libbrecht in Van IJssel, 2007, p.30). Van IJssel (2007) comprised the opinions on difference between religious and mystic experience as a slope. A religious experience is when the I becomes confronted with the transcendental, the holy, the ground of Being, the Absolute Reality and becomes mystic when the I becomes one with this or the I falls away (Van IJssel, 2007, p.80). According to emeritus professor of University Leiden Ilse Bulhof, mysticism has not been highly regarded in western philosophical and theological tradition<sup>8</sup> because it seems immature to think non-dually (2005, p.301). Non-duality thinking means to let subject and object be one and the same (ibid). Bulhof uses the example of a religious person experiencing the mystic unification with God. Dualistic thinking rejects this, because it does not metaphysically allow a religious person to be the same as God. According to Davidson (n.d.) and Van IJssel (2007), humanism steered far away from mysticism due to Enlightenment ideals until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mysticism, such as the mystic experience of becoming one with God, is in western religious mystic context is not alien but it is berated by the western philosophical Enlightenment ideals (Bulhof, 2005; Van IJssel, 2007). Mysticism became rather polemic due to the conceptual theoretical thought and so the experiential and bodily comprehension of spirituality has gradually been lost in Western culture (Van IJssel, 2007, p.32). Adri Smaling & Hans Alma

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<sup>8</sup> And thus humanism as well (Davidson, n.d.; Van IJssel, 2007, p.

(2010) made a connection between transcendence and meaning (*zingeving*) to spirituality. Meaning is a more or less continues transcendence of the immediacy: a transcending experience of meaning; they called it ‘horizontal meaning’ (ibid). “Mysticism in its very nature defies the analysis of logic, and logic is the most characteristic feature of Western thought”. (Suzuki, 1964, p.35). Mysticism in Eastern thought is rather to be understood as “an experience that baffles all languages” (Suzuki, 1964, p.12). *Satori*<sup>9</sup> (Enlightenment) is a ‘*mysterium ineffabile*’ and comes as something unexpected, not to be expected.” (ibid, p.95). “*Satori* is the *raison d’être* of Zen, and without it there is no Zen.” (ibid, p.12). To understand the East, mysticism must be understood (Suzuki, 1964). And so, a way to understand Eastern mysticism is through understanding spirituality as a universal phenomenon of horizontal transcendence in becoming a ‘whole’ person (Fowler, 2015).

### **Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics (Maso & Smaling, 2009) is understood as an interpretation theory. It is validated in some forms of qualitative research. More importantly, it is used to interpret texts. Wilhelm Dilthey’s works (1833-1911) on hermeneutics concentrated on the time-related ‘inner senses of meaning’. Dilthey made effort to distinguish human sciences from natural sciences by acknowledging that the lived experience (*erlebnis*) is fundamental to human being (Thiselton, 2009, p.290). In our case, this means reading and interpreting texts by understanding things as the spirit, culture, history and meanings of the writer in his time period.<sup>10</sup>

### **Humanist chaplaincy**

In Dutch language, humanist chaplaincy is mostly called *humanistisch geestelijke verzorging* (humanist spiritual care), *humanistische geestelijke begeleiding* (humanist spiritual accompaniment) or *humanistisch geestelijk (raads)werk* (humanist spiritual ((council)) work). But these terms are not commonly used in English language to define *spiritual caregiving* of humanist denomination. Therefore, I have conformed to using the most commonly known English and American term *humanist chaplaincy* that is used by the American and British Humanist Association instead of the more neutral and correct term

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<sup>9</sup> The Japanese-Buddhist translation and softly defined as ‘a strange perception of unsurpassed singularity’. (Suzuki, 1964, p.9)

<sup>10</sup> To simplify reading, I have tried to keep the written individual to the male gender. Obviously, all other genders apply as well.

*spiritual caregiving* to aid in the readability of this thesis. In the Dutch professional standard for spiritual caregiving (2015), spiritual care is defined as: professional guidance, assistance and advice on meaning and philosophy of life.

#### **1.4 Relevance to Humanistic Studies**

This thesis has sought philosophical grounds to intervene in the humanist debate on the Anthropocene by addressing an implicated inability of humanism to transcend its anthropocentrism via reflection on Daoist criticism on Confucian humanity concepts. To humanistic studies, and to the Humanistic Canon, the unfamiliarity of Daoist influence on Heidegger's philosophy illustrates a philosophical gap in the possible understandings of Heidegger's philosophy. The gap suggests that Heidegger's philosophy may be better understood if its Eastern sources, and in particular Daoism, is explored. Future comparative researches in Eastern philosophies and traditions that may have other insights on Mankind due to a totally different philosophical discourse. Exploring these insights and their Eastern sources, next to Zen-Buddhism, may help invigorate modern – western – humanism into a more universal humanism. Another implication is that in the current debate on anthropocentrism Dutch humanist philosophers are not yet able to radically horizontalize humanism's supraposition. This implication gives solid grounds to explore the critique on humanity that has been ongoing between the Chinese traditions Daoism and Confucianism. These implications primarily show two weaknesses in modern humanism: 1. failure to understand and relate Martin Heidegger's criticism to Eastern spirituality, 2. humanism's self-criticism is anthropocentric in its nature. The results of this thesis may help reinvigorate humanism, enrich the *Anthropocene* debate, invite humanist thinkers to further explore Eastern thought, help understand Eastern humanism concepts and be reflective of the dangers of humanism's own dogmatism. This thesis aids in the research program *Critical Regeneration of Humanistic Traditions and Values* of the University for Humanistic Studies.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

In Chapter 2, I have attempted to interpret the comments and critique on anthropocentrism by high-profiled German thinkers Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk, Meister Eckhart and current Dutch humanist philosophers as Harry Kunneman and Peter Manschot. The texts of *Letter on Humanism* and *Being and Time* by Martin Heidegger has been high-profiled because he publicly opened a space for thought towards posthumanism. I rather see it as a criticizing re-orientation of humanism instead of posthumanism. By criticizing the narrow scientific and rational view on reality, Heidegger attempted to bring humans back closer to

*Being* which we now understand as *being authentic* (Delaune, 2015; Dreyfus, 1991). This critique of bringing humans back closer to *Being* will be proven to be influenced by Daoist thought on humanness versus – Confucian - humanity. Sloterdijk (2009a) advanced on Heidegger's thought towards the dangers of genetic manipulation by addressing the 'arrogance' of humanist anthropocentrism. In Meister Eckhart's mysticism – and Heidegger's philosophy - , imperturbability (*gelassenheit*) is suggested to reveal *Being* of humans. This imperturbability resonates with the Daoist concept of *wu wei*. Chapter 2 is therefore an exploration of the essence of critique on anthropocentrism and to examine hints at Daoist and Eastern influences in Heidegger's thought. By exploring this, a picture is made of the main issues with anthropocentrism.

In Chapter 3, concepts of Daoism *Dao*, *De*, *wu wei* and the *Daoist Art of Living* are explored as context for the discussion with Confucianism. Sources from experts on sinology and Daoism philosophy such as Kristofer Schipper, Patricia de Martelaere en Tu Weiming are consulted on these Daoist concepts to show Daoist critique on the Confucian *way of culture*, basically Confucian anthropocentrism. I will also elaborate on the similarities of Heidegger's *Being* with *Dao* and *Gelassenheit* with *wu wei*. However, Chinese philosophy is under western scrutiny for being superficial due to its practical wisdom. Instead of analyzing metaphysics, Chinese wisdom concentrated on the practicality of its philosophies and traditions. Chinese thought, and in particular Daoism, is examined to illustrate Daoist main principles as critique on Confucian thought on humanity. I have added chapters of the main book *Dao De Jing* (Schipper, 2010)<sup>11</sup> of Daoism to help get a feeling for the associative meanings of Daoist terminology and philosophy. Lastly, clues to Daoist influence on Heidegger will be shown by several philosophers that are experts on Heidegger and Daoism. Here we find an undeniable bridge between Heidegger's criticism on western philosophical traditions and Eastern thought on spirituality. This opens a space to think about the enrichment Eastern thought can or cannot bring to modern humanism and western philosophical tradition.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the commensurability and incommensurability of Daoism with modern humanism. Daoism defies humanity, because from Daoist perspective humanity exists as consequence of disharmonization with the *Dao*. In Daoist perspective, finding *De*

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<sup>11</sup> Also compared with the translations from Jaap Voigt (2011). Original work by Lao Zi around 300 BCE

(inner power) as the inner moral strength, leads to a more natural way to *Be*. In essence, Daoism calls upon humans to be more authentic by harmonizing with the *Dao* through *De*. Humanity concepts are therefore considered irrelevant, because humans are *being* human, instead of *humanized*. In the latter half, I will have humanist philosopher Joep Dohmen confront Daoism on the arguments made for and against anthropocentrism. This chapter entails the confrontation and (in)commensurability of Daoism with humanism.

In the chapter Final Considerations, I will answer the thesis's questions and try to find Daoist potential enrichment for Dutch modern humanism. Also, I will implicate possibilities of understanding Daoist insights in the humanism debate on the Anthropocene.

## **Chapter 2 Critique on anthropocentrism**

The Anthropocene is currently being debated as the era in which Mankind is causing a sustainability crisis (Ten Bos, 2017). As consequence, the philosophical reflection on the Anthropocene has led to the debate on anthropocentrism in human sciences. Dutch geophilosopher René ten Bos (2017) thinks that Mankind is wandering in the Anthropocene without knowing what it is doing to nature and when it realizes, what to do about it. Dutch high-profiled humanist philosophers such as Henk Manschot, Wouter Achterberg, Hans Achterhuis and Harry Kunneman have made attempts to reconcile Mankind with nature. However, choosing a normative frame and lifestyle without leaving the basis of the *animal rationale* has publicly troubled many western humanism critics since Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism*. To Heidegger, all current –isms – and thus humanism as well - are traditionally formed by the same and singular philosophical framework: 'mankind is an *animal rationale*' (Heidegger, 2005). This framework means that Man is a thinking animal and invents rules for himself through knowledge and metaphysical reasoning. So, to Heidegger, any –ism philosophy basically grounds itself in metaphysics and derives ethical behavior based on this reasoned knowledge. Heidegger's critique on metaphysics is that this way of the *animal rationale* thinking in all '–isms' abberates from its original *Being* (ibid). Here, we find a first sign of Daoist thought. In Chinese context, Daoism defies Confucian humanity, because humanity and ethics are considered a consequence of disharmonization with human nature or humanness from Daoist perspective (Froese, 2006; Parkes, 1990). In the western philosophical discourse, Heidegger attempted a non-anthropocentric position on the essence of Man (*Being*); namely that Mankind in his existence does not make the world, but that Man

appears existentially in an already existing world (*da sein*). So, Heidegger says, man must consider the philosophical frameworks and 'herd' *Being* (2005, p.57). His position opposes a metaphysics with a humanist makeability ideal in which all meanings are anthropocentrically decided. What human nature is, is not asked in the entire western philosophical tradition and persistently according to Heidegger (1999). In the spirit of Heidegger, German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2009b) also confronts humanism in *Rules of the Human Zoo*. These two philosophers will take the stage in this thesis due to their orientation on the Chinese philosophy of Daoism. Heidegger's attempt and Sloterdijk's reaction to Heidegger are explained as some of the fundamental criticisms in the European philosophical tradition on anthropocentrism. Another indication of Daoist influence on Heidegger is the resonance of Heidegger's *gelassenheit* (imperturbability) with the Daoist concept of *wu wei*. In his work *Country Path Conversations*, Heidegger (2010) absorbs the term *gelassenheit* Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) uses. Eckhart's thinking on interreligious dialogue of Multiple Religious Belonging (identifying yourself or belonging to multiple religions) and his thinking about unity spirituality (dominicanen.nl, 2014) is currently being read with vigor by many Christians and Buddhists due to his resonance with *Zen* of Zen-Buddhism. The term *Zen* is derived from the Chinese transliteration (*ch'an-na*; *zenna* in Japanese) of the original Sanskrit (Suzuki, 1964, p.32). Zen-Buddhism originated from the Chinese Chan-Buddhism. The latter has been most influenced by Daoism, particularly in its aspect of *Zen*. *Zen*'s mystic freedom of thought resonates with Daoism's *wu wei* and Eckhart's *gelassenheit* which have influenced Heidegger's philosophy. I implicate that Daoist philosophy resonates with their thoughts on some issues with humanity and humanism. There we will find common grounds on a missing insight in the current humanist critique on anthropocentrism. Also, by choosing these three thinkers, I want to illustrate the dogmatic behavior of hyper-moralist critics who have blackguarded Heidegger, Sloterdijk and Eckhart. It is to show a critique that an anthropocentric dogmatism has nested in modern humanism; one that beholds the danger of making humanism unable to self-criticize, and be criticized, due to its overly focus on reasoned humanity and a waning sight of humanness. While humanist philosopher Harry Kunneman (2017) made a similar warning through the explanation of domination by logopoiesis in humanism; my attempt is to warn from an Oriental philosophical discourse and from a non-anthropocentric Daoist perspective.

## 2.1 The current humanism debate on anthropocentrism

On the website of Humanistic Canon, Professor Doctor Davidson (n.d.) claims that at first sight, sustainability seems to be an obvious aim for humanism. Humanism aims at enhancing the quality of life for humans, a human-worthy life (Derkx, 2004, p.65). In its humanist history, anthropocentrism became a fundamentalized rational argument against religion. A common humanist phrase is to say, humans are central in this reality – thus not God –. This way of thinking gave humanists legitimized meaning to autonomous rational thinking, insofar that they could decide to give meaning to their own lives instead of being in service of God (Derkx, 2004). Founding father of modern Dutch humanism, Jan van Praag, defined humanism to be conscious of the relationship with his surroundings and the *other*, the other includes everything that makes the *other* (ibid, p.65). Therein, the worth and value of the self is not disrespected, but is still focused on the whole, and *in that sense is humanism anti-egoistic*, Van Praag says (ibid, p.65). But in current times, anthropocentrism of Mankind is acknowledged to be devaluating the environment and non-human beings. There is enough scientific evidence on climate-change, decreasing amounts of biological diversity and natural resources to know that future generations will not be able to sustain current Mankind's way of life (Davidson, n.d.). Humanism, apparently, has not been able to divert the arrogance of Mankind's self for itself to the *other*. In The Netherlands, the orations and works of humanist philosophers such as Hans Achterhuis<sup>12</sup> (1990), Wouter Achterberg<sup>13</sup> (1992), Marcel Wissenburg<sup>14</sup> (2007), Henk Manschot (2010)<sup>15</sup> and Harry Kunneman<sup>16</sup> (2017) have acknowledged this threat to Mankind, but argued that humanism is compatible with the non-human nature in a biocentric or ecocentric world view. Together, they suggest that humanism has primarily been an anthropocentric thinking in which nature did not have intrinsic value, something only humans have had. However, they claim that humanism should be compatible with a healthy scepticism on the potential of technology and that caring for nature needs to be approached with precaution (Davidson, n.d.). In their reasoning, it is due to anthropocentrism that humanist organizations and humanists have kept nature soulless and subordinate to the wishes, needs and demands of humans (Achterhuis 1990; Wissenburg, 2007).

A stark illustration of this phenomenon in humanist organizations are the conclusions of the first ecology conference of the Humanistic Covenant in The Netherlands in 1975. The

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<sup>12</sup> on the silence of Dutch humanism concerning environment issues

<sup>13</sup> on the problematic relationship between anthropocentric humanism and ecocentrism

<sup>14</sup> on the seemingly impossibility of humanism to go beyond utility value

<sup>15</sup> on changing a human centered to a cosmos centered world view

<sup>16</sup> on radicalizing the horizontalization of humans with other life forms

conference developed a report in which only three small paragraphs were formulated on bio-ethics, but with fivefold of text on control of human population growth and human consumption (in Wissenburg, 2007). At the world congresses of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), humanist morality would be condensed into 1. educating humans to better moral behavior, 2. using technology to fix environment problems and 3. subordination of the non-human in service for mankind (Wissenburg, 2007, p.3). It is due to a strong Dutch humanist lobby that the IHEU started a resolution in 1992 to look beyond human's instrumental view on nature by 'embracing sustainability and birth control for the benefit of Man and other forms of life' (ibid, p.4) . An increased attention for bio-ethics by humanists and by Socrates-professor Paul Cliteur have helped create humanist space to think responsible for the fate of animals, albeit from an animal-as-human perspective (ibid). Under the leadership of the positivist Cliteur (1993-1995), the Dutch Humanist Covenant (*Humanistisch Verbond*, HV) had an atheistic, antireligious and antiritual humanist discourse (Spekschoor, n.d.; Van Ijssel, 2007, p.173). Humanism as an organization and philosophy did not need or have an ethical or spiritual reason to feel responsible for nature, but one to Mankind's own sustainability by keeping the environment livable (Wissenburg, 2007). To religious and spiritual humanists, this was a shortage of meaning and connection with deeper meanings of life (Van Ijssel, 2007). Former professor *theory of the philosophy of life* Fons Elders of the UvH critiques that modern humanism to have identified itself too much with a progressive, secular, science-technology world view – anchored in the Enlightenment philosophy – of which the moral-free, reasonable human is the center (in Van Ijssel, 2007, p.178). On individual levels, humanists do seem to have interest in linking humanism with sustainability, for example Indian humanist Vikas Gora:

Humanism is inseparable from the environment. (...) Climate change and global warming have been recent scary developments. But sadly many of those involved tend to magnify the issues so much that an individual feels out of place and unqualified or incapable of bringing about change for the better. Humanists have a role to play in showing that an eco-friendly lifestyle can lessen the consequences of environmental degradation. It brings to the fore the necessity of developing alternative sources of energy, such as solar and wind power. (Gasenbeek & Gogineni in Wissenburg, 2007, p.5)

Wissenburg (2007) mentioned that humanist organizations did not seem to be interested in being environmentally friendly, because theoretically anthropocentrism in humanism causes humanists to centralize humans in reality and subordinate all non-human things. Therefore, Wissenburg opts for reasoning that choosing how to relate to nature makes a difference to the identity of humans *as a human* and therefore humanism as a social relevant movement in sustainability-thinking. Humanism is *intrinsically* not connected with nature at all; but humanism is not about how to live well, but is about *choosing* and *justifying* a lifestyle (Wissenburg, 2007, p.6). By acknowledging the social construct of Man with nature and the excessive positivism of the Enlightenment, Man could see nature as a construct of autonomous design. Within this construct Man would be able to shape and transform its self-image (ibid, p.6). To Wissenburg, the choice to form an identity is key to deciding to our self-image of Man. Yet, this would mean that making this choice is a human-valued choice. An anthropocentric choice.

### 2.1.1 Anthropocosmos

Humanist professor of the UvH Henk Manschot attempts a humanist cosmological perspective on ecology, starting with a contemplation on how the Anthropocene is connected with modern life by examining the character of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's (1883-1891) *Zarathustra* in Nietzsche's philosophical book *Also sprach Zarathustra*. To Manschot, Nietzsche was one of the most sensitive philosophers to unspoken things that were happening in society. The book calls for the awakening of the ecological human, who leaves his nature-hostile behavior behind in the modern age (Manschot, n.d.). Manschot, in agreement with the Chinese Confucian philosopher Tu Weiming, says that modern core values of humanism are not outdated, but need to be put in a larger cosmological perspective. A broader framework in which Mankind lives and thus moving from an anthropocentric to an anthropocosmic world view. Confucian critique must be given on the detachment of human life from the larger picture<sup>17</sup> says Tu (in Manschot, 2010, p.9).

