
August 2019

Theorizing about the Self in Panpsychism and the Extended Mind Using the Dao De Jing (道德經) and Zhuangzi (莊子)

Ryan Lemasters
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopreview>

 Part of the Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons, Other Philosophy Commons, Other Religion Commons, and the Philosophy of Mind Commons

Preferred Citation Style (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

APA

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Hilltop Review by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

Theorizing about the Self in Panpsychism and the Extended Mind Using the Dao De Jing (道德經) and Zhuangzi (莊子)

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Brian Bruya (Eastern Michigan University) for being an exceptional professor. I also want to extend my gratitude to David and Alie Kiel for making graduate studies possible. Finally, I want to thank Maggie Caruso for being my support, inspiration, and partner every step of the way.

Theorizing about the Self in Panpsychism and the Extended Mind Using the *Dao De Jing* (*道德經*) and Zhuangzi (*莊子*)

By Ryan Lemasters

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I begin by briefly showing how the problem of self has been understood and approached historically in Western philosophy. I follow this by focusing on some of the recent literature in the philosophy of mind that suggests that the self is extended, meaning it is not solely located within the boundaries of the brain (Clark and Chalmers 1998). It will be evident that this is in conflict with the traditional Western understanding of the self. Since it seems to be the case that there are strong arguments for endorsing the view that the self is extended (to some degree), we ought to give the proper philosophical attention to such views, and using Daoist ideas will help to theorize about these unorthodox views. This will be the focus of the remainder of the paper, pulling primarily from the *Dao De Jing* (*道德經*) and *Zhuangzi* (*莊子*). It will be shown that some of these unorthodox views arising from the philosophy of mind bear a close connection to certain Daoist ideas, therefore making it likely that they share common conceptual resources. I will conclude with some possible objections and responses to those objections. Ultimately, if the self is indeed extended, then this is unfamiliar to the Western mind. However, analyzing these unorthodox views using Daoist ideas may be a suitable tool in progressing our understanding of the self.

Introduction

Recent literature produced in the philosophy of mind has been met with skepticism. Panpsychism and the extended mind thesis are two views that fall into this category. Grasping these theories from the perspective of Western philosophy is difficult because they run counter to traditional Western notions of cognition, consciousness, and the self. However, taking a more Eastern approach and grounding these views in Daoist ideas provides a bridge for theorizing about panpsychism and the extended mind thesis. In this paper, I begin by briefly showing how the problem of self has been understood and approached historically in Western philosophy. I follow this by focusing on some of the recent literature that suggests that the self is extended, meaning it is not solely located within the boundaries of the body. It will be evident that this is in conflict with the traditional Western understanding of the self. Since it seems to be the case that there are strong arguments for endorsing the view that the self is extended, we ought to give the proper philosophical attention to such views, and, as I argue, using Daoist ideas will help us theorize about these unorthodox views. This will be the focus of the remainder of the paper, where I pull primarily from the *Dao De Jing* (道德經) and *Zhuangzi* (莊子). It will be shown that some of these recent, unorthodox views in the philosophy of mind bear a close connection to certain Daoist ideas, suggesting that they share common conceptual resources. I will conclude with some possible objections and responses to those objections. Ultimately, if the self is indeed extended, then this is unfamiliar to the Western mind. However, analyzing these unorthodox views using Daoist ideas may be a suitable tool in progressing our understanding of the self.

Traditional Western Views of Self¹⁰⁵

The problem of personal identity is multifaceted in that it concerns metaphysics, biology, and certainly many other areas. I take it to be the case that the most prominent aspect of the problem is the spatiotemporal boundaries of the self. This problem has a long history in the West. It has been pursued by many of the most influential philosophers, such as John Locke, David Hume, Gottfried Leibniz, Joseph Butler, and Thomas Reid¹⁰⁶. The philosophical nature to the question of what is a self is familiar to everyone when we reflect on our own experiences. People claim ownership to their physical body because they believe

¹⁰⁵ “Traditional Western Views” should not be understood as a characterization of (all) Western Philosophy. I am simply using this category to draw out some key features that have been prominent in Western Philosophy regarding the self.

