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ISAIAH BERLIN'S CHALLENGE TO THE ZHUANGZIAN FREEDOM

Abstract

Isaiah Berlin is known for articulating two competing notions of freedom operative within the modern Western political philosophy, negative and positive. He provides a powerful defense of modern liberal tradition that elevates negative freedom in its attempt to preserve personal space for one's actions and choices while regarding positive freedom as suppressive due to its potentially collective orientation. This article uses Berlin as an interlocutor to challenge Zhuangzi, known for his portrayal of spiritual freedom in the Chinese tradition, prodding modern Zhuangzians to bring the Zhuangzian spiritual freedom into the sociopolitical arena by reimagining new possibilities about politics.

I. Introduction

As Chinese exposure to various Western ideologies and institutional practices increases, some scholars trained in the Chinese intellectual tradition, both in China and in the West, have attempted to locate indigenous Chinese resources that might be analogous to those Western ideas and practices. Such a comparative approach to ideas across cultural boundaries and historical genealogies can be very effective in reaching a better understanding of both China and the West through the vantage point of their representative voices while enlarging the conceptual repertoire of a particular idea.

Moreover, from a Chinese perspective, engagement with modern Western thinkers can be a fruitful way to confront new problems and issues that emerge in the context of modernization because the West has a longer experience in modernity and the Western thinkers have had more opportunities to think through some of the issues that have

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arisen in the process. Even though Chinese modernity inevitably follows a different trajectory, globalization means that many experiences and problems are shared in an increasingly interconnected world. Neither traditional Chinese thought nor modern Western philosophy has ready-made answers to the complex issues facing Chinese modernity. Vigorous intellectual engagement between traditional Chinese thought and modern Western philosophy can generate new ideas to address new problems confronting China today more effectively. This article is written from such a perspective. It uses a leading contemporary Western philosopher's deliberation on the idea of freedom as a way to push the limits of traditional Chinese meditations on this concept of critical importance in the contemporary world.

The Latvian-born British philosopher Isaiah Berlin is a major contemporary Western thinker on the subject of political freedom, best known for articulating and crystallizing two competing notions of liberty/freedom (Berlin uses the two terms synonymously) operative within the modern Western social and political philosophy, namely negative and positive freedom. His framework provides the most powerful defense of the modern Western liberal tradition that tends to elevate the ideal of negative freedom in its attempt to preserve personal space for one's actions and choices, while regarding positive freedom as suppressive due to its potentially collective orientation as opposed to the individualistic orientation of negative freedom. Creative dialogue with such a leading voice in the contemporary Western reflections on freedom can be very fruitful in motivating thinkers in the Chinese tradition to reexamine their own cultural premises, confront certain blind spots within the traditional intellectual framework, and address new questions that originate from the modern and global context.[1]

For this purpose, there is probably no better conversation partner than Zhuangzi on the Chinese side. Among traditional Chinese thinkers, Zhuangzi stands out as the most powerful advocate for freedom, and the *Zhuangzi* provides rich conceptual resources for a Chinese version of freedom, thus affording us with a great opportunity to engage the two thinkers for a potentially edifying and enriching dialogue on freedom. Let me briefly summarize their respective projects before engaging the two. This critical engagement will highlight some of the problematic implications in the Zhuangzian conception of spiritual freedom from a Berlinian perspective and make the case that the Zhuangzian *imaginaire* of spiritual freedom needs to be expanded into the social and political arena so as to make a greater contribution to the Chinese political discourse on freedom.

II. Berlin's Negative and Positive Freedom

In his famous essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty," Berlin defines negative freedom as "the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others."[2] Here the obstruction or coercion "implies deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise act."[3] Clearly, negative freedom is primarily concerned with various external constraints placed on a person while living in a society. On the other hand, positive freedom "derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master."[4] Put differently, positive freedom pays more attention to the internal dynamics of a person, valorizing the ideal of self-determination and self-realization. Despite the appearance that the two are simply two sides of the same thing, they do come into conflict due to their historically divergent development.[5] His essay offers a powerful defense of the modern liberal project of democracy with its entailment of negative freedom while casting an unflattering light on various conceptions of positive freedom, both Western (e.g., Stoic) and Eastern (e.g., Buddhist).[6]

Berlin's deliberation of freedom and his valorization of negative freedom over positive freedom are grounded in his acute observation that many ultimate human values are incommensurable. He defends the superiority of negative freedom by offering a spirited critique of the various ways positive freedom has been perverted and abused in the service of political suppression and tyrannical governance under the banner of achieving "higher" political and social ideals, whether genuine or cynical, making a powerful case for the necessity of privileging negative freedom over positive freedom in a liberal democracy. He provides a sobering observation that the effort to realize various ideals of positive freedom has often led to the most catastrophic human disasters and suppression of individuals in modern history, both on the left and on the right. Berlin asks, "What can have led to so strange a reversal—the transformation of Kant's severe individualism into something close to a pure totalitarian doctrine on the part of thinkers, some of whom claimed to be his disciples?"[7] According to Berlin, the line between the ideal of individual freedom and totalitarian doctrines is much more blurred than their apparent incongruity, both philosophically and historically.