Not the human but the life of the earthly<sup>18</sup> community as a whole, focused on a shared future, must become the umbrella framework. The values of life, liberty and the pursuit of

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<sup>17</sup> Heaven in Confucian terms

<sup>18</sup> As in, all life forms

happiness in which the Enlightenment mentality is summarized, will then return in a new form. (Tu in Manschot, 2010, p.9-10)

Tu wants to turn the anthropocentric view into an anthropocosmic view by considering humanity values as ones that concern all life forms, not just humans or humanists. In Tu's perspective Neo-Confucianism, compared to the secular humanism, is an inclusive humanism with an anthropocosmic idea, but will therefore need to develop its spiritual tradition [...] in religiosity as provides human beings "with a sense of deep awe towards Heaven and Nature; without this sense of transcendence, human life would be shallow" (Hung, n.d., Anthropocosmic Unity section, paragraph two). Manschot prefers a secular definition of a *anthropocosmic* perspective. Tu Weiming based his perspective on religiosity in neo-Confucianism<sup>19</sup>. For Manschot, being a secular humanist philosopher, he says that the human and world view should be designed in accordance with the current scientific insights on the origin of the cosmos and development of evolution (2010, p.10). Manschot (2010) calls it *cosmogensis*, the 'process of becoming' of the cosmos. The base of his design on creating an anthropocosmic perspective is that Man has its own place and meaning within the becoming-process of the cosmos. In many philosophies of life, a core idea exists that Man has an active, unique and conscious role to play in the cosmogenesis. Manschot argues that acknowledging this role means that the choices and decisions of humans should not be addressed as being evolutionary preprogrammed nor be called a byproduct or epiphenomena of the evolutionary process itself (ibid, p.10). To Manschot, this implies that Man is conscious of what he does and wants to become. Manschot offers three orientations on his proposed anthropocosmic perspective (2010, p.10-16):

1. An adequate evolutionary vision built around the current scientific insights and offering the option to situate the phase of modernity and to evaluate in the wider context of the cosmogenesis process.
2. The question how moral responsibility can be extended from Man to all lifeforms. As life on Earth has become dependent on human action, human responsibility should be enhanced as well. The extension lays base for new meanings of humanity and humanization.
3. Concerns the function and the meaning of life meaning in the life of humans. The human is a meaning-giving being and gives his reality meaning. It changes the

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<sup>19</sup> Neo-Confucianism refers to seeking an organic unity between Transcendent Man and Heaven

positioning of Man so that meaning-giving institutions will explicitly theorize on this transformation, next to their philosophies and culture.

Unlike the world religions and indigenous cultures, humanism does not have ‘origin’ insights or images on the relationship of Man with Earth or the cosmos. As Manschot (2010; Manschot, n.d.) argues, while the former can find meaning in their traditions, humanism may need to find her strength by developing a new perspective on relating to the cosmos by absorbing all discoveries and new insights. Manschot (2010) calls on interlocutors such as Greek and Roman philosophies as the Stoa, but also the Romantic Movement. Philosophers like Rousseau, Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche have helped shape the sensibility as fascination for the wildness in nature. The experience of feeling Nature’s greatness and her power has been dubbed ‘The Sublime’ by 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophers. Manschot (2010) clues that these philosophers were impressed by nature and started to attack the subject-object paradigm to make spiritual thought possible of unification with the Sublime. A characteristic of the sublime experience is that Man is overwhelmed and confused by nature’s power and the feelings that come with it. The sublime experience breaches the safe frameworks of subject-object schemas on the basis of how Man orientates himself in the world. She feeds the imagination and the desire to enter the bigger picture and experience unity. In Manschot (2010, p.19), Schopenhauer emphasizes for example, that the experience of the sublime nature drives us beyond ourselves, separates us from everyday perception and life, and clears the way to a reality of becoming.

Deep Ecology, developed by the Nordic philosopher Arne Naess in the early 70’s, attempted a counterculture and nature-orientated philosophy, one that radically criticized the detachment of human civilization with nature and distanced itself from *shallow ecology*<sup>20</sup> by focusing on the rights of all life forms. To Manschot, this counterculture held the danger of moving away from human techné and civilization which by itself would lead to a nature narcissism (ibid, p.20). But if this thinking were to be reflected and re-interpreted, it could help humanism position itself in the Anthropocene debate. For humanism, a challenge exists to reflect on the friction between cosmic evolution and ecological destruction by Man. As lead-up, humanism should formulate a humanist-cosmological vision in which Mankind designs a framework with scientific evidence (ibid).

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<sup>20</sup> An ecologic thinking that centers the survival of Mankind by sustaining its environment

### 2.1.2 Radical humanism

In his farewell speech at the UvH, Harry Kunneman acknowledges that modern humanism in overall has played a central part in culturally legitimizing Humankind's apathy of the quality of life for other life forms on our planet (2017, p.18). Some earlier mentioned humanist philosophers have criticized these vertical relationships with nature but are still in minority in modern humanism. Kunneman acknowledges other philosophies such as the Ubuntu, Daoism, Buddhism as well as early Greek humanism to have a horizontalizing and humanized critique. But in the spirit of Edward Said, Kunneman thinks humanism has to criticize and counter vertical anthropocentrism needs to base this critique on its own tradition (2017, p.19). Kunneman calls these vertical relationships with other life forms vertical anthropocentrism because it visualizes a power relation as supraposition of Man being higher than other 'lower' life forms. To Kunneman (2017), humanism should radicalize its aspect of horizontalization and thus create equal power relation. Humanism may learn a lot from the outside, but can be allowed to advance by its own characteristics of horizontalization and self-critical thinking (ibid, p.19). According to Kunneman, the first step is to acknowledge that humanity is older than the *homo sapiens* and distributed across many life forms. Biologists are shifting the focus from the differences to the continuity between humans and other life forms. Scientific evidence of biologists such as Frans de Waal show that humans do not have the sole understanding of good and evil, nor of cultural transferable knowledge and techné (ibid, p.20). With the knowledge produced by De Waal, Kunneman proposes to understand humanization as a multi-billion-year development process of reasonably well living between organisms that resulted in a relational spectrum from katapoiesis (destructive creation)<sup>21</sup> to diapoiesis (dialogical creation). Then humanity can be understood as a lifeforms wide philosophy of life, based on three outputs:

1. The ability to perform embodied relationships with other biotics,
2. The ability to experience pain and joy and understand the bodily and social touchability and vulnerability,
3. The ability to work with and learn from the tension between katapoietic and diapoietic forms of social bonding.

Using these definitions of humanization and humanity, vertical anthropocentrism can be bent horizontally. The second step towards a radicalized humanism, as his farewell speech title

‘Radical Humanism’ suggests, is to understand the difference between humanity and humanness. Humanness does not equal humanity, but in the West we have become to assume that it is (ibid, 25). Humanity is traditionally tied to the *diapoietic*<sup>22</sup> part of the biotic spectrum while humanization is conceived as transcending and leaving behind autopoietic, destructive and exploiting forms of social bonding, he says (ibid, p.25). Kunneman adds logopoiesis (logic creation) as a new register, one that in its appearances as dialogos, ideologos, metalogos, nomologos and technologos<sup>23</sup> (ibid, p. 29-31), human acts can to be understood as ways ‘to prevent and ban tensions by striving for provability and repeatability.’ (ibid, p.31). In other words, Kunneman (2017) argues that reasoned logics create and manage systems that attempt to ban frictionability, frictions that are inherently tied to embodied relational work. The developments of these logic systems are accelerating, but are becoming unmanageable. The dynamic questions involved in the creation of logic and the tension between katapoiesis and diapoiesis look quite like ‘slow questions’ [*trage vragen*] (ibid). Coined by Kunneman, slow questions are questions that do not have an immediate answer and need time to be pondered upon. The third step is a consequential step from the first two:

1. accept that humanity predates *homo sapiens* and is distributed among many life forms and
2. accept that humanness of the *homo sapiens* is not the same as, but overlaps humanity partially and enriches it. Modern humanism has become too focused on autonomy, scientific rationalism and *Bildung*, resulting from logopoietic abilities of Man (ibid). A vertical anthropology has made the logopoiesis as prime and categorized all other poiesis, and thus from other life forms as well, as animalistic. In other words, Man decided to become a logical and reasoning *animal rationale* and rejected all other forms of poiesis. Therefore, the third step is to understand that humanness is becoming problematic in a predating process of humanization (ibid. p.32). Humanists would have to understand that they are embodied humans with slow questions who are taking part in the humanization process. So, Kunneman suggests a radical humanism that horizontalizes relationships with other life forms by acknowledging that humanity is a shared concept among many life forms on Earth and by acknowledging the acts of embodied paralogical relationships in our humanity (ibid) with other life forms. In Daoist perspective, Kunneman is closest to Daoist critique on anthropocentrism as later chapters will show. But how come Kunneman’s humanity is to be

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<sup>22</sup> A portmanteau word of Kunneman of *dialogue* and *poiesis* (the manifestation of an activity that did not exist before) in which Kunneman describes as when biotics adjust their acts on others to make the relationship pleasant or lustful (2017, p.24).

<sup>23</sup> The created and reasoned logics that form the metaphysical world

considered a core principle that predates humans? Does the word humanity not fundamentally tie to humans and thus *Anthropos*? Does this not insinuate that Kunneman's humanity actually is still anthropocentrically motivated?

It appears that the similarities among the humanist philosophers on the debate on anthropocentrism are mostly 1. to get rid of the vertical anthropocentric relationships with other life forms and horizontalize this by making other life forms equal to humans, 2. accept embodied and experiential spirituality, as being embodied and re-iterate a social relationship with nature and 3. self-criticize the underlying motives of unsustainability of Mankind towards relationships with other life forms.

## **2.2 Martin Heidegger's *Dasein***

In Western philosophical discourse, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is considered to be one of the most controversial and important philosophers contributing to human sciences. His thoughts and interest concentrated on what Being (*Sein*) is, and thus what human-being (*Dasein*) is. Heidegger opposed Western philosophical tradition of metaphysical thinking, because metaphysics does not, and will not allow to, ask what Being is. To portray Man as '*animal rationale*' does injustice to what humanity in its entirety may behold (Heidegger, 2005).

On November 6, 1945, a French philosopher Jean Beaufret sends a letter to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. For some years, Beaufret has been trying to analyze the main work of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* with compatriot Joseph Rovin in order to fathom Heidegger's phenomenology. On October 15, 1946, Beaufret writes a letter of thanks for his visit to Heidegger but his letter was not delivered due unknown circumstances. In his rewritten - and now published - letter of thanks, on November 10, 1946, Beaufret then posed a number of questions that prompted Heidegger's infamous *Letter on Humanism*. Beaufret's letter can be summarized into three questions: 1. how ontology relates to a possible ethics, 2. how philosophy can remain adventurous without becoming an adventurer, and 3. how new meaning can be given to the word 'humanism' (Heidegger, 2005, p.13-15). The reaction of Heidegger in the *Letter on Humanism* would go in great depth the last question: Heidegger's critique on humanism and humanism's loss of connection with human-being (*Dasein*).

Heidegger used this opportunity to address his essay to Beaufret, but also to the public as well. It was quite possible that the letter was a disguised attempt to regain interest from - German – intelligentsia (Sloterdijk, 2009b). Before this letter, Heidegger associated himself

with the national socialism of Adolf Hitler before the Second World War. Heidegger also was a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, the Nazi party)<sup>24</sup>. After the Second World War, Heidegger was forbidden by the French Armed Forces and by German intelligentsia to teach because of his association with the NSDAP and his allegiance with the 'dangerous' thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche. Through his letter of reply to Beaufret, Heidegger was able to leave the isolation imposed on him. Heidegger's analysis on 'a new meaning for humanism' provided room for a posthumanistic discourse, which is sometimes also misinterpreted as a plea for an anti-humanism (Sloterdijk, 2009a). On Beaufret's third question: how do we give new meaning to humanism? Heidegger answers that 1. names such as the word 'humanism' cause mischief and 2. in that question, there is an assumption that humanism is losing meaning, but it is nonsensical to cling to the word *humanism*. (Heidegger, 2005, p.23-25). The –isms have always eventually been distrusted by the public opinion and yet, the public keeps seeking for new –isms in a never-ending circle. Therefore, an –ism such as a humanism may not be the correct way to educate people as the *techné* of humanity inevitably will fall the same metaphysical trap.

### 2.2.1 Criticizing the '–ism'

Heidegger's Letter on Humanism paved the way for a posthumanism thinking by criticizing the way European philosophies and religions determine humanity (Heidegger, 2005, p.27). Those philosophical traditions, what Heidegger calls, '–isms' with superficial differences, such as Christianity<sup>25</sup>, Marxism and existentialism teach normativity and ethics to humans (Heidegger, 2005. Sloterdijk, 2009a, p.27) in a metaphysical way that is crystallized. Heidegger says, when thinking falls out of its element, it compensates this loss by earning respect as a *techné* (a craft-like knowledge), as a schooling and culture company (Heidegger, 2005, p.27). These –isms are not thinking anymore, but are busy with 'philosophy'. These philosophies are then publicized as objectifying and –isms with authority. The effects of these '–ism-companies' have not been able to approach humanity because all forms of such –isms can be traced back to an Ancient philosophy metaphysics in which man is regarded as an *animal rationale*, with or without a spiritual component (ibid). And so, these philosophies do

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<sup>24</sup> Some philosophers like Jürgen Habermas, Theodor Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas saw Heidegger's philosophy as flawed due to his allegiance with the Nazi's. Other philosophers like Hannah Arendt, Otto Pöggeler and Jacques Derrida have separated his politics from his philosophy to show relevant key philosophical insights he has made.

<sup>25</sup> To Heidegger (2005, p.35), Christianity can also be considered a humanism because Christianity comes down to soul salvation (*salus aeterna*) and the history of Man and because the history of Mankind has been in perspective of the history of salvation

not keep Man ‘in his element’, but decide what Man should be (ibid, p.27). Man is defined as an animal that thinks and must be tamed into a human person and one that differs from animals, plants and God. This proponent thinking of learning the rules of reality is called metaphysical thinking. Every new development in this philosophical tradition is therefore a metaphysical move in which the framework of humanity has already been determined by metaphysics and thus, according to Heidegger, erroneously determines humanity. To Heidegger (1999; 2005), the –isms [and thus humanism as well] were competing with each other as public variants of philosophy in their technical declarations of causes, but the truth of *Being* doesn’t come from causes and explanatory grounds. *Dasein* (Being-there), the human being, can only be understood as an existential *In-der-Welt-Sein* (being in the world<sup>26</sup>), an original grounding of Man.

To have mankind ever come close to being, he would first have to learn to exist in the nameless. He must also recognize the temptation of the public domain as much as the powerlessness of the private domain. Before speaking, man must first let himself be addressed by being, with the risk that he has little or seldom something to say about that claim. Only in this way is the value of his being returned to the word, and to man the housing for winning in the truth of being. (Heidegger, 2005, p.31)

So, we first would have to understand that the being of humanism is by definition metaphysical. Knowing that metaphysics makes its world, it also means that metaphysics doesn’t ask, but even blocks the truth of *Being* and it stays in a Being-forgetfulness (*Seinsvergessenheit*) (Heidegger, 2005, p.87). Heidegger argued for a deepening in humanism by replacing the conceptual metaphysics of humanity with an ontology of humanity and the ontological structure of ‘Being-in-the-world’. Simons explains that ontology is the philosophical study of being in general, or what applies neutrally to everything that is real (Simons, 2015). Ontology means: an attempt to attribute properties to entities (*beings*) that are there. To understand what ‘Being-in’ [the world] actually means, the ontological meaning of ‘Being-in’ needs to be examined (Heidegger, 1999). In *Being and Time* (1999), Heidegger wrote that *Being-in* is wrongly understood as to-be-in something as a being-present-at-hand in a space in relation with something else with the same kind of *Being*. Heidegger’s *Being-in* of Man’s *Dasein* should be understood as a ‘Being-at-all’ (Steiner, 1991, p.118). To Heidegger, these categorials do not represent the *Dasein* of beings. *Being* cannot be

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<sup>26</sup> Or perhaps better phrased as ‘the Being, and the human as *Dasein*, exists in the world among other beings’

understood as Being-present-at-hand. "Heidegger is saying that the notion of existential identity and that of world are completely wedded. To be at all is to be worldly. The everyday is the enveloping wholeness of being." (ibid, p.120). So, the essence of man shows himself in *Dasein* (being-there), but not in relationship toward the world. Man *is* there in the world while Man is not and does not make *Being*. Man is called upon by *Being*. So, according to Heidegger, language is not for humans' own sake, but to civilize together in this House of Being.

Rather, language is the House of Being, in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it. So the point is that in the determination of humanity of man as ek-sistence what is essential is not man but Being --- as the dimension of the ekstasis of ek-sistence. (Heidegger, 1977, p.213)

That is why Man is 'being-there' as shepherd of *Being* and, according to Sloterdijk, why Heidegger is certain that his criticism of humanism is not the same as an antihumanism. The most important element of classical humanism is to befriend through language with the other (Sloterdijk, 2009c). The world is the clearing where *Dasein* takes place under the care of the human being. This *ontological* consciousness happens before an ethical act and so the contemplation of *Being* should not be forgotten while forming *Dasein*. Thus, Heidegger concludes that thinking about *beings* must not be reduced to a mere absolutized training instrument. So, if one asks about what man distinctly does different from animals and plants, it is because Man feels vocated by *Being* and should therefore assume the role of shepherd of *Being*. Also Man acts due to *Dasein*, not by understanding the world in a metaphysical sense.

Man is aware of 'being' and is called by this awareness to guard 'humanity'. The essence of man is more than the reasonably living entity, but man does not determine being, he hides being and is therefore the neighbor of Being. (Heidegger, 2005, p.81)

Care for the human *Being* should be attuned to bringing Man back to his essence says Heidegger (1999). Through care, *Dasein*-with and *Dasein*-in becomes *Dasein*-for. To Heidegger, caring (*Sorg*) means to care for the presentness and obscurity of *Being* itself (Steiner, 1978). To make humans (homo) humane (humanus) and not inhumane (outside his *essence*), care is the meaning of *Being*. So humanity exists in human's *being*. This is why Heidegger believes that humanism and humanitas have been based on a misunderstanding of the essential nature of Man due to the metaphysical limitations of the philosophical tradition

(Froese, 2006, p.9). As long as man defines himself as an *animal rationale*, humanity will remain subordinate to the ideas that are formed about Mankind in a long tradition.

Insofar as thinking in 'Being and Time' is directed against humanism, this contradiction does not mean that such a thought would strike the opposite of the humane and would advocate the inhumane, defend inhumanity and degrade the dignity of man. Against humanism is thought, because humanism does not think of *humanitas* highly enough. The highness of man's essence is not based on the fact that man, as the 'subject' of the being, making up his substance, to be the power of Being, to let essence-being of the Being merge in the far too loudly praised 'objectivity'.  
(Heidegger, 2005, p.55-57)

In the words of Karin de Boer, that man is not the center of the universe and does not have the power to control reality (in Sloterdijk, 2009a, p.52). In this, according to Heidegger, humanism makes a fallacy. With 'thinking' as a metaphysical property of man, people can ontologically distinguish themselves from animals and plants. For plants and animals, the play of *Being* is very narrow because they soar in their immediate surroundings. They coincide with their environment and cannot relate to it reflexively. That reflexivity is the privilege of man (Heidegger, 2005), but also an anthropological distinction of Man from animals and plants. This reflexivity is not only positive, because these cognitive abilities give humans the ability to fill in reality with meanings at their own discretion.