¹⁰⁶ An analysis of the historical context of the problem can be found in Harold Noonan’s *Personal Identity* (2003).

that their body is different from the body of another person. People also believe that they are the sole owner of their mind. It belongs to the person and no one else has the ability to occupy his or her mind. Common reflections like these have prompted philosophical inquiry into the relationship between the body and mind. Is it the case that the mind makes up the self, or does the body make up the self? Furthermore, how does the self exist from one point in time to another point in time? This is the problem of persistence.

The persistence question is often taken to ask what it takes for the same person to exist at two different times. The most common formulation is something like this: If a person x exists at one time and a person y exists at another time, under what possible circumstances is it the case that x is y ? (Olsen, 2017).

When I see a photograph of myself from when I was two years old, I point to the photo and say, "That is me!" The persistence problem addresses the justification (or lack of) for why two-year-old Ryan is the same person as adult Ryan. Fleshing this out further, the bodies are completely different. The child in the photo is very small and lacks mature physical characteristics compared to the developed adult body exemplified in present-day Ryan. It is a similar story when it comes to the mind. Child Ryan has not developed cognitive processes that are present in adult Ryan. Furthermore, the access to memories is very different because adult Ryan possesses many more. Intuitively, it seems that child Ryan and adult Ryan are of the same self. However, this is not necessarily the case, and many contemporary Western philosophers have developed competing theories with disparate conclusions. Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne capture the focus of the problem.

There are two philosophical questions about personal identity. The first is: what are the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for a person P_2 at a time, t_2 being the same person as a person P_1 at an earlier time t_1 , or loosely, what does it mean to say that P_2 is the same person as P_1 ? The second is: what evidence of observation and experience can we have that a person P_2 at t_2 is the same person as a person P_1 at t_1 (and how are different pieces of evidence to be weighed against each other)? (1984)

I will outline two popular theories that have been used to respond to the problem of persistence: the Simple View and the Complex View.

Simple and Complex View

The influence of Cartesian dualism on the Western academy has been prominent. This paper specifically shows the influence it has had on spatiotemporal boundaries of the self¹⁰⁷. Monotheistic religions, and also some Eastern religions, hold a metaphysically dualist position. In the context of personal identity, the Simple View takes a similar metaphysical position. This is why many of the defenders of the Simple View hold religious beliefs. “The proponent of the Simple View of personal identity will say that personal identity is an ultimate unanalyzable fact” and “persons are ‘separately existing’ entities, distinct from their brains, bodies, and experiences” (Noonan, 2003, pp. 95-96). Arguments that defend this theory are found in Shoemaker and Swinburne (1984). Ultimately, the self is fundamentally identified as the soul or some immaterial substance. A competing position to the Simple View is the Complex View. This view claims that the self is identifiable by an individual’s brain, body, and experiences.

A proponent of the Complex View will maintain that an informative account of what personal identity consists in *is* possible, since personal identity is nothing over and above those observable and introspectable facts of physical and psychological continuity which provide the only evidence for it. (Noonan, 2003, pp. 95-96)

Both the Simple View and Complex View are within the scope of Traditional Western Views, because both approaches understand the self as fixed in space and time. From the spatial perspective, the claim is that the self is just one thing, and it can only occupy one space. For the Simple View it is some immaterial substance, and for the Complex View it is some combination of material substances. From the temporal perspective, they claim that the self has a fixed temporal structure. The issue can be understood through the question of whether the self endures or perdures through time.