Berlin lays the blame for this ghastly perversion of freedom squarely on the impulse toward a philosophically and emotionally gratifying moral monism on the part of many philosophers,[8] with disastrous unintended consequences. Moral monism is understood as the conviction that "[a]ll true solutions to all genuine problems must be compatible: more than this, they must fit into a single whole: for this is what is meant by calling them all rational and the universe harmo-

nious."[9] Given the apparent diversity and plurality of human values, in order to make them compatible with each other, moral thinkers invariably employ various theoretical schemes to distinguish the "higher," "true," or "rational" nature from our "lower," empirical, and "irrational" nature and argue that those "higher" and "true" values are congruous with each other in forming a perfect and harmonious system of values:

> [t]he common assumption of these thinkers is that the rational ends of our "true" natures must coincide, or be made to coincide, however violently our poor, ignorant, desire-ridden, passionate, empirical selves may cry out against this process. Freedom is not freedom to do what is irrational, or stupid, or wrong. To force empirical selves into the right pattern is no tyranny, but liberation.[10]

Once distinctions are made between the higher and the lower, the true and the empirical, and the rational and the irrational, the next logical step is to find ways to achieve the former in the pair and suppress the latter, despite the suffering such a process has often caused. This is how the value of individual freedom is metamorphosed into the obedience to an authority, typically an authoritarian or even totalitarian state, which claims to speak on behalf of such "higher" and "true" values.

As Berlin sees it, there are four problematic premises that have led to the subversion of freedom into totalitarianism:

> first, that all men have one true purpose, and one only, that of rational self-direction; second, that the ends of all rational beings must of necessity fit into a single universal, harmonious pattern, which some men may be able to discern more clearly than others; third, that all conflict, and consequently all tragedy, is due solely to the clash of reason with the irrational or the insufficiently rational—the immature and undeveloped elements in life—whether individual or communal, and that such clashes are, in principle, avoidable, and for wholly rational beings impossible; finally, that when all men have been made rational, they will obey the rational laws of their own natures, which are one and the same in them all, and so be at once wholly law-abiding and wholly free.[11]

Berlin goes on to make a passionate case against moral monism that is based on some a priori conviction, instead of an investigation into how real lives are lived and negotiated in the real world. Such a conviction is also demonstrably false. He observes that "[t]he world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others."[12] Given this incompatibility of various ultimate values, Berlin argues that social and personal conflict and tragedy is

not simply a contingent fact of life, but rather its very constitution: "[t]he necessity of choosing between absolute claims is then an inescapable characteristic of the human condition."[13]

To treat this incompatibility of ultimate values as the inescapable human condition seriously, Berlin turns to pluralism, with the negative freedom it entails, as a truer and more humane way to accommodate the differences and to affirm our conviction that human beings are free agents. Otherwise, "[t]o say that in some ultimate, all-reconciling, yet realizable synthesis, duty *is* interest, or individual freedom *is* pure democracy or an authoritarian state, is to throw a metaphysical blanket over either self-deceit or deliberate hypocrisy."[14] This means that negative freedom, with pluralism as its positive corollary, is a potent way to keep various forms of positive freedom in check so that the monistic orientation of the latter does not overwhelm the pluralistic orientation of the former. Berlin ultimately justifies this on the ground of incompatibility of values, trying to preserve, within the social and political arena, a space for the individual with the idea that certain personal space *within* the social and political domain is inviolable. It enshrines the primacy of the *ordinary* individual and the inviolability of her choices as a human being.