Pointing towards this subject in *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1999) pleads with this reflexive freedom to pay attention to the essence of an act (*Zuhandenheit*) and not just to look at the usefulness (*Vorhandenheit*) of action. The usefulness of the action is again determined by a theoretical metaphysics. This is why Heidegger finds us looking at entities as *equipment*, based on their usefulness and designed for-tasks. A theory is devised about the usefulness of this action, for example being able to swim in order not to drown. Therefore the ability to swim is considered useful, but non-drowning does not necessarily have to be the only use of swimming. That depends on the meaning that is given by the I and the environment to the *Being* of swimming. The essence of swimming is then more original than the usefulness of not drowning. Swimming can also be for physical and mental relaxation and effort, for food gathering, for health promotion, in short, something that touches the intersubjective essence of swimming. Heidegger uses a hammer as an example:

Hammering does not simply have knowledge about the hammer's character as equipment, but it has appropriated this equipment in a way that could not possibly be more suitable. (...) The less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is – as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific 'manipulability' of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses – in which it manifests itself in its own right – we call readiness-to-hand. (Heidegger, 1999, p. 98)<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger maps it because he thinks *Vorhandenheit*, the 'objective' utility, of the action is too dominant in the intellectual discourse. The being-there (*da Sein*) of the act of swimming has thus been forgotten. Heidegger projects this train of thought on Mankind as man's *Dasein* is being forgotten (*Zeinsvergessenheit*). Mankind has been objectified by metaphysics and became conceptualized into tools instead of considering oneself as intrinsic values (Froese, 2006, p.82). In the truth of *Being*, Man exists when laws and rules are not conceived from 'reason', but from humanity and the essence of human *Being*. These rules and laws are no longer just thoughts, but offer a hold on the essence of Man. Therefore, according to Heidegger, the distinction between essence and existence must not be sought, but one must search for a hidden relationship between essence and existence. Man does not have to shape the essence nor the existence of things and himself. Man should behold what kind of *Dasein* already exists. What is the hidden insight in *Dasein*? It is that *Dasein* only reveals itself when it, so Heidegger says, existentially grasps reality. *Dasein* only reveals itself during a being-with inside the world (Steiner, 1991). Heidegger uses the concept of ethos with an example of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BC) to explain this hidden insight.

### **2.2.2 Story of Heraclitus as an example of *Dasein***

The proverb of Heraclitus (Fragment 119): *èthos anthrôpôi daimôn* [character is destiny] is translated in a modern, non-Ancient Greek sense, as: "His own nature is man's demon." The concept of *èthos* in ancient Greek sense means *residence* and *daimon god*. The saying goes: 'man lives as far as he is a man in the vicinity of god' (Heidegger, 2005, p.109). Heidegger explains this on the basis of Aristotle's story about Heraclitus:

A number of visitors came along, in the expectation that they would see the great thinker in an extraordinary life at work in all profundity. However, when they arrived,

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<sup>27</sup> An undeniable similarity with the Daoist tale of 'Cook Ding' cutting with his knife, see Appendix C

they saw a shivering Heraclitus warming up in an oven. That was not the image that the visitors had wanted to see. Heraclitus saw the disappointment in their eyes and encouraged them with the words ‘*einai gar enthouta theous*’ (gods are also here). (ibid, p.109-113)

Heidegger used the example of Heraclitus to refer to *Lichtung*, an open space or clearance in a visualised forest. One that also sits in language and where Being can be found. In this clearing, meaning is linguistically given to the world and to being human because the *Being* holds place there. *Being* only appears in transcendence of *Dasein*, being-there-in-the-world. *Beings* then becomes meaningful through language in this open space. Thus *Being* exists without a human perspective. The human perspective is *Dasein* (being-there). According to Heidegger, thinking about the truth of Being is not ethics nor ontology. Gods are not to be expected, they are there and always have been as Being. It is the visitors who have expected to see a formed God-image of the famous Heraclitus, their projection of his *Dasein*. In Zen-Buddhism and Daoism, this worshipping of the ‘Other’ is considered problematic. Firstly, because the ‘Other’ is considered other than the I, and secondly that there is an I (Bulhof, 2005, p.306)<sup>28</sup>. Using the story of Heraclitus, Heidegger illustrates that Man already exists in his nature. Being-there (*Dasein*) is already present; people should only behold what *Dasein* is (*seinsverstehend*). Following this line of thought, it can be concluded that Heidegger thinks Man should not anthropocentrically think of humanity, but should respect and listen to *Being* in an dialectic associative way. In the open clearing, Man can transcend, because then Mankind realizes it has made itself anthropocentric instead of having understood Mankind is part of a world. Heidegger's motto is to listen carefully to the language of being human in the open clearing. In other words, *Being and Time* suggests an ontology that humans could follow if they wanted to and that this Being is actually the human nature. To practicalize his philosophy of *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempted to make *Being* present itself by practicing his interpretation of Meister Eckhart’s *gelassenheit* (Parkes, 1990; Steiner, 1978).

### **2.2.3 Heidegger’s Gelassenheit**

To understand *Gelassenheit*, we must first understand how Heidegger differs calculative thinking [*das rechnende Denken*] (Heidegger, 1966, p.46) from meditative thinking (*das besinnliche Denken*) Barbara Dalle Pezze (2006) explains. Calculative thinking calculates, plans and investigates to serve specific purposes such as developing new possibilities by

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<sup>28</sup> Bulhof actually used this example to explain the Eastern issue with a Prophet

manipulation of thinking (Heidegger, 1966, p.46). So, calculative thinking thinks in terms of usefulness. But there is ‘thoughtlessness’ (*gedankenlosigkeit*) in this way of thinking, because it always rushes ahead and “never collects itself” (ibid). In this linear way of rushing forward, Man takes technology as countless possibilities to speed ahead and be ‘chained’ by the power of those technologies (ibid, p.52-53). Man becomes dependent on those technologies. To counter his possible unaware dependency, Man needs to be able to observe its ever fast-forward behavior. The never-ending rush forwards keeps happening due to his comprehension of his *Being*. This line of thought is observed in Sloterdijk’s and Kunneman’s criticism. Mankind is aware of its death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) and thus rushes with technological devices to ‘save time’. But dulled by the thoughtless rushing using technology, Man lives shackled, forgets his *Being* and forgets the freedom he had before, Heidegger (2005) says. Meditative thinking relieves itself of the logic system of rushing ahead of death, so that an associative thinking remembers *Being*. Meditative thinking is to take time to ponder, observe and be aware of the things happening in and around us. But meditative thinking has an abundant amount of conditions before it can be entered, it keeps focus on our *Being* and our freedom from the shackling of these technologies due to its awareness that calculative thinking cannot have. This would be Heidegger’s ‘releasement toward things’ (*die Gelassenheit zu den dingen*) (ibid, p.54). Instead of thinking calculated in terms of usefulness, thinking becomes about pondering on hidden meanings. This resonates with Kunneman’s slow questions and the becoming aware of logopoiesis, thus also to become aware of all other parapoiesis.

Pezze (2006) uses Heidegger’s work *Country Path Conversations* to illustrate a dialogue between a scientist<sup>29</sup>, a scholar<sup>30</sup> and a teacher<sup>31</sup> ensues on the nature of thinking, one that does not involve willing Pezze (2006) explains. The three interlocutors are searching for a “will-less thinking” (Lovitts, 1995, p.599) that will be explained as *Gelassenheit*. During this *Conversation*, each interlocutor gradually lets go of his own discourse while still interacting in a circular movement instead of a deductive reasoning. Due to the dialectic nature of a – loose – form of thinking among different thinking spaces, a new thinking space is allowed to emerge. Pezze calls this “the transforming transformation of our own way of thinking, which is forced to change in its core in order to be part of the scene settles by

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<sup>29</sup> Able to think deductive and think in a representational model

<sup>30</sup> Able to philosophical think from within a metaphysical perspective

<sup>31</sup> The Heideggerian idea of a teacher

Heidegger” (Pezze, 2006, *Conversation* section, paragraph 5). The traditional way of thinking is subordinate to will and subjectivism. This means that all things and beings become subordinates to the subject that became the highest principle of *Being* (ibid). By questioning how thinking without will can be achieved, it beholds the essence of thinking as non-willing (*Nicht-wollen*) (Heidegger, 1966, p.58-59). The interlocutors are willing not to will so they can achieve a thinking without will, thus without position and subjectivity. Pezze (2006) explains that this stage needs to be done to get closer to *Gelassenheit* as it is a preparation for the final stage of releasement where we have left the sphere of willing behind altogether, where man, as with Eckhart, has no will at all (1990, p.171).

By letting go of willing, an awakening of releasement in sense of keeping awake for releasement (*Wachbleiben für die Gelassenheit*) is made possible (Heidegger, 1966, p.61). This is not to be understood as *Erwachen* (an act to wake up *Gelassenheit*), but to have a non-willing and open thinking so that the interlocutors are let into *Gelassenheit*. Pezze points out that the verb ‘*lassen*’ (give up something) may suggest a passiveness, but as the *Conversation* leads the reader on to experience *Gelassenheit*, it is rather to be considered ‘higher acting’ in the form of ‘waiting’<sup>32</sup>. In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger begins with the complaint that Man does not think principally enough on the nature of acting. Acting is only known as manipulating an operation. The reality of the *Being* is valued according to its usefulness, but the essence of acting is ‘accomplishment’. Heidegger describes accomplishment as to develop something into the fullness of his being, to bring forth in its fullest, *producere* (Heidegger, 2005, p.19). So, higher acting does not ask for action, but is a ‘higher’ acting due to accomplishment. It accomplishes by waiting to happen instead of willing to happen. To Heidegger, this accomplishment disposition is achievable through waiting, because waiting does not change possibilities but keeps them open (Heidegger, 1966, p.68). The moment we do think about what we are waiting for, we are not waiting anymore but expecting. What Heidegger is saying is that *Gelassenheit* escapes the moment we think about it. It is ungraspable, cannot be defined or even done. The truth of being, the *Dasein*, the essence of human nature, shows itself in being itself by a non-willing waiting attitude. This allows Man to be let-in into *Gelassenheit*. So waiting makes free of thinking in a representing mode. Waiting has no will to subject anything and thus it lets in the openness to *Gelassenheit*.

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<sup>32</sup> This resonates with Daoism’s *wei wu wei* (act by not-acting). Not to be considered a passivity, but as active awareness and influencing by just *being-there*.

Being let-in *Gelassenheit* means to be let-in into *Gegnet*. *Gegnet* has no proper translation Pezze affirms, at best should be understood as a Region (that-which-regions) that “comes to meet us” (ibid, p.65). “*Gegnet* refers to the acting of *Gegnet* towards the being of Dasein. We could say that *Gegnet* is the essential movement that relates and determines a relation to the being of Dasein” (Pezze, 2006). To Heidegger, *Gegnet* is a *verweilende Weite* meaning to say that it a dwelling space without restrictions and as a distance. In Heidegger’s words, an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests (Heidegger, 1966, p.65). So the Region is an abiding expanse in which things just ‘are’ without any means of Being. Pezze (2006) concludes that *Gelassenheit* means waiting, in the sense as she has previously described. By waiting, Man is in a true relation to *Gegnet*. A true relationship, Heidegger says, is one that what it relates to, can be to the fullest of its own Being without being held back by the one that it is relating to. Pezze (2006) calls upon two concepts: resolve to remain open to being and composed steadfastness where releasement rests in. With in-dwelling (*Inständigkeit*), they all belong to ‘authentic releasement’ in moving into near-ness of Being. Pezze concludes that “the task is that of being mindful and moving closer to that which is the closest to us, and because of this the farthest, that is, *be-ing* in its truth. Thinking the truth of *be-ing* is the task of thinking, and thus of man, that as “thinking being,” is called to “in-dwell into releasement to that-which-regions.” (2006, end section).

The critique of Heidegger on anthropocentrism lies in the metaphysical and cognitive-rational way of thinking of the Western philosophical discourse. And so, Heidegger attempted to find out a way to be able to enter *Gegnet* where *Dasein* is, but without the ability to define and grasp it. Peter Sloterdijk takes on Heidegger's criticism on humanism. For Sloterdijk, humanism has shown that it has failed, partly due to two World Wars in the 20th century and the waning of the Critical Theory. As conclusion Sloterdijk (1999) thinks that Man cannot be tamed with a humanism or a religion, but has to work on a codex of anthropotechniques. These human-ethical techniques are to be formulated before unethical acts of technologies may be executed on humans. The *Rules for the Human Zoo* is therefore a warning, not a plea for genetic selection and division of humans from superhumans.

### **2.3 Sloterdijk’s Rules for the Human Zoo**

On July 20, 1999, philosopher Peter Sloterdijk gave a lecture at an academic congress in Elmau on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Sloterdijk came with his own reply letter to Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* (1946). Sloterdijk's lecture and letter attempted to update

Heidegger's criticism of modern humanism in order to question the philosophy of its position vis-à-vis biotechnology and genetics. Sloterdijk's letter for Heidegger further discusses the implications of current and future technical eras on humanism. Just like Heidegger, Sloterdijk (2009a) went through history to demonstrate the weaknesses of humanism as a literary training institute with the most important ones: that anthropocentrism and reason are the pillars of humanism. Humanism, to Sloterdijk, is the product of the transfers of good literature and wisdom from one generation to another that builds friendships. The Greeks passed on her texts to the Romans and the Romans passed it on to European civilizations. But in Roman times people had the 'civilized' culture, but also the 'beastly' culture in which gladiator fights and executions took place. Using written texts as means of communication gave the humanists an ability to distance themselves from dehumanizing acts. But humanism did not succeed, Sloterdijk believes. It simply is not enough anymore to try to achieve a tele-communicative bond by writing, as professional as they may be, love-inspiring letters to a nation of friends (2005, p.22). Due to media in 1918 (radio) and after 1945 (television) and now the internet revolution Man has become post literary, post epistolary and therefore posthumanist. The era of modern humanism as a schooling and shaping model has ended because the illusion has become unattainable that large political and economic structures can be organized within the friendship model of the literary society (Sloterdijk, 2005, p.22). Who still tames the human being if humanism as a school of human consent fails? Sloterdijk (2005) asks. Sloterdijk therefore values Heidegger's call for a contemplative asceticism, but combats his religious, mystical and cryptic ambiguity (2009a). He quotes Heidegger in the part on replying to the third question of Beaufret, how can a sense be restored to the word 'humanism'? At this point, Sloterdijk reiterates Heidegger's question, why should humanism and its general philosophical self-representation be seen as the solution for humanity, when the catastrophe of the present clearly shows that it is man himself, along with his systems of metaphysical self-improvement and self-clarification, that is the problem? (Sloterdijk, 2009c, p.17). Sloterdijk disagrees with Heidegger on the ontology of Being. To Sloterdijk, Heidegger mistakes how humans enter the clearing (*Lichtung*). Sloterdijk says, on one hand, a natural history of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) in which Man could become the animal and control the world and the other a social history of taming at which humans experienced themselves as beings that concentrated to answer the whole (2005, p.33).

### 2.3.1 Nietzsche's Zarathustra

In Nietzsche's most famous philosophical book *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Henk Manschot (n.d.) sees an interesting story in which the modern Man needs to be closer with the Earth by heading into the mountains. Feelings of fear, uncertainty, but also awe and exuberance [of nature] interexchange in this book. Nietzsche shows that modern Man is looking for a new spirituality, as God has 'died'. In this story, a clochard comes forth who has undone himself from materialistic richness. A person who is free, but also feels ashamed of the greed of Mankind.

Sloterdijk uptakes two historical discourses of humanity: 1. the anthropogenetic revolution in which man is born prematurely and is born with a surplus of beastly behavior and 2. domestication of the home builders of Language. The antropogenetic revolution is the biological birth of coming into the world. He would even go as far as to call the human the creature that failed in his animalhood and his animal-being (ibid). Man then falls out of 'Umwelt' (milieu) and learns the world in an ontological way. This 'dramatic' birth and transfer of ownership to *Being* is the heritage humans have brought along. So, if a human is in-the-world, then it's because he's the product of a hyper birth that made him from infant to worldling. Without language, the house of Being, it would only bring forth psychotic animals. So, house builders of Language did help greatly to tame humans. But now that there are houses, people need to decide who get the house and who don't. In other words, who decides for humanity which course to take? Sloterdijk also cites Nietzsche's book *Also sprach Zarathustra*. In that book the main character is surprised about the ever smaller human-growing due to its educational humanism. To Zarathustra, Man has succeeded in taming humans' wildness by using virtues, but it could not be possible with just humanistic educational means. The humanist horizon would never reach further than taming and educating, shackling Man to his self-imposed virtues. But behind the light horizon of the well-effective taming humanism, Nietzsche finds a second and darker horizon where humans are cultivated. The dark side of the clearing did not criticize the successful results of ethics and genetics of the human cultivation politics. Humans have been domesticated and made themselves pets by ones who are enforcing the cultivation politics. It has led to an unsuspecting separation between growers and cultivated people with specific cultivator-roles like priests and teachers (Sloterdijk, 1999, p.35-36). Nietzsche wishes to address those cultivators and create a new battleground of all kinds of cultivators and cultivation politics. Sloterdijk would frame it as the battle between humanists and superhumanists

(*Übermenschen*). Although Sloterdijk thinks Nietzsche may have exaggerated, Sloterdijk does think that “the discourse on discrimination and interweaving of taming and cultivating has validity. Also the twilight awareness on human production and in more general terms: antropotechniques. The current thinking cannot turn away unless it wants to surrender to innocence.” (ibid, p.38). What Sloterdijk warns for is that people are increasingly falling into either ‘active’ or the ‘subjective’ side of selection. As a result of this essay, Sloterdijk calls for “actively playing the game of Zarathustra and to formulate a codex of anthropological techniques” (ibid, p.39). “Such a codex would change the meaning of classic humanism because not only *humanitas* would mean friendship of human with Man, but implicitly and now increasingly explicitly imply that the human has become the higher power for Man.” (ibid, p.40). With antropotechniques are meant physical and mental techniques where people work on themselves. In that respect, religions are for Sloterdijk (2011) mere - spiritual – antropotechniques where man does not find God again, but finds forgotten parts of the self, of the human nature. Sloterdijk takes Plato’s royal antropotechnique as example: the shepherd would not be someone who herds by popularity vote, or inherited privileges nor assumptions. He would be a statesman who would be able to most efficiently interweave the most favorable qualities of free controllable people for his society, so that the human zoo would achieve optimal self-regulation. For humanists, their task would be to have one suprahumanist who would plan the characteristics of an elite group of people who on behalf of all other humanists would be cultivated (ibid, p. 45). Some German intelligentsia read Sloterdijk's lecture carelessly and immediately assumed an undemocratic discrimination against people on the basis of genetics. A plea for a Nietzschean separation between people and *Übermenschen* was assumed. The German intelligentsia immediately criticized Sloterdijk's warning as an argument for the cultivation and breeding of genetically qualitatively better people. This is called eugenics or breed improvement. Jürgen Habermas, one of the great thinkers of the Marxist Frankfurter Schule and figurehead of the Critical Theory would have encouraged his journalist friends to accuse Sloterdijk of "authentic facism" sophistry (Sloterdijk, 1999, 153). Sloterdijk, like Heidegger and Nietzsche, had to be put away as their thoughts were considered dangerous philosophical domains as so to protect the Critical Theory and humanism.