Endurantism is a theory sometimes referred to as three-dimensionalism. For a self to endure means that a self exists wholly at each time that it exists. In other words, a self does not have any temporal parts. Take the case where person X exists at time t1. X would exist entirely at t1. Then take time t2. If X exists at t2, then X

¹⁰⁷ Rene Descartes’ investigation into what an individual can know for certain is explicated in his *Meditations*. Though most modern-day philosophers would not agree with his conclusions, the metaphysical questions he raises remain philosophically important. Descartes’ analytic argument explaining the nature of reality supports my claim that Descartes cannot be ignored. He calls into question the idea that matter is all that exists. This is portrayed by his deconstructive methodology. He concludes with the metaphysical position that there are two kinds of stuff: material and non-material, captured by the term Cartesian Dualism.

existed entirely at t1, and then entirely at t2. Perdurantism is the theory that is sometimes referred to as four-dimensionalism, the fourth dimension referring to time. To claim that the self perdures means that the self persists through time by a specific temporal part existing whenever the self exists. In other words, if a self persists through time it will never exist entirely from time t1 to time t2 because the amount of temporal parts will be different. It is not the object of this analysis to settle the issue on which theory is correct. The point I am trying to make is that temporal structure is a major factor in understanding the self, and from the description I have provided, it seems to imply that the self has temporal boundaries. I will conclude this section by reiterating that Traditional Western Views are committed to the position that the self is fixed in time and space, and that there are boundaries for what counts as a thing exemplifying a self.

Unorthodox Views

I will now present two contemporary Western ideas of self. I give a brief overview of each, highlighting key features. I label these contemporary Western views as the Unorthodox Views because they have been met with much skepticism, especially from proponents of the Traditional Western View.

It is common to address the idea of self by exploring consciousness. Consciousness is something that every human is familiar with. We intimately know it without having a clear understanding of what it actually is. Consciousness is not something we can forget to have. It is always with us. Even when we think about times where consciousness is not fully activated, like while dreaming, there is still some phenomenal experience of what it is like to be in that state. The first Unorthodox View I will discuss is panpsychism. “The word ‘panpsychism’ literally means that everything has a mind. However, in contemporary debates it is generally understood as the view that mentality is fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world” (Goff, Seager, & Allen-Hermanson, 2017). There are a variety of theories that fall into the panpsychism camp. I am using panpsychism as meaning “that mentality is distributed throughout the natural world—in the sense that all material objects have *parts* with mental properties” (Goff et al, 2017). Panpsychists are not committed to the claim that the Empire State Building, a rock, and chairs are conscious like humans. It seems that they are committed to the thesis that there is a fundamental nature to physical things, namely consciousness. The idea is that everything in the universe has a mental state in which there is something it is like to be in that state. If panpsychism is right, then physical entities in the universe are conscious, and that implies “that there is something it is like to be a quark or a photon or a member of some other fundamental physical type,” even if the degree of consciousness is minimal (Chalmers, 2017). Though this view is sometimes dismissed outright as being crazy, this objection alone does not have any merit.

The second Unorthodox View that I will discuss is embodied cognition. The endorsement of embodied cognition has gained momentum in recent literature in the philosophy of mind and in the field of cognitive science¹⁰⁸. Several contemporary scholars, such as David Chalmers, Andy Clark, Alva Noë, Lawrence Shapiro, Anil Seth, Evan Thompson, and David Vernon, have given attention to this matter, but the seminal work for thinking about embodiment comes from “The Extended Mind” (Clark and Chalmers, 1998).