### **2.3.2 A never-ending acceleration of kinetic politics**

The Sloterdijk-Habermas affair ironically proved to be an example of the hyper morality of the Critical Theory that Sloterdijk denounced. The philosophers of Critical Theory, with the

image of 'the intellectual type as the watchman of the public sphere' had perverse incentives to hold on to power and in this case to raised public alarms through journalists (Vollmer, 2009, p. 104). Sloterdijk argued against an indifference about the developments of anthropotechniques in an era in which humans can work with (gene) technology themselves. In addition, the affair itself was an expression of the oblivion disputed by Heidegger that the essence of man was already determined by these humanisms, without questioning whether the interpretations of these humanisms were correct or not. The blackguarding critics of the Critical Theory in the Sloterdijk-affair have therefore ironically proven the danger of being the active side of Zarathustra's game. Blinded by their own dogmatism, modern Frankfurter philosophy could not see otherwise than its self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, modern philosophy is mobilizing itself to move further and faster. Sloterdijk juxtaposed the kinetics of modern planetary mobilization metaphorically in an ever-present moving forward car-driving towards the false instrumental truth of continuously creating more motion. In the book *Eurotaoism* (1991) Sloterdijk writes that modernity is characterized by mobility kinetics. It is a kinetics, a movement theory, where modern Man and his capital goods must be able to mobilize immediately, accompanied by an unprecedented and an ever-growing haste. This dynamic brings progress and chaos, says Sloterdijk:

We must assume that in the very risky accelerations of our time, something is accomplished. Something that is from us and is close to us, read: something what we want. If that is true, then a critical theory of the society becomes impossible – because there would be no left distinction between the critique and the criticized unless the critique first thinks against itself. It will have to subjugate the ownness, the closeness and the self-wanted to a research. (Sloterdijk, 1991, p.14)

To counter this acceleration, Sloterdijk would call upon Daoism to slow down this mobilization with *silent criticism* (ibid). Sloterdijk uses the theme of 'birth' in his books *Spheres* and *Eurotaoism*. For Sloterdijk, birth means that people have already been received in the safe womb. That means that Man always seeks a unity with his environment. Without his environment, Man has no meaning. So, according to Sloterdijk (1991), Heidegger's *Dasein* needs to be born into the world. Then comes the 'drama of birth' that puts Man in a less safe space. Through metaphysics, technology and culture, Man subjects himself to immune spheres, spaces, to protect himself and to give meaning to this world. These spheres are broadened from microspheres to macrospheres. A space of family, of a country, of religion, and ultimately also of the universe. By equating man with God, it could not be

otherwise than that God would eventually be replaced by man (2009b, p.15-16). As a result, the paternalistic overarching and structured sphere differs into individual spheres next to and alongside each other. In the section *Foam* of Sloterdijk's book *Spferen*, Sloterdijk endeavors to find out the rules for the human zoo with this liberation from metaphysics.

Sloterdijk thinks that Mankind has forgotten how he was born in the world. Modern Man knows no rest and has also forgotten the Earth as a carrier. It is only possible that man has forgotten himself and is uprooted by himself. Sloterdijk therefore sees, inspired by Heidegger, the man rather than being hurried. With Eckhart's concept of *Gelassenheit* Sloterdijk refers to what Heidegger called letting the *beings be*. Via the Dominican theologian and mystic Eckhart von Hochheim (ca. 1260-1328) Heidegger finds an opportunity for non-conceptual, non-metaphysical thinking that he, later, will relate to in Eastern thought.

## **2.4 Meister Eckhart**

Otto Pöggeler, a German philosopher specialized in Heidegger, wrote an essay *West-East Dialogue in 1990: Heidegger and Lao-tzu* about the similarities between Heidegger's thinking and the Chinese philosophy of Daoism. Otto Pöggeler begins with the introduction of Dominican mysticist or philosopher<sup>33</sup> Meister Eckhart (1260-1328). Meister Eckhart's mysticism is currently quite popular among Christians and Buddhists due to his theological thinking for the current interreligious dialogue on Multiple Religious Belonging (identifying yourself or belonging to multiple religions) and his thinking about unity spirituality<sup>34</sup>. Meister Eckhart did not criticize humanism directly, since the Enlightenment humanism did not exist until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, Eckhart

### **2.4.1 Divine unification**

For Eckhart, God's birth or divine union does not mean an event in a certain time and space, but this unity of God and man means an infinite dynamic where God gives birth in the soul of man (Vlieger, 2014). Eckhart distinguishes between the divine perspective that is eternal and the human perspective that is temporarily and operates constantly in a reflective way. According to Eckhart, divine reality can be seen as a dimension to which the individual is

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<sup>33</sup> Scholars do not agree whether Meister Eckhart is a mysticist or a philosopher. Jeremiah Hackett defined Eckhart as an "original hermeneutical thinker in the Latin tradition". Hackett, J. (Ed.). (2012). *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*. (pp. xxiii). Brill.

<sup>34</sup> dominicanen.nl, 2014

concerned, but as soon as Man realizes that he is experiencing that dimension, that experience is no longer valid for an experience that is placed by man between other experiences (Vlieger, 2014). When Man realizes in his human reflective attitude that he is experiencing God, then Man returns to a relationship with God and is - again - detached from the oneness with God. Therefore, the divine reality for Eckhart is not a unification between the divine and human perspective, but a dynamic and fleeting union with God that immediately decays when man realizes that he experiences that oneness with God. According to Eckhart, it is therefore not possible to experience the divine reality with conscious, but it is possible to express that reality in us by being receptive (Vlieger, 2014). Philosopher and phenomenologist Gerard Visser (2008) describes two attitudes to stand before God: self-will and resignation. Self-will is an attitude in which you take God as being outside and in front of you and resignation is an attitude of perfect inner peace in which you let go of the first attitude and open up to the inner self as the only place where God himself can reveal himself (Visser, 2010, p.197).

#### **2.4.2 Eckhart's *gelassenheit***

For Eckhart, an attitude in which the human perspective is released by not judging or reflecting on our - sensory, emotional, spiritual - perceptions, but by accepting them without having to understand or know why it is happening. This attitude is a core element in Heidegger's criticism of humanism. Man must not fill in reality and give meaning to it, but consider unity with God - or reality as it is present for us now and here - as it already exists. Vlieger (2014) emphasizes that this passive attitude does not mean that there are no performances, desires or goals, but that the fixation on all these things is left loose. If you relate wrongly to those things, then you cannot help but become unhappy:

The people who seek peace in external things, be it in places or in ways, in people or in work, in the foreign or in poverty or in humiliation - however impressive or whatever it is, everything is nevertheless nothing and gives no peace. (Eckhart, 1979, p.56)

In this quote it becomes clear that with a self-will a peace outside the self is sought. One cannot find peace by going to places or rituals, no matter how beautiful and wonderful they are. Such a person comes with the expectation to find peace and because this is outside of himself, he will not find it. Peace has to be experienced in the person and we do that by being left alone, says Eckhart (Maurice, 2009). That does not mean adopting an indifferent attitude,

but being open to the things that are near and to act on what makes you move. Eckhart explains this as follows:

Indeed, if a man thinks he will get more of God by meditation, by devotion, by ecstasies, or by special infusion of grace than by the fireside or in the stable -that is nothing but taking God, wrapping a cloak round His head and shoving Him under a bench. (...) And so, if you were to ask a genuine man who acted from his own ground, 'Why do you act?' if he were to answer properly he would simply say, 'I act because I act.' (Maurice, 2009, Sermon 13, p.110)

For Heidegger, Eckhart's way of thinking about resignation was interesting, because Eckhart suggested a mystical but non-conceptual non-metaphysical way of thinking. This way of looking at the world would be purer and closer to reality than the images and meanings that people put on (Heidegger, 2005). As mentioned in section 2.2.3, Heidegger therefore makes an attempt to replace the metaphysics of humanity for an ontology of being human.

Heidegger refers to Eckhart and Lao Zi, but does so within the context of their ways of thinking. In this, Heidegger and Eckhart differ from each other on how *gelassenheit* is to be understood. Jellema (2010) defines Eckhart as a theist who viewed *gelassenheit* in an infinite dynamic unity dimension of Man and God. Heidegger (2010), from a philosophical perspective, could not take over this definition of *gelassenheit* as religious notions may pose metaphysical basis. Heidegger sees *gelassenheit* as an exercise to let *being* be, thus let Being come forth as a phenomenon that shows itself in *Gegnet* (Pezze, 2008). *Dasein* is for Heidegger a human being that exists only in our temporality. Thus, for Heidegger the lived experience (*Erlebnis*) is an expression of rational thoughts in that temporality (in Livingston, n.d.). For Heidegger, *Erleben* refers to experiencing the lived moment with heart and soul before the human perspective gives meaning and language to it. Heidegger's thought can then be called an existential or hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical movement and qualitative science that not only relies on human cognitive abilities, but also on our essential, physical, emotional, intuitive experiences in reality (Van Manen, 2005). Phenomenology seeks as close as possible to the origin of the pre-reflexive dimensions of human existence. Heidegger was therefore looking for a philosophical thinking in which the lived reality and not the conceived metaphysics of people were central.

Thanks to the correspondence between Beaufret and Heidegger, many philosophers have once again been inspired to study Heidegger's works and to comment on them.

Heidegger's essay *On humanism* led to a renewed critical philosophical reflection of being human by re-evaluating the subject-object dichotomy, followed by many discussions and sometimes heated debates. Heidegger, Sloterdijk, Eckhart and Daoism have close similarities and are relational to each other. Together, they have criticized the anthropocentric perspective through anti-metaphysical means. Traditional Western philosophy thought man purely as an *animal rationale*. From that perspective, it is logical to put people at the heart of *Being* right. However, rules and laws conceived by *logos* cannot approximate the essence of being human, the ethos, because the ratio approaches it in a metaphysical way. Man decides what man is by his *logos*. Humanism thus creates and tames man instead of considering what the essence of man is, according to the previous authors. The technological way of speaking via the usefulness of objects and actions is a shortage of *Being*. It is also a shortage of *Tao* as Daoism considers normativity to abberate from *Tao*. Man disregards what is closest to him, namely: to regard his understanding of his actions, to be on the road to. Being there as an attentively resigned attitude. Heidegger's and Taoist criticism can then be interpreted as a shift from analytical thinking to sensory, spiritual and experiential associative thinking. In doing so, it leads to a spiritual connection with the environment.

### **Chapter 3 Naturalistic Daoism and humanistic Confucianism**

Patricia de Martelaere wrote in her book *Taoïsme, de weg om niet te volgen*<sup>35</sup> (2006, p.11) that someone should be familiar with at least three or four Chinese research areas or practices to understand Daoism. He must have internalized these areas in order to understand Daoism: 1. to be able to read Daoist texts, one must know and understand the Chinese - cultural and discourse language, 2. a philosophical education or at least familiarity with philosophical questions and concepts, 3. practicing at least some form of meditation or inner training to realize what Daoist principles like *wei wu-wei* (doing by not doing) mean and 4. an elementary knowledge of Chinese medicine. The latter is seldom or only briefly mentioned by sinologists, scholars and historians because Chinese medicine, besides meditation, Tai Chi Chuan and respiratory doctrine Qi Gong are considered crucial praxis of Daoism but Chinese medicine as a product of Daoism. They are technical actions to attune with the Dao using the body and mind. Little is known about the relationship between Daoism and Chinese medicine, because it has so far not been referred to by an acknowledgment of sources with accurate historical dating (De Martelaere, 2006, p.21). Thanks to a recent translation of the

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<sup>35</sup> Daoism, The Way Not to Follow

latest classical text *Nei Ye* (Inner Training), there now seems to be better evidence that Daoist praxis are acts for a lived philosophy of the body (ibid). De Martelaere (2006) also gives two warnings before studying traditional Chinese thought. It has a dynamic character that often fails to intervene and has a contextual interaction. Characteristics of Daoism can transform, evolve and always have a counterpart. This is illustrated by the more familiar Yin and Yang principle. *Yin* and *Yang* are the two philosophical and energetic manifestations that arise from *Qi*. *Qi* is in turn a representative part of the comprehensive *Tao* (Maciocia, 1989). The second problem with Chinese thinking is that it remains 'practical' in the broad sense of 'praxis'. Traditional Chinese thought tried to elaborate universal principles that could control the body – on micro level - and the land – on macro level -, practically in a medical and strategic way (De Martelaere, 2008). Fairly all Chinese philosophies and traditions have attempted to find universal principles that could be acted upon on individual to all higher levels. So, the question remains whether Chinese thinking can be called a philosophy and whether praxis prefers a different and incomprehensible non-rational language. With examples, imagery and passages I hope to give an idea of what is meant by specific Daoist concepts such as *Tao*, *wu wei* and *ziran*.

### **3.1 Daoism and Confucianism**

All world religions have at some time made their appearance in the history of China like Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism. But prior to all these world religions, the Chinese had their own traditions, mostly noted Daoism and Confucianism. The world's religions and indigenous philosophies were regarded as learning paths that contained wisdom about arts of living, politics and spiritual (self)-care (De Martelaere, 2006). For this reason, the Chinese did not see these learning paths optional offers, but as joint paths that each could reveal pieces of wisdom in their own ways. Daoism and Confucianism have a unique relationship because both originated around 350 BCE and have always been each other's continuing polars.

#### **3.1.1 Daoism**

In China, Daoism has influenced these world religions to a greater or lesser extent; the most characteristic for the West is a branch of Indian Buddhism, which under the influence of Daoism has developed into Chan Buddhism, which we now know better as Zen Buddhism (Ransdorp, 2007, p.10; Schipper, 1988, p.12). To date, it is not clear whether the founder of Daoism Lao Zi actually lived or that he was a compilation of written wisdoms, compiled in the book *Tao Te Ching*. Professor of Modern Literature at the University of Utrecht Maarten

van Buuren thinks that the Tao Te Ching is not a compilation, but must be written by a single author because it has an affectionate stream-lined style that speaks about the poems in its text (Van Buuren, 2011, 0:08:18-0:09:29). De Martelaere thinks is more likely the case that it was a compilation now that the translated basic text *Nei Ye* (Inner Training) is dated 350 BCE by Roth and Kirkland. If so, the Tao Te Ching, the Daoist Book on the Way and the Force cannot be older than 350 BCE (De Martelaere, 2006, p.34). That could implicate that Daoism did not come up with Confucianism at the same time, but rather is a reaction to Confucianism. In the complete writings of Zhuang Zi, Confucius appears as the adversary of Daoism and in Confucian texts Confucius turns against anti-social individualism, but he is positive about Daoist principles such as 'inaction' (*wu wei*) (Schipper, 2014, p.8).

By the end of the Zhou Dynasty (1050- 256 BC), seven Chinese nations were fighting each other in the bloody Warring States Period (475-221 BC). The decline of the Zhou dynasty brought social and political unrest that would lead to an era of The Hundred Schools of Thought (770-221 BC). During this period several philosophical traditions arose that tried to confront this unrest. In the historical work *Shiji* by the Han dynasty-official Sima Qian, Confucianism, legalism, Daoism, Yin-Yang school, Mohism and the school of Namur are recorded as the most prominent Chinese traditions of that time. Confucius (551-479 BC) and Lao Zi lived in the time of the loss of the Zhou dynasty. Daoism is opposed to Confucianism as an antithesis, with its main arguments that Confucianism only knows the Tao of people. For Confucianism, humanity is the best way to cultivate humanity in relation to others. That must lead to a peaceful society in which man becomes fully human through self-cultivation. Daoism, however, states that by absolutizing morality a fixation arises on fellow humanity and virtue. This fixation leads away from the Tao, the Road, whereby people with active intervention behavior do more harm than good for the harmony and processes of life and the Tao (Schipper, 2007. Schipper, 2010. Delaune, 2015. De Martelaere, 2006). To Daoism, humans should be considered individuals and uncategorial. Feelings such as love, dedication, loyalty, humanity, righteousness are spontaneous in our *Being*, if they are not. They are useless (Schipper, 2010, p.198). This spontaneity refers to the concept of *ziran*, more on this in paragraph 3.3.2.

### **3.1.2 Jesuits**

Thanks to the reports of the Jesuits, philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) became inspired by Confucianism, because this 'natural theology' of China was very reminiscent of Christianity. The Jesuits came to China as missionaries in the sixteenth

century to proclaim Christianity there. Fathers Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Michele Ruggiere (1543-1607) first became acquainted with Confucianism. They began to participate in Chinese culture and its Confucian practices and rituals. Ricci's notes were later worked out by missionary Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) (Gallagher in Schipper, 2014, p.87). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Confucianism became more and more familiar, so that European thinkers such as Voltaire may have been inspired by Confucianism during the development of enlightened humanism (Schipper, 2014 p.92). To Voltaire, Confucianism was a rational form of social order as opposed to Christianity, because it did not appear to have religious aspects. But Voltaire was mistaken in the motives of Confucianism as Enlightenment thinking. Confucianism was not based on principles of Enlightenment thinking, but on social behavior and rituals that promoted and guarded humanity (Froese, 2006). Following the example of the Chinese examination system for civil servants meritocratically devised by Confucius; countries as Prussia, England and France followed with an examination system for senior officials (Schipper, 2014). This is one of the reasons why Schipper (2014) believes that Confucianism has secretly become one of the building blocks of the Western Enlightenment. No evidence of this has been found in humanist literature. Perhaps European humanism then concentrated on its own discourse after a negative turnaround in the consideration of 'useless' Chinese non-philosophy and culture just before the Opium Wars. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) dismissed Confucianism as a useless moral philosophy (in Schipper, 2014, p.98) and the Jesuits tried to transform Confucianism into an exclusively Christian-Confucian orthodoxy that did not tolerate other ideologies (ibid.). As a result, Confucianism has lost its humanistic character, becoming a means for political strategic use.

### **3.1.3 Confucianism**

By gaining inspiration from the early years of the Zhou Dynasty and Chinese antiquity, Confucius developed a political and also a humanistic philosophy in which *ren* (仁) is usually translated as humanity or virtue as the highest principle. The Chinese character is composed of human (人) and two (二). This principle is thus based on a horizontal relationship between two people. Confucius applied this principle of reciprocity to five human relationships (*wu lun*): 1. respect and loyalty between BCE and servant, 2. goodness and obedience between parent and child, 3. intimacy, 4. tolerance and division of tasks between husbands and wives, 5. loving care and togetherness between brothers and other relatives and trust between friends (Schipper, 2014, p.13). By following these five relations, *ren* would be expressed. Humanity

and virtue are the two cardinal principles that arise in Confucian thinking in which sympathy, empathy and compassion are central (Weiming et al, 2011). *Ren* then means being able to identify yourself with your neighbors (in Schipper, 2014, p.57). There is also the essence of Confucius' famous statement:

Zigong asked, is there a single word that you can take your life as a principle for what you do? The Master said, That is charity. What you yourself do not want to undergo, do not do that to others either. (Schipper, 2014, p.56)

Confucius calls the character of *ren* measure and middle are the highest of human nature (Jaspers, 1960, p.101). For Confucius this meant that a person becomes a human being only by cultivating and practicing. *Ren* is the essence of Man that is always near Man. *Ren*, however, should not be seen as an inner morality, but is only found during an active experience with human relationships, out-of-the-self dialogue and through exchange in society (Weiming & Ikeda, 2011). Every human being is thus a social being who is related to others and that is best expressed through virtues and rituals. People also had to educate and cultivate so that they could show moral and ethical behavior. There are three main issues: 1. childlike piety (respect for family and hierarchy) 2. humanity and 3. (*li*) rituals, but also laws, ceremonies, rules of conduct can be understood as *li*. *Li* is the ritual expression of norms in the context of right and civilized behavior in relationship forms. By *li*, the true emotions of an educated person are expressed and thereby strengthen the own inner strength (*de*) (Fingarette in Schipper, 2014, p.61). In addition, reciprocity in *li* ensured social order in society.