Clark and Chalmers (1998) argue that cognition extends into the world. To support this claim, they focus on “beliefs embedded in memory,” using the thought experiment Inga and Otto to convince you that “when it comes to belief, there is nothing sacred about skull and skin” (pp. 10-23). Clark and Chalmers thought experiment can be summarized as follows. Inga hears about an event going on at the Museum of Modern Art and wants to attend. She thinks for a moment and remembers that the museum is located on 53rd street. She proceeds to the museum on foot. It is clear that Inga had the belief that the museum is located on 53rd street before she recalled it from her memory. It became an occurrent belief but previously (before she recalled it from memory) it was not. Now consider Otto who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. It is common for people that suffer from this disease to rely heavily on information in the environment to help bring coherence and structure to their life. Otto is not unique in this respect. He relies on his notebook, which he carries around everywhere, in order to bring structure to his life. When he receives new information, he writes it in his notebook. In fact, this book plays the role of a biological memory. When Otto hears from a friend about an event occurring at the museum, he consults his notebook which indicates that it is located on 53rd street. He proceeds to the museum (1998, pp. 10-23). Clark and Chalmers believe that if the cases for Inga and Otto are analogous, it follows that the mind extends into the environment. However, resistance to this conclusion takes the following forms: the usage of belief in this case is incorrect, information is just in the head, and the access and reliability between Otto and Inga is different. Clark and Chalmers respond to this opposition by arguing that even when differences occur, “these various small differences between Otto’s case and Inga’s case are

¹⁰⁸ From the analysis of the Traditional Western View, it is clear that cognition is a prominent factor when making sense of the self. For example, scholars that endorse the Complex View may claim that the persistence of the brain is all we need for the persistence of the self. With that said, the recent literature in cognition has shifted away from the thesis that cognition takes place solely inside the skull. David Marr (1982) is partly responsible for this traditional perspective because of the monumental work he did in perception. Marr argues for computationalism, a view that says perception is representational and algorithmic. Although this idea precedes Marr, his work has inspired contemporary progress in the development of artificial intelligence. Ultimately, computationalism reduces human experience to an algorithm that can be uploaded into a machine. This makes strong artificial intelligence plausible. The unsettling conclusions of this view have allowed for alternative theories of cognition to flourish.

shallow differences” (pp. 10-23). At the very least, Clark and Chalmers show that the extended mind thesis should be taken seriously, and it is worth further philosophical attention. If dispositional beliefs are a major factor in our identity as cognitive agents, like Traditional Western Views hold, then the self is extended into the environment. In other words, if we think of the mind as being intimately connected with the self, and we accept Clark and Chalmers’ thesis that the mind is extended, it follows that the self is also extended.

The Traditional Western Views and the Unorthodox Views I have outlined above are so disparate that it is nonsensical to try to understand one using the framework of the other. Because the Traditional Views predate the Unorthodox Views and have elicited so much philosophical attention, the Unorthodox Views, coming later and conflicting with the earlier views, are seen as controversial, and many are skeptical about their plausibility. It will be shown that some of these Unorthodox Views arising from the philosophy of mind bear a close connection to certain Daoist ideas, suggesting that the two share common conceptual resources. In the remainder of this paper, I argue that a focus on certain Daoist ideas may be an appropriate lens to use when analyzing and attempting to further understand the Unorthodox Views.

Daoist Ideas

One reason why Traditional Western Views of the self are perhaps not an appropriate lens to use for understanding the Unorthodox Views is because the former requires necessary and sufficient conditions for defining the self, while the conditions remain unclear in the latter views. The Daoist perspective does not make use of these conditions either, which makes it a more suitable framework to use for comparative analysis in order to understand the Unorthodox Views. This becomes evident when understanding Daoist metaphysics and its view on change as fluctuation and alteration as opposed to substantive change. In Daoist texts, the self is described as being vast, extended, transformative, and having the potential to be formless. I will now turn to specific examples within the text and abstract the key features to clarify the Daoist notion of the self.

Transforming occurs in the *Dao De Jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. This should be understood as part of a process. Just as it is the case that Daoists think of change as more of alteration and fluctuation than cause and effect, this idea applies to the idea of the self transforming as well. In many cases it is the result of a meditative practice. Ultimately, transforming supports the importance of meditation practice within Daoism. The *Dao De Jing* and *Zhuangzi* provide “Several passages [that] seem to refer to meditation practice” (Allen, 2014, p. 257). Ames and Hall (2003) goes as far as claiming that the “*Daodejing* can be read as metaphor for breathing exercises” (p. 90). Breathing exercises are a form of meditation. This practice is important to my investigation of the self because through this practice, according

to Daoist texts, it is possible to transform the self. “Tzû-ch’i of Nan-kuo reclined elbow on armrest, looked up at the sky and exhaled, in a trance as though he had lost the counterpart of himself” (Graham, 2001, p. 48). This example suggests that Tzû-ch’i’s breath provided a transformative experience in which his self was transformed. The use of the word “counterpart” here would seem to suggest that his self is located in two different places, one being the armchair and the other being located in a different space. The possibility of the occurrence of losing a counterpart of one’s self, and not one’s whole self, is evidence that the self is extended in space.