For Schipper, it is unmistakable that original Confucianism must be regarded as one of the most important humanistic and ethical philosophies of life in history. Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy and Confucian Studies at Harvard University Tu Weiming also believes that new Confucianism as an extended and inclusive humanism can yield better welfare for people than the secular humanism of Enlightenment thinking (Weiming & Ikeda, 2011). As a Confucian humanism it can present an anthropocosmic holistic view in which interrelations exist from a union with Heaven, people and the Earth that calls for self-cultivation at all levels. In paragraph 2.1.2 Anthropocosmos, the anthropocosmic unity principle in Neo-Confucianism was proposed by Tu Weiming. In Inquiry on the Great learning, Wang Yangming (1472-1529) emphasized that the ontological power of people to sympathize with Heaven, Earth and tens of thousands of things is a human-defining characteristic (ibid, p.246). On the basis of a number of examples, Wang makes it clear that

sympathy (the essence of Man) becomes an embodiment with the Other. An example of this is that people cannot get away from the heavy and dirty feeling when they see the fear of an animal that is slaughtered. "The [*ren*] is not a romantic ideal of unity, but a differentiated concept of connectedness" (ibid, p.247).

### **3.2 *Tao and Te***

The first two sentences of chapter 1 of the Tao Te Ching, literally "The Book of Tao and Te, by Lao Zi goes as follows: The eternal Tao cannot be expressed in words. The eternal name cannot be called (Schipper, 2010, p.23). Perhaps the most fundamental feature of Daoism is that there is an absence of definitions (Schipper, 1988, p.13). Confucius has as a teaching that all things and people must use the correct name: A lord must be a lord and a servant a servant; a father must be a father and a son a son. (in Schipper, 2010, p.22). This imposes certain roles and identities on people that they fulfill in a society. The former two sentences of the Tao Te Ching are a critique of this Confucian doctrine. Names do not matter, because names do not define what they are, but what they have to be - in a created and thus artificial culture. Daoism therefore thinks that culture and etymology makes people stray from the Tao and the inner strength *Te*.

#### **3.2.1 Tao**

In Chinese thinking, wisdom is focused on discovering a praxis of good and wise life. Western philosophy is focused on the discovery of truth from metaphysics, so that there is more importance in determining definitions. For example, an atom as a category is referred to as the starting point of the origin of the universe. But Tao does not have a fixed definition or category and must be understood as a cosmic principle that is omnipresent both inside and outside us. Tao is described by Schipper (2007, p.24) as the 'way' of nature, of 'heaven and earth' in all its aspects, in the cosmic energies of the stars and of the nature around us, but the Tao is also all-embracing so that it escapes every definition. Chapter 1 of Lao Zi (Appendix A) states that Tao is the path between 'being' and 'non-being', 'the nameless' and the 'mentioned'. Schipper (2010) tries to describe Tao as an omnipresent (immanent) quality of 'nothing' as well as of 'something'. Van Buuren (2011, 0:28:48-0:32:16) explains Tao in four meanings: 1. the literal and figurative guides, 2. the Way to follow, 3. the Universal Order that includes the Cosmos, Earth and us in continuous movements and rhythms and 4. a fundamental tone that man has to tune in with his own tone, going back to the origin 'the Void'. In Lao Zi's poetic thinking, Tao means correctly spoken, or authentic, which is closer to Heidegger's explanation of the Tao and Sein. In chapter 25 (Appendix B) of Lao Zi it is

explained that Tao does not travel a linear path, but makes a circularly recurring movement. Because Tao cannot be completely defined in human language, a river is often used as a metaphor to describe the dynamics of Tao. Tao is perhaps best described as a harmonious auto-regulatory mishmash of natural, spontaneous, immanent and latent things of different things that work together as influential elements and where there is no solid truth to be found. In short, the way of nature. On the one hand Tao is the beginning of everything, the Mother, but on the other hand the opposite, the Empty (Schipper, 2010, p.9). Resonance with the Way (Tao) is then resigned to the circular flow of all these things that comprise the Daoist Heaven and Earth. The Tao cannot be recorded in the human language, but can only be described. And unlike the Greek philosopher who sees 'the One' from the outside, the Chinese philosopher sees all patterns of the cosmos by staying with 'the One' within. This is elaborated in chapter 42 of the Tao Te Ching: *'The Tao produces the One. One produces two. Two produces three. And three brings forth the ten thousand things'* (in De Martelaere, p.33). The 'One' is the original state of undivided energy (*Qi*). From this *Qi*, manifestations arise, disperse and aggregate that express themselves in lighter Yang elements (Heaven) and heavier Yin phase (the Earth). The interactions between these elements lead to the third, a tangible form of existence including Man and ten thousand things (Kaltenburg in De Martelaere, 2006, p.144). However, this should not be regarded as a chronological timeline, but as a nucleus that expands and that interactions between different manifestations of *Qi* that dynamically leads to manifestations of people, animals, plants, the earth, the cosmos, and so forth, that take place between those spheres. It can be compared to a mountain of Lego blocks (*Tao*) that interact with each other (*Te*) by two main interacting forces (*Yin* and *Yang*) and from that, as some point, the human being and the Ten Thousand Things materialize. Thus, Daoist thinking requires a relational but dynamic thinking. And so, *Tao* seems to resonate with Heidegger's *Sein* and the logos of Heraclitus.

### **3.2.2 Te, an inner force against moral values**

The Daoist *Te* was described as moral virtue by Confucian commentators and this incorrect translation is also usually found in Western literature on Daoism. Schipper (2010) explains that the Confucianist understanding of *Tao* (way) and *Te* (virtue) were used as power principles in Confucianism. The mandate of Confucian Heaven (as Supreme Being) was only given if the emperor had great virtue and had to do so through the way of moral principles such as humanity and justice. Another Confucian translation of *Te* is 'acquired life force', one that can also be transferred as power of ancestor to future generations. But in Daoism *Te* is

‘an inspiration of the cosmic matter *Qi*’ (Schipper, 2010), an *inner* force that comes from within the body. It is rather a given natural force such as the healing power of eucalyptus against colds. Therefore, it can be seen as the effect of Tao in us that was given to us before birth (ibid). Perhaps it can then be described as the essence or characteristics of *Tao* that is expressed from our inner self. So, with lack of a better description, there is a given inspiration of the body by *Tao* that expresses Man in his authenticity when he is harmonized with *Tao*.

De Martelaere (2006) notes that in Daoism a distinction is made between *Te* as an energetic force (virtue) and humanity as a moral virtue. Humanity as an artificial virtue is rejected and seen as a degeneration of the loss of *Tao* and *Te*. In the first place, it is a reaction against Confucian’s shackling norms but secondly a deeper reaction against any human opinion on moral intervention whether it is motivated by social conventions or on the ‘true’ nature of Man. To Lao Zi, moral values are substitutes to a lost original and natural purity (of *Tao* and *Te*). For example, fishes do not need to worry about loving each other. They are provided for by the river and can therefore just *Be* (harmonized with the Tao). People who advocate humanity strongly are compared by Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi to fishes on a dried riverbed who are trying to wet each other with their saliva (Watson in De Martelaere, p.112). To Lao Zi, not only are moral values misleading, inefficient and consequences of dire need, but humanity and righteousness also cause more harm than good (ibid, p.113). Daoism’s critique on the Confucian *way of culture* is that humanity becomes the norm at which a human is valued (ibid). Zhuang Zi badinages hyperactive practitioners of the *Tao* who try their hardest to harmonize their *Qi* and try too hard to become one with the *Tao* (ibid, p.118). They have not turned down their ruler, humanity and rule of becoming one with the Tao and thus are shackled by this self-imposed rule. This has been a recurring criticism in Chapter two by western philosophers. Now we see it that in Daoism, criticism on aspects of humanism and anthropocentrism has existed long before. The Daoist who does not have the intention to be moral, appears to be a much more efficient ‘caregiver’ than the activist who *wants* to care and the sentimentalist who cries for the fate of his brother (ibid). In Daoist perspective, energy is lost in human ambitions, actions and emotions. The wise (Daoist) cares for Ten Thousand things not because of what he does, but because of what he is. Like the sun, it does not give life. Life becomes due to the presence of the sun. Fishes do not worry about water, they are provided with water by the river they live in. Therefore, the moral act of a Daoist

should be to cultivate *Te* (inner strength<sup>36</sup>) in others. The point of moral act in Daoism is not calculation or carefulness, but cultivating *Te* of the *Tao* from inside others so that people can let manifestations of *Qi* harmonious be what they are and let these manifestations not be treated as merely things (Watson & Palmer in De Martelaere, p.121). In letting manifestations ‘naturally’ be and be cultivated, authentic life is expressed.

### 3.3 Wei wu wei and *ziran*

Being in harmony and coming into harmony with the *Tao* is a Daoist basic principle to (continue to) manifest the given life force. Being one with nature is according to Lao Zi achieved by *wu wei* (inaction). The principle of *wu wei* seems to be a paradoxical impossibility or useless activity because *Tao* is not possible to be reached. *Tao* is already in every person and so searching for *Tao* does not make any sense. What exactly does *wu wei* mean? Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, an author in the field of Zen and Shin Buddhism, (in Sorajjakool, 2001, p.80) warns that non-action (*wu wei*) should not be approached dualistically nor as passivity. *Wu wei* should also not be explained as doing nothing or indifferently, but as doing something by doing nothing (Schipper, 2010). It is like sailing with the wind in the back and the shadow of a tree looking up against the too bright sun. It is a spontaneous (*ziran*) action that comes naturally from the inner self (Sorajjakool, 2001) which is also shown in the parable of the cook Ding (Appendix C). *Wu wei* therefore refers to an authentic non-acting act in which the balance between and in all influences of the *Tao* is kept and restored. Schipper explains it as a formula: looking for the source of inner strength out of love and respect for life in yourself (2010, p.13). *Wu wei* is achieved by being constantly aware and responsive to *Tao*. The word *ziran* (自然) appears in Chapters 17, 23, 25 and 51 of the *Tao Te Ching* and is translated<sup>37</sup> as spontaneity or naturalness, in some translations it is translated as ‘core nature’. It is comprised of the words *zi* (自) (self, oneself, from, naturally) and *ran* (然) (correct, right, so). Specifically, there is no English equivalent to this word and spontaneity does not fully cover *ziran* either. It is better understood as the core essence of yourself, which if harmonized with *Tao*, you are ‘being yourself’. It is like seeing the spontaneous genuine laugh of someone in an activity who is not aware of others and thus

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<sup>36</sup> Perhaps authenticity although I am not yet convinced I can use that word. In Heideggerian words, I would like to implicate that the moral act of the Daoist is to help others to *Be* and does this by *Being* himself. The practical act would be to influence a situation so that an equilibrium of all influences in that particular situation are in harmony like cutting meat fluently between bones in the parable of Cook Ding.

<sup>37</sup> [www.britannica.com/topic/ziran](http://www.britannica.com/topic/ziran)

neither himself are observing his laugh. But the moment he becomes aware, the laugh starts to look less genuine, suppressed by human normativity.

### 3.3.1 *Wu wei*

Sorajjakool (2001) translates *wu wei* as non-being. He points out that if non-being is the reason why things move in the phenomenological world, then Being in the world rejects us from harmonizing with the Tao. Sorajjakool (2001) links that to Heidegger's philosophy in his summary of Being and Time: people are constantly searching for being human, *Dasein*. By being in the world, this means being aware and being aware of the temporality of Being. This means that man has to hurry to the future because it realizes that Being is only temporary because of an inevitable death and that Being has no permanent basis (Green in Sorajjakool, 2001, p.81). A debt by *dasein* is experienced and that brings uncertain feelings in people because he knows that he is removed from his authentic life. He is not what he should be. Due to this guilt, being the real authenticity of itself. To feel guilt also means that Being knows that something transcends. So through guilt people become aware of their non-union with Being. The disappearance of Being makes people insecure and makes them look for 'care'. Through care, man hopes to reach unity with Being again, but then one must know what is Being. Through conscience man tries to reconcile with guilt. Man constructs knowledge about God and thereby the criteria of good and evil to purify the conscience. In His and Time the conclusion is that the I, through the guilty conscience, tries to make something real of itself, out of the fear that it will otherwise be nothing (Macquarrie in Sorajjakool, 2001, p.82). Making criteria to make Being more true than non-being means, however, that distinctive categories arise where one (Yin) can no longer be - with - another (Yang). Spontaneity (*ziran*) can no longer exist because Man subjects himself to a cultural behavior within a normative framework. It is like a spontaneous young child with an open mind who is no longer allowed to do anything, because that specific and authentic action does not fit in a desirable category. As a result, people will impose their will on nature instead of following it (Kohn in Sorajjakool, 2001, p.83). Man and Confucianism try to explain with their will what natural things should do. It is like saying how the sun shines, from the human perspective, with these colors and from this time until this time. Or saying that beauty is good, but ugliness is bad. This is how man should be, with these moral virtues and these things good and that those things are wrong. This way, when *dasein* is approached by humanists and Confucians, the Tao is completely lost because one cannot do without the other and the sun shines because it is 'spontaneously itself' (*ziran*). The colors just exist, but

it is Man who gives meaning and associates these colors, resulting in rituals and covenants on how to act knowing how the sun is supposed to shine. By considering *yu* (Being) as desirable, man tries to avoid *wu* (Nothing). According to Sorajjakool (2001), two problems follow from this. The first problem is not following *wu* means not following nature. Man wants to be something and not be nothing, but nature (Tao) is *yu* (Being) and *wu* (Nothing) together. Yin and Yang. It is a one-sided view that leads to the second problem: by only following *yu* (Being) constantly, an ever greater awareness of *wu* (Nothing) arises. That realization leads to a fear that, in turn, strives even more for *yu*. Daoism fundamentally critiques this Confucian – and humanist – virtue, suggesting it leads to a downward spiral thinking where Confucianists will not be able to rest in an ever-seeking *Being*.

### 3.3.2 *Ziran*

To follow the Tao is not to work towards the future, but to return to the origin, the Way, Tao, nature, the essence of man, the 'Daoist' Heaven. *Wu wei* is therefore turning to the inner and to 'being natural' or spontaneity (*ziran*). *Wu wei* is finding and relaxing yourself. *Wu wei* is action through unprejudiced inaction. *Wu wei* is stopping 'wanting to be'. *Wu wei* is not making a distinction in Being. *Wu wei* is accepting Yin as a unit with the Yang. That means that in Daoism Being cannot exist without the Nothing. The Nothing creates Being and vice versa. By not intervening, you bring the natural qualities of the Other or the I into expression (Van Buuren, 2011). To return to the natural self, Zhuang Zi says in passage 4:1 that Man must fast the heart: 'empty yourself, do not think about anything anymore, be completely silent' (in Schipper, 2010 p.13). It is not just about actively wanting to stop thinking, but also to stop wanting to stop actively. If that succeeds, then there is complete silence in man and he only moves from the Tao. Thus there is no moral virtue or norm that determines how the Daoist should behave, nor is it clear what It should be because that particular being has its own *Te* acting from the Tao. The lesson that Daoism wants to give is that the essence of Man should not be determined by a normative framework containing humans in their rituals and organizations, but that human act should come from spontaneity (*ziran*). Being is not imposed by the will of the other or the ego because it is Being, the Tao *is*. Being is not fixed either, but is context-bound and manifests when Man is open to *ziran*. Then man comes closer to his *Tao*, his natural self who then becomes a partial representation of *Tao* and the universe itself.

### 3.4 Daoist influence on Heidegger

Since the 1960s there have been increasing indications that Heidegger has been strongly influenced by Eastern thinking, mainly Daoism (Stambaugh in Parkes, 1990. Pöggeler, in Parkes, 1990. May, Reinhard, 1996. Lee, 2001. Froese, 2006), and in particular his ontological and metaphysical reflections (Sorajjakool, 2001. Vlieger, 2014. Delaune, 2015). In the previous paragraphs it was explained that Heidegger had the wish to put philosophy back in the flow of life instead of its role as a distant seeker of an objective, fundamental truth (Clarke in Delaune, 2015, p.10). Heidegger had an aversion to the logos of analytical thinking and wished to replace it with a meditative mode of thinking. The most important clues on Heidegger's link with Daoism have been collected by Professor Graham Parkes (1990) in the Heidegger and Asian thought collection and by Professor Lin Ma of University Leuven of which some have been described in this thesis.

Heidegger's interest in Eastern thought developed in the context of the 20th century. The rapid growth of industrial capitalism worried Germany of a moral and spiritual gap in modern Western society (Delaune, 2015). A populist group, the Völkisch Bewegung, wanted to return to an idealistic romantic era in the past and sought, among other things, salvation in Eastern thinking (Clarke, in Delaune, 2015). Heidegger, in his twenties, became acquainted with Meister Eckhart's *Opus tripartitum*<sup>38</sup> and attempted to apply his conception of *Being* as a finite predicate to God but gave up<sup>39</sup> on it (Pöggeler, 1990, p.47). In the literature it is not clear when and how Heidegger specifically started reading Taoist texts, but there has been enough anecdotal evidence of Heidegger acknowledging to others of his closeness with Daoism and Zen Buddhism. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, one of Heidegger's best friends, wrote: "I knew how highly Heidegger esteemed Lao-tzu. But only after he died did I learn that at one point he began translating the *Tao Te Ching*." (Petzet, 1993, p.181). The *Tao Te Ching* is a collection of 81 chapters on how, from the Chinese philosophical Daoism thought, to lead a good and wise life.

On invitation of Heidegger, a Chinese academic Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, worked together on a translation of the *Tao Te Ching*. Hsiao (1987, p.93) assumed that the Daoist philosopher Lao Zi's thinking could contribute to philosophical German thought and to clarify similarities between Chinese thought and Heidegger's thinking. The project was not finished after eight

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<sup>38</sup> A manual of Hungarian customary law

<sup>39</sup> God is by definition *intelligere* (understanding)

chapters, because Hsiao received several invitations in Germany to teach about Chinese thinking. In addition, Hsiao (1987, p.98) found that Heidegger, in his search for all meanings surrounding Daoism's concepts and terminology, was being too creative in translating the Tao Te Ching. There was no ill intent, but Heidegger was doing this with great vigor in order to extract every possible meaning from the texts. In the attempts to translate the Taoist text, Heidegger had to move from a *logos* language to an ideographic language. Every Chinese character, which is also an ideogram, can have different meanings depending on the contextual sense. In order to be able to understand a Chinese text, according to Heidegger, all the meanings of each word and contextual sense must first be explained. Otto Pöggeler thinks that this is why Heidegger developed a cryptic and often criticized writing style in his work and explains it as follows:

Heidegger "reads" and "translates" the graphemes of a language the spoken words of which he does not understand. But must we not first understand what is really going on when Heidegger speaks and reads as he does? Heidegger demands a language in which it is not primarily a question of univocal concepts and their coherent connection, but rather of images whose meanings are multidimensional and inexhaustible. Heidegger was impressed by the Thai monk because he did not enumerate the viewpoints of the conversation, nor did he proceed in a linear, discursive and analytical way: "For a European would keep saying: 'firstly,' 'then,' 'thirdly' and so forth. But here there is no kind of 'logical progression'; rather, everything comes out of one center." Across the various dimensions of meaning every word is connected with every other; the breakthrough to the deeper dimensions transforms thinking and brings it on to a path. (Pöggeler, 1990, p.68)

Heidegger's works are therefore easier to read when they are not read in an analytical manner, but with an associative attitude. The accusations by supporters of the analytical philosophical movement, however, are that Chinese thinking and Heidegger's thought cannot be described logically and argumentatively, and therefore leave subjective interpretation and ambiguity to the reader's discretion (Parkes, 1987, p.5). But this is just like in Heidegger's *Conversation* with the three interlocutors with their own respective fields of expertise. By combining multiple research fields, new spaces of thinking are made possible when they are put together in dialogue. By refraining from fixating on a standpoint and using the correlative meditative thought the meanings and the discourse of the traditional Chinese thought is better understood and a different kind of thinking is achieved that is able to accept the 'vagueness'

of a correlative thought process. And so, we see faint hints at what could be contributive as a new insight to anthropocentrism.

Heidegger uses Way before his own concept of Being, but the similarities are clearly present. Heidegger says in his lecture *The Demand for Technology*: 'Questions builds a Way. We are advised in this and should therefore pay attention to the road. The Way is one of thought.' (1993, p.311). To understand what Heidegger means by *Weg* (*way*), philosopher and professor at New York City University Joan Stambaugh first asks what it does not mean. For Heidegger, Way is not a scientific approach to thinking, because in that form of thinking knowledge is the object and desired goal. The goal is determined in advance in scientific thinking. A road beheld an undetermined goal which will be reached. Heidegger rather refers to reflective thinking as being on the move on a road. It does not resemble a metaphysical character, such as *Vorhandenheit*, which would be the rule: people start from point A to point B in order to achieve a certain goal.

Heidegger's discussion on *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* is also reflected in a parable (appendix D) 'the useless tree' of the Daoist philosopher Zhuang Zi. In this parable the logician Hui Zi complains that the tree they are standing at is useless, because the wood cannot be used. But Zhuang Zi points out to him that the tree can be useful for shade or as a landmark (Dreyfus in Delaune, 2015, p.4). Depending on the context and how people orientate themselves with their own frames of reference, objects(-subjects) are 'useful' and available only in personal opinion. Here we find a comparison between Heidegger and Zhuang Zi. Heidegger's concept *Umgang* is not translated by Dreyfus (in Delaune, p.5) as coping, but as handling with an emphasis on the Zen-like flow in the skillful use of tools that are available. In a previously mentioned parable, the cook Ding (Appendix C) makes elegant and skillful use of his available tools to slaughter the ox. The cook did not carelessly cut bone with his knife through bone and meat, but cuts with a consciousness that is constantly aware of the forms of the muscles, the positions of the bones and tendons. Cook Ding did not set his own rhythm on nature, but sought ways to coordinate the different rhythms of him, the knife, his body, the flesh, the bones and tendons and so on (Froese, 2006, p.109). Delaune (2015) remarks that this skillful action with tools and the interaction with objects transcends the Cartesian subject object thinking what Heidegger emphasizes in his philosophical thinking as in *Being and Time*. In fact, Heidegger asks us to stop using language as an information source of 'utility', most notably in his example of the hammer. Heidegger would rather see that man reflects with the intention of 'being on the road to'. In the following quotation from

Heidegger, according to Stambaugh, the most pronounced about Way in relation to Daoism is said to be:

The word "way" probably is an ancient primary word that speaks to the reflective mind of man. The key word in Laotse's poetic thinking is Tao, which "properly speaking" means way. But because we are prone to think of "way" superficially, as a stretch connecting two places, our word "way" has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what *Tao* says. *Tao* is then translated as reason, mind, *raison*, meaning, *logos*. Yet Tao could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, mind, meaning, *logos* properly mean to say—properly, by their proper nature. Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word "way," Tao, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so. Perhaps the enigmatic power of today's reign of method also, and indeed preeminently, stems from the fact that the methods, notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the runoff of a great hidden stream which moves all things along and makes way for everything. All is way. (Heidegger, 1971, p. 92.)

For Heidegger (1971), Way is thus a source of reason and spirit that Man accepts. Heidegger says the same about thinking about Sein. The source, in Eckhart's words, the dimension in which man is in union with God, cannot be metaphysically and only be experienced. The point is that in *Dasein* Man is aware of *Being* and can only come into oneness with this *Being*. Walking on this Way creates an experience in which man rediscovers aspects of himself. The Way is not to be regarded as a metaphysical abstract symbol of a subjective all-existing thought path, but a sensory path that only emerges while walking on the way to. The *Dasein* is thus actually a journey for Heidegger, or reaching for what can be achieved. Being human transcends from the *Dasein* that takes place in the clearing, in the lived and sensory experience of being on the way to. Heidegger explains this in an essay *Die Sprache im Gedicht* by Georg Trakl. It is about a man with madness (*Wahnsinn*) who's senses feels differently. This man does not think in senseless delusions, but he experiences his senses differently from what happens normally to other people. Why a sensory experience? Because *Sinnan*, the sensory feeling, travel from origin, means to strive for a certain direction, says Heidegger (1971, p.53). So Stambaugh concludes that sensory feeling in Heidegger's thinking means being practically experienced on the way to. This praxis of Way is made

possible by *Gelassenheit*. Heidegger's meditation on *dao* is also seen when he explains *Be-wägung* (movement) as 'the original giver and founder of ways' (1971, p.92, p.198). Lin Ma points out two specific paragraphs in which *Tao* is mentioned by Heidegger<sup>40</sup>:

*'The first paragraph runs: The word 'way' probably is a primal word [Urwort] of language that speaks to the reflective mind of man. The guideword [Leitwort] in Laotse's poetic thinking is Tao, which 'properly speaking' ['eigentlich'] refers to [bedeutet] way. But because we are prone to think of 'way' superficially, as a stretch connecting two places, our word 'way' has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what Tao says. Tao is then translated as reason [Vernunft], spirit [Geist], raison [Raison], meaning [Sinn], logos.'* (in Ma, 1971, p. 92/p. 198; tr. m.)

And,

*'Yet Tao could be the way that gives all ways [der alles be-wägende Weg], that which makes possible our power to think what reason, mind, meaning [Sinn], logos may say properly, that is, by their proper nature. Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying [denkenden Sagens] conceals itself in the word Weg, Tao, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so. Perhaps the enigmatic power of today's reign of method also, and indeed preeminently, stems from the fact that the methods, notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the drainage of a great hidden stream which moves [be-we`gt] all things along its track-drawing way [seine Bahn reißen den Weges]. All is way.'* (in Ma, 1971, p. 92/p. 198; tr. m.)

In Heidegger's thinking, resignation is beyond the difference of activity and passivity (1966, p.61). It is an open attitude without expectations. Similar to Eckhart's imperturbability we also see this reflected in the Taoist *wu wei*. In Heidegger's later works, the word *lassen* (in the word *gelassenheit*) becomes more prominent. Man has to leave *Dasein* to form an ego that objectifies things to their own functional use with *zuhandenheit*. But the lived experience should not be reduced to what is useful at that moment. To achieve that, something must be done. How can you not want something, to not want? It is not possible to be 'just' there. Just like how acting through not acting seems to be a contradictory concept, but that is not the

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger has not denied his interest in Daoism in person to his peers, but Daoist concepts are rarely mentioned in his philosophical works. The two passages Lin Ma refers to, are stated to prove Heidegger has been well-versed in Daoist philosophy and has incorporated it into his own works.

case in practice (Schipper, 2007). Heidegger solves this problem with the word *Inständigkeit* (non-persistence). Stambaugh (1990, p.87) explains this word as a non-passive, but very intensely attentive attitude of waiting that can be seen, for example, with a musician who gathers together just before his music, or that a baseball player concentrates intensely for the pitch. For Stambaugh (ibid, p.87) it is reminiscent of the Buddhist Zen monk Dōgen who calls it a sustained exertion, continuous effort. It is not an indifferent passive attitude, but an attentive<sup>41</sup> unwilling attitude, which, according to Stambaugh, endures. However, Visser will call it an attitude "where our thinking, speaking and acting are not determined by selfish motives, but are carried by an inner silence" (in Steenhuis, 2008). The pre-conceptual thinking can only be expressed through a sensory and pure language that is left. This means that the person does not speak from the utility of objects, but from the experience in the vicinity of those objects. In this way, *Gelassenheit* offers an inner peace from the inner space.

Eckhart, Heidegger and Sloterdijk have tried to think through an anthropocentric problem, but each one of them received institutional violence for their way of thinking. Heidegger has been scrutinized for his cryptic writing and ridiculed for his comment: "Man needs to be a shepherd of Sein." Sloterdijk got tarred by Jürgen Habermas for being misunderstood on his warning call against innocent eugenetics and Meister Eckhart was accused by the Pope of pantheism and heresy. If, according to them, humanism failed due to an anthropocentrism and its supporters became hyper morally activist, how should humanism think freely from this destructive attitude towards self-criticism? For Sloterdijk this means an impetus for a codex of ascetic anthropotechniques, for Heidegger an attentive action on the Way to *Dasein* and for Eckhart a *gelassen* meditative behavior. The *Sein* seems to show close similarities with Tao and *Gelassenheit* with a non-ascetic *wu wei*. It is therefore unmistakable that Daoism influenced Heidegger and later Sloterdijk on the reflection of humanism. Following Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida, Heidegger tried to break through rational difference and deconstructive thinking by understanding Daoism and Eastern thinking. Taoist inspirations have been able to promote his philosophical thoughts about *Sein*, *Dasein* and *Gelassenheit*. From this, a posthumanist message results that humanism must transcend a self-ego with *Dasein* and by living in the experiences of the world (Froese, 2008).

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<sup>41</sup> What we now call 'mindful'

## **Chapter 4 (In)commensurability**

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the similarities and differences between main concepts of Daoism and humanism by showing discussions between Daoist and Confucian philosophy and the duality of Western philosophy and non-duality of Eastern thought. The first part of this chapter concentrates on the dialogue and differences between Daoism in Eastern thought and humanism. In the latter half, I will have humanist philosopher Joep Dohmen confront Daoism on the arguments made for and against anthropocentrism. At first sight, we may find two non-commensurable philosophical discourses. By its extent, we may also find answers to tackling the issue of humanist anthropocentric ecocentrism.

### **4.1 Eastern thought explained through non-duality**

To Ilse Bulhof (2005), empowerment, personal responsibility and tolerance may be the most central ideals of modern non-theist humanism. In Eastern spiritual traditions, ideals such as self-loss and selflessness are considered as most wanted. By removing the entire ego of the self, a place is opened for the Buddha-nature. This may seem like an anti-humanism but should be considered an Eastern humanism with connections to non-dualistic or mystic traditions. To Bulhof, non-duality means the congregation of both object and subject such as becoming one with God. Dualism like ‘*Being and beings, God and world, God and human, subject and object*’ are used in the western philosophical discourse to clarify and position objects and subjects. In Buddhism, non-duality shapes a special kind of fellow humanity, usually indicated as compassion. ‘A compassion as a congregation of on one hand ‘letting be’ of everything and on the other hand sympathizing with everything that suffers (ibid, p.302). In the study of David Loy (1998) *Non-duality: A study in Comparative Philosophy* there lies a deep experience of non-duality in all Eastern spiritual traditions. Although Bulhof makes point that non-duality has been tried in Western philosophy such as the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and Nietzsche, they have not gained fruition. But in the East, Buddhism, Vedanta and Daoism were the most influential Eastern philosophic species, according to Loy. In these Eastern philosophical systems, the world that we are used to is not absolutized (Bulhof, 2005, p.304). The world of our daily experience, comprised from separate objects connected by causal relationships is not seen as the only possible world. Another world of non-dual experience is considered superior and more truthful in Eastern thought. Thus from Eastern perspective, to think there is only one way to experience the world is a post-Aristotelian basis that we do not realize it is an opinion instead of truth (Loy in Bulhof, p.304). So, Bulhof states that in the dominant western culture, there is a blind spot

for other ways of experiencing things. But by calling non-dual experience unspeakable and only achievable after a long spiritual training, it is not appealing and elitarian to Western philosophers. Also, to experience non-duality, philosophy and the discursive reason need to be transcended (ibid). To understand Eastern thought, the western philosopher needs to revise his thought processes into non-duality thinking but also have to accept that his philosophical tools to deconstruct, analyze and rationalize are plainly unuseful. Experiencing Eastern meditative thought comes down to an embodied and spiritual experience (De Martelaere, 2006. Van Ijssel, 2007).

As example of a freeing effect of non-duality experiences, Bulhof (2005) makes the exercise of observing a cup. By looking with utmost attention, wonder and subordination to this cup, a certain way of looking is eventually transcended. The metaphysical construct of me as subject observing the cup as object is lost and then there is the other way of observation, without subject, selfless and without a Me. It brings to attention that deciding the cup is Asian and thus the characteristics of Bulhof such as being a philosopher, being [culturally] woman, having blond hair and being Dutch are activities, not categorials. She was taught that she has blond hair; it is not like she already knew at birth that she has blond hair. By letting all these *activities* go in this exercise, only a 'pure' I-less observation remains. To merge into watching this cup is not an *act* of the actor (I see the cup), but a *state of Being a watcher (a be of watching)*. The I is then not a psychophysical entity that does or does not do something, but a way where in a certain space, in a certain time space is '*Being-t*', an activity without the focused strivings of the I (ibid, p.307). By letting go of all metaphysics, provisions, even a body and identity, Bulhof becomes fully free of any human constructs. To be *nothing* at all, gives a feeling of being *One with all* and being connected with everything (ibid).

A second example of non-duality is signified by *identification*, says Bulhof (2005). Knowing by identification - something you learn by doing - copying the other being. It is a learned skill until it becomes, what we call, 'second nature'. The subject lets go of his being-a-subject, of the I. This becomes a *psychophysical* process: mentally and at the same time embodied. All body senses take part in this observation 'mode'. Because knowing by identification is merging into the other, it is knowing in the *here and now*. It cannot be objectified and therefore is outside the discursive intellect (ibid, p.309). Unlike the transmission of knowledge, to experience and to be something are personal but in the western culture, these skills are seen as less important than knowing rationally (ibid, p.310). Professor

Maarten Van Buuren (2011) illustrates a contemporary anecdote of the *Tao* and *Being* during his video lecture, in resonance with the identification process. He has tried a number of forms of Zen meditation and Tai Chi Chuan to find balance and unwind, but those just were not his thing. Then he found out that what he tried to achieve with meditation, he has always done it through cycling. He cycles with a racing bike without paying attention to the cycling norm: the ideal posture, a relaxed upper body, the correct sitting posture and the ideal rhythm. At a given moment, after a first number of kilometers, he observes what he calls 'a blurring of my ego' (ibid, 1:04:15-1:05:06). The ego Maarten van Buuren, his body, his bike are no longer there. He has become 'cycling' and 'movement'. He completely loses the realization that he is on the bike and is cycling. In other words, he has merged or identified into the Tao (or Zen) as he is now acting natural (*ziran*) through inaction (*wu wei*). In addition, he even merges into the landscape where he finds himself, with the mushrooms, the hay and the sparrows. His borders are fading so that he becomes part of the landscape. That is the real happiness that catches him when he cycles, he says. In this state of *Being*, he was offered solutions that he had not yet realized as problems. Unknown problems were already solved by not thinking about those problems. So, this state of mind makes one free of constructs that otherwise may unknowingly hold back the ego.

#### **4.2 Daoist ethics**

In a thought experiment (Appendix E), Russel Kirkland, a leading American professor in Daoism, asked students what Mencius, successor of Confucius, and Taoist Zhuang Zi would do if a baby were to fall into a river. In short, a student has relatively easily solved this experiment. Confucian Mencius would immediately jump into the river to save the baby, because the virtue *ren* (humanity), he cannot and should not do anything else than rescuing the baby. Daoist Zhuang Zi would have no reason to intervene; the process of saving the baby was already under way by Mencius. If Mencius had not intervened, Zhuang Zi *might* have come into action to restore harmony. Be it *Te*, the inner strength given by Tao, or *wu wei* that would have urged Zhuang Zi to intervene, it would only have been because the harmony of his environment would be restored. But Zhuang Zi would not save the baby because he himself wanted to. He trusts that Nature in her incomprehensible processes will do something with the baby in an auto-regulating way. The baby is in fact left to its fate, determined by the other dynamic influences of Tao. However well-intentioned, from a Daoist perspective, Man will inevitably do more harm than good with forced interventions. Kirkland (n.d.) goes so far in his analysis in his claim that Zhuang Zi will never save the baby. In Kirkland's analysis

(ibid, p.1-15) Zhuang Zi will not do this because he has no moral compassion, but because his moral compassion is grounded in a more complex vision of the nature, the Tao, of the world. He watches and takes no action, because that is the only correct moral action for the Taoist. Admitting to impulses and feelings would be a sign of weak morality, because the Taoist is not being one with the Tao. The humanist may feel morally forced by his impulsive emotions, his conscience and his moral compass to intervene in places where life threatens to be lost. That is exactly the opposite for the Taoist. He will feel morally forced not to intervene, to respect the Tao. People tend to judge quickly and simplistically about events based on simple assumptions such as life is better than death and beautiful is better than ugly. The Daoist cannot be tempted by these impulses, but questions the event and leaves the prejudices aside. When Zhuang Zi's wife passed away, Zhuang Zi would have had sorrow, but would rationally reflect on life and have come to accept that his wife did not do anything else than be in a natural process of life and death. To act against that natural process with anger would only show immature moral behavior, because it then acts against something that always happens, without exceptions, in nature. It would therefore be better in Taoist terms to hold back and reflect on. In a follow-up of the baby thought experiment, Kirkland asks the question: What if the baby was a Chinese version of Adolf Hitler and he would kill more than 1 million people in his life? (ibid, p.11). Would he let the baby drown? And would that serve a higher moral purpose? Or does every person have a fundamental and moral right to life? What Zhuang Zi tries to teach is that we cannot know, at the moment, which action is right. For Zhuang Zi, human wisdom is impossible to fully consider an event and to judge it correctly. It is impossible for the Taoist to know. In addition, a 'good ending' is not guaranteed while it is expected by humanist Confucianists. These events are natural and belong to the Tao. Kirkland concludes in his analysis that sentimental binding to objects, patterns of life and people from Taoist perspective bring unnecessary stress when something bad happens. The Taoist would be responsible and mature to calm down irrational emotions and accept the new course of events out of moral consideration. This does not mean that Daoism would always be completely passive, but it means that the Taoist would not base his morality on the basis of human virtues. The Taoist would base his moral behavior on the Tao, the Being, on Heaven and Earth. The Taoist trusts that the Tao improves life behind the scenes, outside the eyes of people, as long as man does not intervene. Taoist thinking therefore actually offers a non-humanist morality. The Taoist trusts that the Tao brings life and therefore will not act because he respects the *Being* of nature. That means that not all good sides of life, but also all bad sides of life have to be accepted. Although it must be

remembered that good and bad are not Taoist categories. These are humanist categories that continue to point to the hasty moral humanistic virtues in the knowledge of *Sein-zum-Tode* (Being towards death).