We also find in Daoist texts examples of cognition as being extended. Again, this is possible through meditation. “Allow your ears and eyes to open inward and thereby place yourself beyond your mind’s understanding consciousness” (Ziporyn, p. 27). The term “understanding consciousness” is translated from the Chinese 知 *Zhi*. The term “means the faculty of cognition in general” and it can also mean “consciousness in the sense of sentience or awareness as such” (Ziporyn, p. 219). Considering this example and understanding the Chinese concept of *zhi* suggests that Daoism allows for the possibility of cognition to be extended into the world, thereby not only occurring within the brain or skull. Yan Hui tells Confucius in the *Zhunagzi* (2009) that he sits and forgets. Yan Hui’s description of his experience provides an example of physical transformation worth exploring within our investigation of the self.

‘It’s a dropping away of my limbs and torso, a chasing off of my sensory acuity, which disperses my physical form and outs my understanding until I am the same as the Transforming Openness. This is what I call just sitting and forgetting.’ Confucius said, ‘the same as it? But then you are free of all preference! Transforming? But then you are free of all constancy! You truly are a worthy man! I beg to be accepted as your disciple.’ (p. 49)

Yan Hui undergoes the process of deconstructing himself. He identifies different components of himself by bringing awareness to his body and detaching from it. He continues this process of detachment from his sensory experiences. He ultimately reaches a state where he is outside of form. This idea of the formless is familiar in Daoism.

“One”—there is nothing more encompassing above it,
And nothing smaller below it.
Boundless, formless! It cannot be names,
And returns to the state of no-thing.
This is called the formless form. (Henricks, p. 66)

In this context, another word for One is *Dao* (道). This passage from the *Dao De Jing* refers to *Dao* and more specifically *Dao-ing*. *Dao-ing*, according to the commentary from Ames and Hall (2003), “will not yield itself up to our most basic categories of location and determination” (p. 97). This means that *Dao* has no physical boundaries. Therefore, *Dao* is formless. However, it is also form. This apparent contradiction needs further attention. Daoist metaphysics seeks to justify why this should not be considered a contradiction. To claim that it is difficult to find a consistent metaphysical position within the early Daoist texts is an understatement. Brian Bruya acknowledges that “there are many lacunae with respect to our understanding of explicit and implicit cosmologies of Laozi and Zhuangzi, one thing seems certain: that there is no metaphysical break between human and animal or human and spiritual” (p. 213). Daoist philosophy does not make a distinction between what is artificial and natural or the divine realm and human realm. They believe that everything is natural and a constituent of nature.

The Way gave birth to the One;
The One gave birth to the Two;
The Two gave birth to the Three;
And the Three gave birth to the ten thousand things.
The ten thousand things carry Yin on their backs and wrap their arms around Yang.
Through the blending of ch’i they arrive at a state of harmony. (Henricks, 1989, p. 11)

This chapter represents the oneness of all things. All things in the universe are fundamentally *Dao*. “Daoism construes oneness and manyness as interdependent ways of looking at the process of experience” (Ames and Hall, p 142). Daoism does not make the distinction between One, Two, or the many as indicated in the *Zhuangzi* when it says that “Heaven and earth are born together with me, and the ten thousand things and I are one” (Ziporyn, p. 15). This metaphysical position, therefore, nullifies the above apparent contradiction of form and formless. It also provides insight into the plausibility of Yan Hui’s transformation from sitting and forgetting because if everything is One, the detachment from physical components of the body will not destroy the self, thereby suggesting that the self extends beyond the confines of our physical being.

Death

In order to elaborate on the transformative nature of the self in Daoism, it is helpful to think about the experience of death, especially because there is textual insight on this matter. When the flow of life (sheng or 生) perishes, is that the end

of the existence of our self? Within the Daoist perspective, this does not seem to be the case. It has already been explained that Daoist metaphysics consist of one thing and not two, so for a self to perish throughout the transformative experience of death seems inaccurate. To even begin to understand death of the self from the Daoist perspective, it seems that we must release our traditional conception of what it means to die and adopt the view that death is just another transformative experience. It is for this reason that Daoists do not conceive of death as a negative event. Just as it is the case that we are ignorant of our existence before we transformed into our current life, we are also ignorant of the transformation we will undergo in the next. "Having already transformed into some particular being, he takes it as no more than a waiting for the next transformation into the unknown, nothing more" (Ziporyn, p. 47). This conception of death is different from Traditional Western Views, where the problem of persistence focuses on whether or not the same self persists over time. In Daoism, this is a non-issue. It is not relevant to the notion of the self to consider it as persisting over time, but rather how it is identified in this transformative process. It remains unclear if the Unorthodox Views of panpsychism and extended mind need to answer the problem of persistence. This could support my claim that they share a conceptual framework. If this is the case, it would seem that the Daoist perspective is a more appropriate lens than the Traditional Western views for further analyzing the Unorthodox Views.

'Ugh!' The maker of things still goes on turning me into this crumpled thing.' 'Do you hate it?' 'No, why should I hate it? Little by little he'll borrow my left arm to transform it into a cock, and it will be why I am listening to a cock-crow at dawn. Little by little he'll borrow my right arm to transform it into a crossbow, and it will be why I am waiting for a roasted owl for my dinner. (Graham, p. 88)

In this example, Master Yu is explaining to Master Ssu that whatever transformation may come, he will identify that thing as his self. Master Yu makes no value judgment on which form is preferred. He seems to recognize the reality of "the transformation of all things" and this should be understood as including the self (Ziporyn, p.27).

Transcendence

Introducing the Chinese interpretation of transcendence is another way of investigating the concept of the self, especially as it pertains to what happens to the self during death and while taking up multiple perspectives. Because various ideological movements have used disparate concepts of transcendence in their

worldviews, the term has become ambiguous (Barrett, 2011). The Chinese connotation with respect to transcendence takes a naturalist form. In the West, Christianity heavily influences the way people conceive of transcendence. In this context, when a person dies, a self transcends (goes beyond) the human realm to a divine realm. This contrasts with the Chinese understanding, which posits that there is no other realm than the human realm. Therefore, to transcend the self is to go beyond your current self, but it does not mean to transcend nature or *Dao*. This is consistent with the Daoist view that metaphysics consists of One, not Two. Another way to understand transcendence as it applies to the self is to analyze this idea of the existence of multiple perspectives. In the West, people's perspective is their own. When someone tries to take up another person's perspective they do so from their own perspective. It is not the case that they completely lose their perspective and adopt an entirely new one. This subtle distinction is important because there are examples in the Daoist texts that seem to imply the possibility of completely adopting a new perspective, and this ultimately supports the notion of the self as being extended, transformative, and vast.

'This' is also a 'that.' 'That' is also a 'this.' 'THAT' posits a 'this' and a 'that'—a right and a wrong—of its own. But 'THIS' also posits a 'this' and a 'that,'—a right and wrong—of its own. So is there really any 'that' versus 'this,' any right versus wrong? Or is there really no 'that' versus 'this'? When 'this' and 'that'—right and wrong—are no longer coupled as opposites—that is called the Course as Axis, the axis of course. (Ziporyn, 2009, p. 12)

Daoism explicitly argues for the existence of multiple perspectives within the universe, which this passage illustrates. People perceive something from their own perspective or their "this," but with every "this" there is a "that." There is further textual support when considering multiple perspectives in altered states such as dreams

You temporarily get involved in something or other and proceed to call it myself—but how can we know if what we call 'self' has any 'self' to it? You dream you are a bird and find yourself soaring in the heavens, you dream you are a fish and find yourself submerged in the depths. I cannot even know if what I'm saying now is a dream or not. (Ziporyn, p.48)

A third example of the idea of multiple perspectives in Daoist text is displayed in Zhuang Zhou's dream.