The Daoist will try to let the *wu wei* (non-act) flourish the virtues of the unique others by creating a harmonious society in relationships with each other. That is to say that the Taoist will try to encourage people to interact with each other, but in such a way that he does not take any action himself and thus the authentic other person can unfold in his uniqueness. The point is not to build artificiality in the natural world, something like moral virtues because that removes man from the Tao. Human love and therefore humanity is not a Taoist principle and is even contradicted in a Confucian framework. "Loving people is the beginning of harming people." (Watson in De Martelaere, 2006, p.110). Zhuang Zi and Lao Zi both reject humanity because it is artificial as moral virtue. It does not come from the Tao, from the inside, but is imposed on the human being from the outside.

May I ask, Lao Zi asked, "Are humanity and righteousness the essence of being human?" "Certainly," Confucius said, "if the noble is not humane, he has no purpose, and if he is not righteous, he has no life. Humanity and righteousness are essentially part of the innate nature of man. How can it be different?" "May I ask, what are humanity and righteousness?" "It is about being one, finding a center in the heart, loving everything, without self-interest - that is what kindness and righteousness are." Confucius replied. "Really! Your words point to misunderstanding," Lao Zi said. "To love everything is vague and exaggerated at the same time. Without self-interest, is that not self-interest? Sir, if you want people to stay simple, would you not look better at the ways of Heaven and Earth? [...] Sir, walk with Te and travel with Tao and you will attain perfection. Why be concerned about all that humanity and righteousness, progressing as if you were rattling on a drum and looking for a lost child. (Watson in De Martelaere, 2006, p.112)

Reading this seemingly passive ethics, one could easily think that Daoists are near-nihilistically passive and amoral. However, this is not correct. The principle of *wu wei* 'questions the basic assumptions of norms and offers an individual the freedom "to be" within the reality of nonbeing itself.' (Sorajjakool, 2001, p.138). Daoists are therefore morally obliged to question reality at which moral principles are based on. In doing so, they become free of 'chained norms' and 'be'.

### 4.3 Daoist and humanist self-care

Humanist philosopher Joep Dohmen (2011) believes that people start self-care because they sooner or later have a feeling of being 'too late'. One gains respite through the awareness of missed experiences, missed time, diluted relationships, and so on. They took no action while they could have done that much earlier. Suddenly it is 'too late'. Some people are shaken awkwardly to realize that they are responsible for their own attitude to life. It is a painful discovery that people could have done more with their lives than they did. Regret and reconciliation offer a new phase of recovery and renewed contacts. The art of living refers to the important role of 'the right moment' in our lives' (Dohmen, 2007, p.36). Sometimes that right moment is initiated by an inspiring moment, but very often by a negative experience that, according to Dohmen, initiates a secular conversion: the turn to ourselves (ibid, p.36). Motivation for self-responsibility usually comes from experiences where opportunities have been missed, so one must intervene in time to be on time the next time. Here the excitement resounds that also occurs in Confucianism. We make anthropocentric goals and standards that we humanists have to meet. In fact, we regret (as Sorajjakool and Heidegger already agreed) if we realize that finiteness is further ahead. That is why we want to achieve goals faster and faster. We want *dasein* in the world (*in-der-Welt*). Daoism counteracts that wanting. Wanting can only push humanists forward but it cannot slow down. So, according to Daoism, humanists will not find peace, if they always look forward out of fear of the finiteness that haunts them indifferently. Humanistic art of living demands autonomy, self-determination, self-responsibility, self-control, self-management, but that is done to get your own life under control so that the quality of life and the meaning of your existence is guaranteed. In Kunneman's Radical humanism's words, to relieve and ban out tension. Humanistic self-care refers to quality of life, to life from the self and from its own order of values. According to Dohmen that is 'authenticity'. In Daoism we have seen that self-care for Taoists means: acting through inaction (*wu wei*) because acting is in conflict with the Tao. But by acting passively with attention to the Tao, the Taoist comes to a resignation. Natural processes are negated by human action because he cannot know whether his interventions are leading to the good result. How do we know for sure that self-management, self-knowledge and awareness will always lead to the desired result? What if we are going to fully organize our lives with all kinds of goals, with a high quality of life and meaning, who says that tomorrow we will not be killed in a car accident? In this regard, Dohmen recruits British philosopher Bertrand Russell who pleaded for self-forgetfulness. Russell seems to be ally of Daoism here, because he thinks that unhappy people are only focused on themselves. Russell just got happier by

focusing less on himself. People would not focus on themselves, but should dedicate themselves to a cause. By forgetting yourself, happiness comes true, Russell agrees (ibid, p.27). Dohmen disparages this statement. There are also enough people who forget themselves and do not become happy. How and how much do you commit to a case? When is it real and when has it escaped? All these questions ask the self to be focused on the self. For Dohmen, this plea of Russell is a farce, except for the exaggerated narcissism of some people. People must consciously lead their own lives through self-care, Dohmen says. He criticizes Russell for not appreciating the quality of a human life. The plea for devotion can only be attractive if someone really wants to commit to a case. Anyone who does not wonder what the matter is and why he wants to dedicate himself, risks a superficial life. This statement of Dohmen actually implicates anthropocentric motives. Daoism would ask 1. why do you need to act on base of will? 2. why is it superficial to not wonder what to dedicate to? 3. why do you need to dedicate? 4. why can't you just sit still and listen carefully, mindfully? 5. why do you need to focus on yourself and not just be what you are? Again Dohmen (ibid, p.44) sees salvation in the art of living because it refers to a learning process in which "self-knowledge, legal capacity and normative evaluation" go hand in hand. For Dohmen, Zen Buddhism is unsuitable as an Eastern art of living for Western artists. The learning process is recognized by both and takes the individual as a starting point, but Buddhism demands detachment and "even quasi-extinction of the self" (ibid, p.51). The detachment of norms and values would be at odds with the art of living that is based on valid frameworks, codes and rules. Dohmen (ibid, p.51) therefore believes that Zen Buddhism extinguishes personal life while arguing for his alternative that proclaims a "proud modesty on the basis of normative self-care". Sorajjakool would say that these values and norms lead to misfortune because *Dasein* is being absolutized. In that sense, Daoism and the art of living would not be commensurable. They are diametrically opposed. The notion of authenticity is also completely different for Dohmen and Zhuang Zi. For Dohmen authenticity means that from the self is lived by its own values, but for Zhuang Zi *ziran* would mean that he will be one with the Tao in which he merges into the larger whole. A truthful *being* by harmonizing with this *being*.

## **Final considerations**

This master thesis has performed a hermeneutical literature research in search of an intervention option to the debate on the Anthropocene by linking Daoist spirituality with Heidegger's thought on *Being*. It has followed a critique on the philosophical reflection on the centering of humans in the universe, namely anthropocentrism by naming high-profiled western thinkers who have tried non-dualistic and anti-metaphysical philosophies. Attempts are made at making *Tao* and traditional Eastern thought comprehensible and with a potential to enrich humanism with Eastern insights on spirituality. By studying sources on Daoism, Confucianism, Heidegger, Eastern thought and spirituality as an overarching way to connect the dots in figure 1, implicated answers are found on the question:

### **How do anti-metaphysical criticisms of Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk and Meister Eckhart relate to Daoist criticism on the Confucian concept of humanity and be interpreted as an enrichment to modern humanism's position in the debate on the Anthropocene?**

In this study anthropocentrism is seen as a problem for humanism and the western philosophical tradition. In historical sense, Heidegger and Sloterdijk criticise humanism to be ineffective in schooling humans to be humane. Kunneman acknowledges that humanism had its own part in the cultural legitimization of Mankind's apathy towards other life forms. Although some humanist philosophers attempt to horizontalize the vertical relationships with other life forms, they seem to do this from an anthropocentric starting point. In the spirit of Edward Said, Kunneman wants to find the moral act to care for nature by humanism's own tradition of humanity. This humanity, as Kunneman (2017) quotes Paul Ricoeur, focuses on creating a good quality of life with democratic and righteous societal proportions. Thus is humanism not only critical but also non-egoistically self-critical, Kunneman (2017) and Van Praag (2004) say. Kunneman would go as far as a radical horizontalization of humanism, but Kunneman does this from within the frames of humanism. As Kunneman (2017) shows that Paul Ricoeur keeps horizontalization to humans, Kunneman challenges humanism to radicalise this horizontalization, being a characteristic of humanism Kunneman says, to other life forms. From Eastern thought perspective, Kunneman's proposal is not radical enough insofar the starting point is still Mankind and humanity still focuses on humans first. Kunneman's analysis (2017) points to a critique on humanism having had an overly focus on *Bildung*, scientific reasoning and autonomy, leaving the parapoietic capabilities redundant. In

his thought, Kunneman criticizes Mankind's technological and view and leaves it to 'slow questions' and the humans who still take part in the humanization process to find out answers. But how come this principle is still called 'humanity' if it needs to go before humans? Also, there is no intrinsic value put on other life forms while this is assumed in humans. So, my implication is that this radicalization from humanism's own tradition is not enough. Wissenburg attempts to solve the Anthropocene problem by making humanists aware of the choice they have to act and therein their identity that is reflected by nature. But in this, only the *choice* of the individual human is respected. It does not lend for an organizational code of conduct. Manschot and Tu opt for an anthropocosmic perspective, one that still suprapositions humans. So, humanist philosophers seem have the tendency to keep humans in a supraposition in the cosmos. Which I imply as being anthropocentric in an ecocentric answer, with a fear that humanism may not achieve radical horizontalization. I think it shows how dogmatic anthropocentrism is in the western philosophical tradition and in humanism. Therefore, I think humanism needs an interlocuting philosophy that can be its antagonist, one that keeps criticizing humanism as to remind what the *essence* of humanism is. What I illustrate in this thesis is that this form of interaction has occurred in Chinese traditions Daoism and Confucianism, and with a different philosophical discourse. One in which spirituality and mysticism has no duality with reasoning as it has been in western philosophical tradition.

The criticism of anthropocentrism by Heidegger, Eckhart and Sloterdijk focuses on a dimension of Man that contains forgotten parts or divinity. Heidegger believes that humanism and humanitas have been based on a misunderstanding of the essential nature of Man due to the metaphysical limitations of the philosophical tradition (Froese, 2006, p.9). As long as man defines himself as an *animal rationale*, humanity will remain subordinate to the ideas that are formed about Mankind in a long tradition. Heidegger appears to have gained inspiration from Daoism to catalyze his antimetaphysical thought. The Heideggerian *Being* and *Gelassenheit* are very similar to the *Tao* and *wu wei* of Daoism. Heidegger, Sloterdijk and Eckhart argue for a praxis of philosophy to offer a solution against anthropocentrism. Again, this is not to say that Eastern thought is better, more complete or more inclusive than Western thought. These two worlds are most likely incommensurable due to their polar differences in duality and non-duality thinking, in reasoning and mysticism, in analytical and associative circular thinking. Western philosophical tradition has developed the freedom of thought, autonomy, separation of powers, categorial thinking, equality, human rights,

scientific and epistemological thinking to name a few. These are benefits that can enrich Eastern philosophical thought. But this thesis concentrates on what Daoism has to offer to modern humanism, as hinted by the link of Heidegger's criticism on humanism and Daoism. If western philosophy and modern humanism could be open to Eastern spirituality and its philosophical discourse, as spiritual humanism and Christians are doing now with Zen-Buddhism, synthesis and enrichments on both sides could happen. A synthesis could be like the deeper understanding of care for the human *Being*. One that should be attuned to bringing Man back to his essence says Heidegger (1999). Through care, *Dasein*-with and *Dasein*-in becomes *Dasein*-for. To Heidegger, caring (*Sorg*) means to care for the presentness and obscurity of *Being* itself (Steiner, 1978). To make humans (homo) humane (humanus) and not inhumane (outside his *essence*), care is the meaning of *Being*. So humanity exists in human's *being*. Heidegger's *Sorg*, and therefore herding by taking care of *Dasein*, instead of humanism's 'chosen ideals' such as sustainability. In other words, we should *care* as a *responsibility* for the authentic instead of idealizing and radicalizing the 'chosen' authentic. Here, we may find struggles of humanism's autonomy and freedom ideals against a degrading freedom of nature.

A history and explanation of Daoism versus 'humanist' Confucianism made it clear that the discussion about anthropocentrism in China had been going on for much longer albeit in its own historical and philosophical context. A contribution that Daoism could make to humanism is that people should also accept the ugly sides and the finiteness of life. As a result, Man should not oppose nor instrumentalize nature or improve their lives with dependable technologies but spiritually live *in or with* nature. The fear and regret that a finitude is due is the reason why humanists continue to rush ahead with its techné. Adopting a resolute *gelassen* or *wu wei* attitude in accepting a *Sein-zum-Tode* as a part of natural progress may break this cycle. This would implicate a redefinition of the Self by being aware of the *Being* of nature and being aware of *Dasein*. In particular, neo-Confucianism has been further 'humanized' in modern times. Professor Tu Weiming is considered a leading figure in this tradition. In many ways, Daoism is antagonistic to humanism. It rejects humanity by relativizing reality, harmonizing with the Tao and deabsolutizing Confucian's humanity. Daoism assumes that humanity is not necessary. Daoism is also a meditative praxis philosophy, awareness and openness are practices that need to be cultivated to be *ziran*. Like Buddhism and all other Eastern traditions, its focus is not on learning truths, but on personal experiential learning (Belhof, 2005, p. 313). To western humanism, Daoism is interesting as

an interlocuting opponent and sparring partner to reflect on humanism's philosophical shortcomings and may be of high instrumental value with its meditative praxis.

Buddhism is currently the only Eastern tradition being well examined by western philosophers, but Buddhism is just one of the many Eastern traditions it has been interwoven with. Separating Buddhism from these other Eastern sources, does not honor the historical relationships and influences it has with other philosophies like Daoism. As Chinese thought made Hindu Buddhism logical and carried Chan-Buddhism over to Japan, the essence of Zen was incorporated and now presumably owned as being originated in Buddhism itself. Daoism has many influences in Heidegger and in Buddhism, yet it remains a superficial source. But if we are to rethink our relationship with Earth, I think we have to learn to appreciate mysticism and spirituality as a means of understanding what 'being-in-the-world' means and thus how to relate to other *beings*. Insofar, I agree with Bulhof that Eastern thought has many possible implications for an Eastern humanism and would prefer an interaction between a Western and Eastern humanism.

In the Humanist Canon there is hardly any information about Daoism or Confucianism. Zen-Buddhism is much more researched and also being read in the UvH-curriculum, such as the works of Zen Buddhist monk Thich Naht Hanh. However, in China these three traditions of Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism are together considered the holy three that have shaped Chinese thought. Namely Daoism and Confucianism were created around 350 BCE and have ever since been in dialog with each other. These three traditions have heavily dialogized, critized and reflected on each other's comments since their beginning. Confucianism is interesting because it is a Chinese equivalent of old European humanism. Perhaps common grounds can be found that leads to a universal humanism. Maybe it would lead to a more universal humanism. Humanistic studies should consider advancing into comparative philosophy and explore Ulrich Libbrecht's thoughts. It is only in the very last phase that I found out Prof. dr. Ulrich Libbrecht's model of comparative philosophy. Therefore, I have not been able to process his philosophical insights. On first sight, I do find similar insights with the philosophical findings from Prof. dr. Ulrich Libbrecht. In his last book *Met dank aan het leven* (With Thanks to Life), he assumes that everything that is materialized is actually condensed energy. He also claims that duality thinking makes it harder to live life. Rather, humans should *be* and intervene less in nature and in themselves. By not intervening, nature and Man stabilizes itself. Apparently, here he also refers to *wu wei* and mysticism. I would opt his thinking or his comparative philosophy

to be a potential research field for Humanistic Studies.. I acknowledge that this thesis only scratches the walls of the historical, cultural, philosophical, theological complex contexts of Mankind. But I do hope that the thesis has shown opportunities for further research and reflection in Eastern thought as an enrichment for modern humanism and as a critical insight for the debate on the Anthropocene.

In the last two appendices (F and G), I have added my reflections of Daoist spirituality on humanist chaplaincy and have added text of Siroj Sorajakool and his book *Wu Wei. Negativity and Depression. The principle of Non-trying in the Practice of Pastoral Care*. This was a sidetrack in my research, but I felt it may have some potential value to whom might be interested in future research on approaching Daoism and Daoist spirituality in humanist chaplaincy. Sorajakool describes the principle of *wu-wei* as a  *coping*  skill against depression in pastoral care. His findings may be able to initiate Daoist insights on spirituality and self-worth in humanist chaplaincy as well.

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## Appendix A

### LAO ZI Chapter 1

The Dao that can be referred to as 'Dao',

is not the permanent Dao.

The name that can be mentioned,

is not the permanent name.

'Nothing' is the name for the beginning of heaven and earth.

'Existence' is the name for the mother of the ten thousand things.

Therefore,

is from his permanent nothing to watch his mystery,

From his human existence, his limit can be looked at.

These both spring together,

but have a different name.

Together they can be called 'deep'.

What is deeper than deep is the gate of all mysteries.

Ransdorp, R. (2007). *Zwervend met Zhuang Zi. Wegwijs in de taoïstische filosofie*. [Roaming with Zhuang Zi. Get familiar with Taoist philosophy]. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (pp.31). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Damon Budel.

## Appendix B

### LAO ZI HOOFDSTUK 25

A form emerged in the chaos,  
were born for heaven and value.  
Silently absorbed he stood alone, unchanging.

You may view him as the mother of the cosmos.  
I still do not know his [real] name.  
Only a nickname, and that is: 'Tao'.  
Furthermore, I cannot do better than to call him 'big'.  
Great, that means: the source.  
The source, that means: far away.  
Far away, that means that it returns.

Truly: the Tao is great, and so are heaven and earth.  
Man is also big.

Man corresponds to the earth,  
the earth with the sky,  
the sky with the Tao,  
the Tao with what is spontaneous is as it is.

Comment from author Schipper (p.70):

"This section is famous, and especially this last sentence (in Chinese: Dao fa *ziran*) is often quoted. The verb fa has a rich variegation of meanings, among which that of 'imitation' is a very general one, and in any case better known than the more original meaning of 'agree with'. That is why they often translate here:

Man shapes himself / takes the earth as an example.  
The earth forms to / takes heaven as an example.  
The sky forms to / takes as an example the Tao.  
The Tao forms to / takes as an example nature (the natural).

That in turn raises discussions about whether, ontologically, nature does not precede the Tao! Of course that is not the case, and the meaning of Dao fa *ziran* must be understood in the sense that 'that which is as it is' (*ziran*) is an attribute of the Tao. "

Zi, L. (2010) Lao Zi. Het boek van de Tao en de innerlijke kracht. [Lao Zi. The Book of Tao and the inner force]. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Schipper, translation). (pp.71). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Augustus

## Appendix C

### THE TALE OF COOK DING

Cook Ding was carving an ox carcass for Lord Wenhui. With each touch of his hand, heave of his shoulder, step of his feet, thrust of his knee – whop! whish! – he wielded his knife with a whoosh, and every move was in rhythm. It was as though he were performing the Dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping to the beat of the Constant Source music.