Once Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly, fluttering about joyfully just as a butterfly would. He followed his whims exactly as he liked and knew nothing about Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he awoke, and there he was, the startled Zhuang Zhou in the flesh. He did not know if Zhou had been dreaming he was a butterfly, or if a butterfly was now dreaming it was Zhou. Surely, Zhou and a butterfly count as two distinct identities! Such is what we call the transformation of one thing into another. (Ziporyn, 2009, p.21)

This example is in partial agreement with some of the ideas described in the Unorthodox Views because it implies that cognition is extended into the environment. However, these examples demonstrate how people can take multiple perspectives a step further by suggesting that it is possible to literally take up the perspective of other creatures. The word perspective has a Latin root that means “look through.” To have a perspective implies that some form of perception is occurring. If perception is occurring, then this is a form of cognition. Therefore, Daoist thought is claiming that cognition is extended into the world. Furthermore, these examples imply just how vast the nature of the self should be understood because of the extension of the self.

Qi

The term “*qi*” can be translated as vital energy, energy, or matter. It is the Daoist belief that *qi* is the essence of everything in the universe. Daoism takes *qi* to be everywhere and in all things. It can also be translated as breath or life force.

It was originally taken as one kind of stuff, connected with air and breath, but it eventually became the dominant label for the basic stuff of the world, used to explain all kinds of dynamic processes, from the formation of heaven and earth to the patterns of weather to the processes of the human heart. It was closely connected with life and the generative power of nature. (Perkins, 2016)

Qi is used often in both the ancient literature and contemporary Daoist literature. In many cases it is used in the context of longevity. By circulating *qi* it “enable[s] us to maximize our potency and invigorate our minds” (Ames, 2003, p. 90). However, some scholars have developed different interpretations of this concept. Brian Bruya (adopted from Jane Geaney) characterizes an early Chinese perspective of *qi* that is slightly different from the previous description.

A human being receives information about the external world not only through the five senses but also through the perception of the flowing of *qi*,

which carries information (to varying degrees depending on the subject, the object, and the circumstance) concerning the fluctuating interior conditions of a thing, a person, a place, a group, or a situation in general. (p. 213)

Perception deals with information. This example gives an alternative to the idea that information is only accessed through our senses. According to this interpretation, there is an association between *qi* and information. The Daoist belief is that *qi* is ubiquitous. If *qi* can be reduced to information, then information is also ubiquitous. If this is indeed the case, this provides insight for theorizing meaningfully about the Unorthodox Views such as, in a certain context, one form of panpsychism called Integrated Information Theory that is represented in the work of Giulio Tononi (2012). The main point here is not the specifics of Tononi's view, but an awareness of the fact that some of the Unorthodox Views, such as Tononi's believe information is essential to understanding consciousness and the self. The accumulation and manipulation of *qi* might be a way of theorizing about how the structure of information gives rise to consciousness.

Objections and Replies

I acknowledge that there could be potential objections to this paper. First, one could say that it is a mistake to conflate the Simple View and Complex View into the Traditional Western Views. I agree that these two views amount to very different positions. However, the main purpose for my categorization was to show that there is contrasting methodological approaches to the notion of the self between the Traditional Western Views and the Unorthodox Views. One major difference in approach lies with the extension of the self. The Traditional Western Views think it is fixed and the Unorthodox Views think it is extended. Therefore, the approach is completely different when considering the spatiotemporal boundaries.

Another objection I foresee is that my conception of *qi* is misguided. This does not seem to amount to much because the main point of that analysis was to identify the connection between *qi* and information. Once that connection is made, the ground for philosophical exploration into consciousness becomes fruitful. We see support of this from the possibility of manipulating or combining *qi* in order to have a different form of consciousness.

Finally, it is a valid criticism to suggest that I am construing panpsychism and the extended mind thesis as more similar than they actually are. I recognize that these two theories have similarities but amount to very different positions. An adequate development of these two theories lies outside the scope of this paper. However, if it is acknowledged that these two views fundamentally contrast the way I characterized the Traditional Western Views, then it is reasonable to suggest that using Daoist ideas is a meaningful way to theorize about these Unorthodox

Views. Therefore, even if the particular Daoist ideas of the self being vast, extended, and transformative do not apply entirely to panpsychism or the extended mind, these terms can still inform our thinking about these views.

Conclusion

Starting with the analysis of Traditional Western Views, it was shown that the self is conceived of as fixed in time and space. When this is the case, problems such as the persistence of the self occurs. Recent literature in the philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences have called into question traditional views concerning cognition, consciousness, and self. In this paper, I have not tried to resolve all the skepticism towards the Unorthodox Views. I have instead extracted key ideas from the primary texts of Daoism to show that the self can be understood as vast, extended, transformative, and has the potential to be formless, which I claim helps us theorize about Unorthodox Views.

From the Daoist perspective, theories or ideas that are considered in the Unorthodox Views are far from radical or crazy. It may be the case that a Daoist would endorse such views. The Daoist ideas that I have presented in this paper should specifically give structure to theorizing about panpsychism and the extended mind thesis because of the shared conceptual resources. Although my approach uses Daoist ideas to help bridge the conceptual gap between the traditional and the more radical views of self in the West, I see no reason for this approach to be exclusive. We could use the ideas of the Unorthodox Views to theorize about Daoist ideas. Ultimately, if we want to resolve fundamental problems with the self that the Traditional View has been stuck on for centuries, we should consider endorsing the Unorthodox Views. Since theories within the category of Unorthodox Views are in the infant stages, compared to those encompassed by the Traditional View, it is difficult to theorize about them. Therefore, it is difficult to advance these views. Using Daoist ideas, I have provided one such avenue for advancing these Unorthodox Views.

References

- Allen, B. (2014). Daoism and chinese martial arts. *Springer, 13*, 251-266. doi:10.1007/s11712-014-937-4
- Ames, R. T. & Hall, D. L. (2003). *Dao de jing*. (Lao-Tzu Trans.). New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group
- Barrett, N.F. (2011). Wuwei and flow: comparative reflections on spirituality, transcendence, and skill in the zhuangzi. *Philosophy East and West, 61*, 679-706. doi:https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2011.0051
- Bruya, B. J. (2010). The rehabilitation of spontaneity: a new approach in

- philosophy of action. *Philosophy East and West*, 60, 207-250.
doi:10.1353/pew.0.0102
- Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. J. (1998). "The Extended Mind". *Analysis* 58:10-23.
- Chalmers, J. D. (2017) Panpsychism and panprotopsyism. In Brüntrup, G. & Jaskolla, L, *Panpsychism; contemporary perspectives*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Goff, P. & Seager, W. & Allen-Hermanson, S. (2017) "Panpsychism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from:
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/panpsychism>
- Marr, D. (1982). *Vision*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Noonan, H. W. (2003). *Personal identity (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Olson, E. T. (2017) "Personal Identity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from:
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/identity-personal>
- Perkins, F. (2016) "Metaphysics in Chinese Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from:
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/chinese-metaphysics>
- Shoemaker, S. & Swinburne, R. (1984). *Personal identity: the dualist theory*. Oxford, UK. Basil Blackwell Publishing.
- Tononi, G. (2012). *Phi*. New York, NY. Random House Inc.