“Ah, marvelous!” said Lord Wenhui. “Surely this is the acme of skill!”

Cook Ding laid down his knife and replied, “What your servant loves, my lord, is the Dao, and that is a step beyond skill.

“At the beginning, when I first began carving up oxen, all I could see was the whole carcass. After three years I could no longer see the carcass whole, and now I meet it with my spirit and don’t look with my eyes. Perception and understanding cease and spirit moves as it will. I follow the natural form: slicing the major joints I guide the knife through the big hollows, and by conforming to the inherent contours, no vessels or tendons or tangles of sinews – much less the big bones – block my blade in the least.

“A good cook changes his knife once a year, but this is mere slicing. An ordinary cook changes his knife once a month, because he hacks. I’ve been using this knife now for nineteen years; it has carved thousands of oxen, yet the blade is as sharp as one fresh off the grindstone. You see, there are gaps between these joints, but the blade edge has no thickness. If a knife with no thickness moves into a gap, then it’s wide as need be and the blade wanders freely with plenty of leeway. That’s why after nineteen years the blade of my knife is as sharp as one fresh off the grindstone.

“But nevertheless, whenever a tangled knot lies ahead, I spot the challenge and on the alert I focus my sight and slow down my hand – then I flick the blade with the slightest of moves, and before you know it the carcass has fallen apart like earth crumbling to the ground. I stand with knife raised and face all four directions in turn, prancing in place with complete satisfaction. Then I wipe off the knife and put it away.”

“How fine!” said Lord Wenhui. “Listening to the words of Cook Ding, I have learned how to nurture life!”

Comment of Robert Eno:

The tale of Cook Ding is in some respects the central tale of the Zhuangzi. It belongs to a set of stories that are sometimes referred to as the “knack passages” of the text. In these tales, individuals penetrate to a state of some sort of unity with the Dao by means of the performance of some thoroughly mastered skill, which they have acquired through long practice of an art (which may be called a dao, as in “the dao of archery,” and so forth). The passages celebrate the power of spontaneously performed skill mastery to provide communion with the spontaneous processes of Nature.

Zi, Z. (2010). *The Inner Chapters* (Eno, R., translation). [Lecture]. Consulted on 3 January 2018, via <http://www.indiana.edu/~p374/Zhuangzi.pdf>

## Appendix D

### THE USELESS TREE

Hui Zi once said to Zhuang Zi: "Take that big tree, which people call chu. His thick trunk is full of lumps and bumps. There is no straight line to pull up. His branches are all crooked and twisted. No compass or snag that you can use on it. If he is along the road, there is no carpenter who looks back at it. Kreck those words of yours: big, but without any use. Everyone turns their backs on them. "

Zhuang Zi replied: 'Have you never seen a forest cat or a weasel? They creep low to the ground and lie in an ambush, lurking on small animals. Then they take a big leap from here to over there, without paying attention to how high they jump, and so they fall into the trap or find death in the safety net. Or take for example the aurochs. He is so big that he reaches up to the clouds hanging from the sky. He is capable of being big, but certainly not in catching rats. And now you have a big tree, but you complain that he has no use. Then why do not you plant him in the land of nothing, in the field of the wide wilderness? Then you sit next to it, do nothing or sleep freely and happily under it. Because:

He will not fall prey to the axe!  
Nothing will ever hurt him!  
Who does not serve anything,  
What can happen to him? "

Zhi, Z. (2007). *Zhuang Zi de volledige geschriften. Het grote klassieke boek van het taoïsme* [Zhuang Zi the complete writings. The great classic book of Taoism] (Schipper. Translation) (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). (pp.52-53). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Augustus.

## Appendix E

### THOUGHT EXPERIMENT ON DAOIST MORAL ACT

Once upon a time, several years ago, I had the opportunity to engage in a variety of teamteaching enterprises at Stanford University. At one time, my colleague Lee Yearley sought to impress upon students the differences between the thought of the Confucian thinker Mencius and the thought of the Daoist thinker Chuang-tzu. The starting point was Mencius' famous insistence that human nature is such that none of us would fail to be moved if we saw an infant facing imminent death, such as by falling into an open well; Chuang-tzu, meanwhile, presumably believed that humans are incapable of comprehending the true meaning of the events that constitute the context of our lives, and urged us to refrain from the delusion that we can correctly analyze those events and correctly govern the events that occur to us. To stimulate students' ruminations on these issues, Lee Yearley gave our students an assignment, to write a paper beginning with the following proposition: Mencius and Chuang-tzu are sitting together on a riverbank, when an infant was descried floating precariously on the river, apparently on its way to its death from drowning. The students' assignment was to describe what each man, in that situation, would do, and why. His assumption was that as students wrestled with the thought content of each of the thinkers in question, students would have to grapple with the morally difficult imperative of Chuang-tzu's thought, which would ask us to forego intervention in the processes at work around us, even if such restraint should mean that innocent children should perish as a result. This presumed moral dilemma was intended to challenge students to wrestle meaningfully with the dilemma of the human condition: that is, that humans live with moral imperatives to do what seems to us to be good, at the same time that we realize that we cannot fully control the events that take place around us, and can probably not fully effect our will, despite our best intentions. Such, at least, was the apparent moral quandary into which Lee Yearley worked to lead the students in our class. One of my own students, however, quickly answered the assigned question, in an unexpectedly easy fashion. The assignment was to explain what Mencius and Chuang-tzu each would do, and why, so this student simply explained that Mencius would jump up to save the baby, for the obvious reasons, and that Chuang-tzu would do nothing whatsoever, because he had no reason to do so: Mencius was already out there saving the baby, so there was really nothing more for him to do.

Kirkland, R. (n.d.) *"RESPONSIBLE NON-ACTION" IN A NATURAL WORLD : PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEI-YEH, CHUANG-TZU, AND TAO-TE CHING*. Georgia: University of Georgia. Consulted op 14 November 2017 at <https://faculty.franklin.uga.edu/kirkland/sites/faculty.franklin.uga.edu.kirkland/files/ECO.pdf>

## Appendix F

### CONSIDERATIONS OF DAOISM IN HUMANIST CHAPLAINCY

Heidegger's antimetaphysical thought, his thought on *Being* and his critique on humanism are respected by the Humanistic Canon. Literature on Zen-Buddhism and its spirituality is being educated to students of the UvH, but literature on Daoism and Confucianism are not. I think that Dutch humanism may possibly bear much more fruits if it was open to study and dialogize with Daoism and Confucianism. By this extent, Daoist spiritual practices would be placed next to Buddhist spiritual practices such as meditation. This would give humanist chaplains more tools and background to work with, concerning spirituality.

Wu Wei nor the praxis Tai Chi (Chuan) are ascetic ideals. They can be pragmatically used to improve medical and mental health, but can also be used as exercise principles to practice spiritual harmonization with the Tao. Tai Chi Chuan is a spiritual expression form for exercising in *wu wei*. Through thoughtless meditational movement, Tai Chi is the artistic expression of meditation in movement by *Tao* and *Te*. In that sense, Tai Chi Chuan would be commensurable as a doctrine of movement and spiritual exercise like the more familiar sitting Zen-meditation. The research into spirituality in humanist chaplains at Van IJssel (2007, p.437) shows that all respondents are familiar with one or more spiritual techniques. Two thirds of the group spends time on these techniques on a weekly basis. These are non-humanistic traditional techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises and yoga-body exercises. Van IJssel concludes that this image provides insight into how humanistic counselors deal with the shortage of humanistic non-verbal spiritual practices. In that sense, Daoism could contribute by describing a philosophy and spirituality with involvement of the body and provide a wide range of spiritual and physiological exercises such as Tai Chi Chuan and Qi Gong and even by extent Traditional Chinese medicine due to its foundations in Daoism and embodied experience.

For the humanist chaplains interviewed by Van IJssel (2007), spirituality is primarily an emotional life and a heart issue. In the Dutch Spiritual Care Directive (2009), spirituality is described as 'the philosophical functioning of man, which includes the questions of meaning and sense experience'. It seems to concern words like 'meaning, purpose and transcendence'. This is an experiential dimension in which self-care of an embodied mind has meaning and can be meaningful for humanistic spiritual work. As a result, care for the body and mind can be further elaborated, like how Renaissance humanistic ideas and ideals about

the *homo universalis* have meant to be. Man develops in all her possible qualities, including in her physicality. Man as a *homo universalis* can then be understood as the balance between *vita complementativa* and *vita activa*: a contemplative life and an active life. The work of Hannah Arendt (1958) criticizes Western metaphysics, because the act is understood as *poiesis*. According to Arendt, Western metaphysics therefore remains trapped in an instrumental way of thinking instead of thinking in an active life. The question is which place has 'praxis', physical spirituality or physical self-care within the humanist spiritual care. 'An important starting point is that in the East 'the priority and the starting point are not usually in the human cognitive capacity, but in a broadly understood' praxis' ([personal interpretation] to which meditation belongs), which at the same time transcends the cognitive capacity and opens the way to a kind of religion-without-deity (De Martelaere, 2006, p.27). This gives humanist chaplains the opportunity to explore eastern spiritual practices without conflicting in philosophies.

Taoist spirituality is closely interwoven with the inseparability of body and mind in the most commonly known traditional Chinese medicine, *Qi Gong* and Tai Chi Chuan. In the Eastern way of thinking, the body and the mind are used to acquire free and new insights or to manipulate the body and mind in such a way through a connecting, for example respiratory meditation, and / or re-creating contact strategy with the body, for example in the praxis of Tai Chi Chuan and aikido, gaining a detachment from discomfort from a certain (life) attitude and to pay attention to what happens in the body (Van IJssel, 2007, p.155). In Taoism and Chinese thinking there is no separation between body and mind because they constantly work together. The body, the mind and all other matter are made up of *Qi*, which Maciocia (1989) sees rather as a "continuous form of matter" than an energy. According to Maciocia (2005, p.41), *Qi* (氣) is a matter that simultaneously manifests itself at the physical and mental-spiritual levels. The purpose of Daoist meditation is to reach the inner chamber in our minds where the *jing* (essence) resides. By breathing *qi* in and out and with the meditation practices, the inner chamber can be enlarged so that more vitality can be maintained. The body and mind are therefore not seen in Chinese philosophy and medicine as a complex mechanism, but as different manifestations of *Qi* that together form an organism. Cultivating this *Qi* and being one with the Tao are therefore the most important spiritual understandings in traditional Chinese medicine. Systematic reviews (Wayne et al, 2013) have endorsed the importance of spirituality as a positive factor in coping with disease, preventing diseases and helping to speed up treatments. Tai Chi has an intimate self-awareness and demands delay. A delay so

slow that it has time to be aware of feelings and sensations. One of Wayne's students said: "I do not practice it every day, but when I do, I find that it keeps me honest in my life and it provides a 'knowing' that just cannot think." (2013, p.64). Tai Chi is a self-examination that transcends matter, logic and has a spiritual dimension. Finally, Tai Chi can help to make the connection between spirituality and the larger Universe. For example, the Daoist technique of deep breathing leads to an exchange of energy with nature. By *Being* with nature through the exercise of meditative deep breathing, the life energy *Qi* is being absorbed by the body. Tai Chi Chuan is also designed to feel a sense of orientation and connection with the Earth. It offers the unity of unity to connect one's own essence or spirit with something that is part of a larger whole." (ibid, p.64). *Tai Chi* is translated as the Ultimate that refers to Yin and Yang, a cosmic complementary duality that is central to Taoism. Chuan is translated as fist or boxing. Thus, it is a movement art with meditative properties, aimed at relaxation, health and self-defense (Wayne & Fuerst, 2013). In the sense of *ziran* (natural being so, or spontaneity), Tai Chi Chuan aims at practicing and cultivating the awareness, openness and responsiveness to the act of *wu wei* and being *ziran*. Relaxation and health improvement are visualizations of the *Tao*. Cultivating self-defense is nourishing the ability to intervene but is also the artistic expression of the self while the individual meditates in movement. This praxis, a series of movement exercises in which the Qi is directed by the mind, arises from a holistic view of man. It emphasizes Daoist principles of *wu wei* and *ziran* and has a one leg in the philosophy of Daoism and the other leg in traditional Chinese medicine (De Martelaere, 2006). Not long ago the classical Daoist text *Nei Ye* (Inner Training) was found and translated. It is a Daoist text on inner cultivation and meditation techniques that are older than the two texts of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. These two texts make references to inner cultivation practices and meditation techniques, which until now have been dismissed by scholars as 'metaphors' or relics from a shamanistic past (De Martelaere, 2006, p.22. Schipper, 2007 & 2010), because there were no historical references and sources. These cultivation practices, breathing and meditation techniques – of the *Nei Ye* - helps expand the inner space in the mind in us to gather more life energy (*Qi*). Through the translation of the *Nei Ye* De Martelaere suspects that there is a direct connection between "an 'Inner Training' and a general 'medicine' of the body" (ibid, p.22). That would lead to a constructive and coherent philosophy of the body. If so, it would allow for a non-dualism between materialism and idealism as it has been in European philosophy:

Both [the doctrine of the macro and microcosm and organic naturalism] were the subject of what I call ... the characteristic European schizophrenia or split personality. Europeans could only think in terms of either the mechanical materialism of Democritus or the theological spiritualism of Plato. There always had to be a deus for a machina [spirit in the machine]. Animas, entelechia, souls and archaei dance in a procession through the history of European thought. (Needham in Maciocia, 1989, p.42)

In search of the source of individual and collective life, Irigaray struggles with deconstructive thinking. There are plenty of questions that the deconstructor cannot solve and therefore Irigaray starts with the basic principle of natural and spiritual life, namely breathing independently (2009, p.40). To her, it is an attempt to live autonomously and to be independent of being breathed. With Oriental masters she has not attempted to put their knowledge into the metaphysical mold of Western thought. As a result, she suspects that the transfer of Eastern knowledge has taken place on her. From this, Irigaray learned that the body itself can become spiritual by practicing breathing. The soul and breathing were still connected in the time of the Ancient Greeks, but not anymore nowadays. What takes place for the soul is "the result of conceptualizations and representations and not the result of a practice of breathing." (2009, p.42). We trace this back to Eckhart about *Gelassenheit* and receptiveness. If the person with a technical goal starts practicing the practice of breathing, then that is in any case no inner cultivation. In the Chinese mind, body and mind are continuously a unity. Breathing with a goal defeats the resignation so that the inner space cannot unfold. With a poetic language, Irigaray explains:

That consciousness is an increasing awakening of the whole being by leading the breath of the centers of elemental vitality to the more spiritual centers: those of the heart, of speaking and of thinking. [...] Spiritual development is not separate from the body, nor from the desire, but the body and the desire are gradually trained to forsake what harms both. It is certainly not about renouncing for renouncing, but about renouncing what is standing in the way of access to bliss here on earth. So asceticism is not negative, as has often been the case in the West. She is a wanted and accepted limitation to become happier. (2009, p.44)

## Appendix G

### PROFESSOR SIROJ SORAJJAKOOL ON WU WEI IN PASTORAL CARE

In the book *Wu Wei, Negativity, and Depression: The Principle of Non-Trying in the Practice of Pastoral Care*, Professor Siroj Sorajjakool writes about the added value of *wu wei* in pastoral care of depressed individuals. Sorajjakool assumed position that the concept of *wu wei* does not conflict in theological sense. The principle of *wu wei*, together with the theory of self-regulating conservation can help to understand the cycle mechanism of depression in individuals. In addition, the application of *wu wei* can help to reduce the forces of negativity and break depressed individuals out of the cycle of depression. With his research, Sorajjakool tried to offer a new coping skill with which pastoral caretakers can help people with depression. His study indicates that depression is an attempt by the psyche to direct the ego to unity and spirituality. Sorajjakool (2001, p.7) sees *wu wei* as a possible principle to be used with other counseling techniques, psychotherapy and other psychotropic medication by empowering the individuals with the possibility of reaching a different self-worth and so releasing the normative frames the individual is entrapped in.

In the book *The Pastoral Care of Depression: A Guidebook* pastoral nurse Binford W. Gilbert presents three pastoral functions (in Sorajjakool, 2001, p.43). First, the pastor must attempt to change victimhood. Through Biblical readings, depressed individuals need to know that they still have control over their lives and that God stands by them. Second, the pastor must encourage depressed individuals who isolate and withdraw to take risks as Jesus did with their disciples and thirdly, support them through logotherapy. Logotherapy was developed by psychiatrist-neurologist Viktor Frankl, which focuses on finding meaning as primary motivation. Pastors can use their training in theological reflection to develop meaning as a source for individuals who experience senselessness in life. Sorajjakool believes that these three functions ensure that individuals evaluate themselves better and encourage self-regulation. If self-regulation is able to close the gap between the "is" and the "ought" during a self-evaluation, the problem becomes less serious. If the "ought" is redefined on the experience of negativity, then this approach is very helpful, says Sorajjakool (2001).

Sorajjakool (2001, p.113) assumes that the principle of *wu wei* helps to remove the focus on the self. As a result, the stalemate between the 'you are' and 'you should be' lapses. Without the focus on the objectified self 'I should be' (ought), the 'I am now' can be

confirmed. This creates the possibility for an alternative source of value. Wu Wei invites that individual to accept the 'nonbeing' left and thus to rest in himself. By embracing the 'negativity' as Sorajjakool calls it, emptying that emptiness resolves the negativity. He sees five possibilities for pastoral caretakers with this Wu Wei approach (ibid, p.113-126): 1. name the cultural and theological context that pursuit 'being'. This context demands 'being' at the expense of 'nonbeing'. By shifting to 'nonbeing' the context and the input for stress falls away; 2. walking with depressed individuals in the experience of negativity without judgment or attempt to solve their depression. The attempt is to help them find peace in their experience; 3. By learning *wu wei* as trusting God or the process of nature; 4. widening the meaning of what is normative; 5. *wu wei* can be used one-on-one to explore their issues in greater depth.

*Wu Wei* wonders what it means to be a 'healthy self', something Sorajjakool says with culture, theological and philosophical presuppositions. According to Zhuang Zi, self-affirmation is sought through the process of self-evaluation. By considering what, "ought to be", the reflexive self starts to correct itself, which then leads to a reduced affirmation. Wu Wei's strongest point is therefore perhaps his emphasis on spirituality. In the language of Sorajjakool, spirituality refers to the need for meaning in the confrontation with nonbeing. For him, spirituality means 'the art of giving meaning at an existential level' (2001, p.123). The experience of negativity is often expressed by "negative memory bias, negative self-perception, self-blame and self-negation." (Sorajjakool, 2001, p.116). Through this experience, depressive individuals try to affirm themselves by over-analyzing themselves. They can even try to force themselves to feel a certain feeling. In the whole process, they objectify themselves and try to confirm themselves in their language-technological 'utility' from which they derive their self-esteem. As a result, they always get rid of themselves, because they try to focus on what they 'must' feel and not feel they are feeling 'now'. The *wu wei* approach does not encourage to change thinking or behavior, but to be left in that uncomfortable situation. The individual separates from being and willing through theological and philosophical constructs. The point is that there is no intervention goal for the self, so that the attention for the self is shifted to a new normative framework in which it can be based.