Charles Taylor is arguably the most prominent critic of Berlin's formulation of freedom and the latter's elevation of negative freedom at the expense of positive freedom. In his article "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," Taylor decries Berlin's caricature of "the whole family of positive conceptions"[15] as well as Berlin's espousal of "a corresponding caricatural version of negative freedom."[16] As Taylor points out, Berlin's formulation tilts heavily toward safeguarding against external hurdles to individual freedom but does not take as seriously obstacles to individual freedom that originate from within, such as "lack of awareness, or false consciousness, or repression."[17] To make his case, Taylor argues that behind the formulation of positive/negative freedom lie some deeper differences of doctrines:

> [d]octrines of positive freedom are concerned with a view of freedom which involves essentially the exercising of control over one's life. On this view, one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life. The concept of freedom here is an exercise-concept.
>
> By contrast, negative theories can rely simply on an opportunity-concept, where being free is a matter of what we can do, of what it is open to us to do, whether or not we do anything to exercise these options.[18]

Taylor uses what he regards as the more fundamental distinction between an opportunity-concept and an exercise-concept to expose the one-sidedness in Berlin's formulation. According to Taylor, the

problem with Berlin's formulation is that it aligns negative freedom solely with an opportunity-concept and positive freedom with an exercise-concept. Such an alignment does not encapsulate the ideal of freedom:

> [w]e can't say that someone is free, on a self-realisation view, if he is totally unrealised, if for instance he is totally unaware of his potential, if fulfilling it has never even arisen as a question for him, or if he is paralysed by the fear of breaking with some norm which he has internalised but which does not authentically reflect him. Within this conceptual scheme, some degree of exercise is necessary for a man to be thought free.[19]

This means that negative freedom can, and must, also be aligned with an exercise-concept.[20] Taylor argues that Berlin, by denying the combinability between positive theories and opportunity-concept on the one hand and between negative theories and exercise-concept on the other, only recognizes the value of opportunity concepts and "leaves no place for a positive theory to grow."[21]

Furthermore, Taylor makes a passionate case that the fear of "Totalitarian Menace," as is evident in Berlin's argument against potential abuses of positive freedom, has led many liberal political thinkers to abandon one of the major sources of freedom in modern Western intellectual tradition, namely Romanticism and its progenies. Calling such an impulse "Maginot Line mentality," Taylor argues that it is indefensible as a view of freedom,[22] as it would have a stifling effect on a powerful source of the modern conception of freedom.

According to Taylor, the appeal of Berlin's formulation of freedom is its simplicity. However, freedom is never simple and always involves various kinds of discrimination and distinction that require evaluations of purposes and values: "our attributions of freedom make sense against a background sense of more and less significant purposes, for the question of freedom/unfreedom is bound up with the frustration/fulfillment of our purposes."[23] Without making such distinctions in weighing the difference in the significance of various human purposes (e.g., between traffic rules and abortion rules that compromise our exercise of freedom), freedom becomes trivial and spiritless, instead of being the powerful drive that motivates human self-realization and fulfillment. In this article, Taylor does not address the issue of the incompatibility of values Berlin raises in his essay, even though he deals with this subject more directly in his other works.[24]

To sum up, the value of negative freedom lies in that it does not offer prescriptive and normative claims about what the individual agent should or should not do, hence saving the critical space for the individual agent for her own self-determination and self-realization. But critics of Berlin, such as Charles Taylor and others, have argued

that making no positive claims about the positive content of freedom completely leaves out the critical scholarly examination of what constitutes a good and fulfilling life, and hence is ultimately detrimental to the political project of liberal democracy.

In some sense, Taylor's critique of Berlin validates Berlin's argument about the incommensurability of values and the necessity of choice among such values, even though the necessity of choice also appears to echo Taylor's contention that freedom has to involve both an opportunity-concept and an exercise-concept.[25] It seems that when facing the "totalitarian menace" posed by conceptions of positive freedom due to their monistic orientation, Berlin decides to simply bite the bullet and reject the project of positive freedom in the political and social arena. Taylor on the other hand wants to maintain a middle ground that leaves room for the public discourse on positive freedom while remaining loyal to the project of modern liberal democracy with its entailment of negative freedom.[26]

Although Berlin's article does not directly engage Chinese intellectual traditions, much of his critique of positive freedom is very much relevant within the Chinese context. Thinkers trained in Chinese thought need to take such critiques seriously in order to confront similar issues. In general, the Chinese intellectual traditions tend to focus on positive freedom, requiring a person to engage in moral/spiritual cultivation to achieve self-realization and self-mastery. However, the *Zhuangzi* is an intriguing exception in that it clearly exhibits distinct traits of negative freedom, showing a deep appreciation for personal space and a profound skepticism toward moralistic certainty as well as embracing value-pluralism, even though it still assumes the primacy of self-cultivation. Let us take a closer look at the Zhuangzian project of freedom before engaging Berlin on this subject.

III. Zhuangzian Freedom (*Xiaoyao* 逍遙)

Against the general grain of the Chinese intellectual tradition that cherishes the relational nature of the world, especially the human society (e.g., the Confucians tend to emphasize the nurturing aspect of human relationality), Zhuangzi[27] is deeply ambivalent about what he perceives to be the inherently relational nature of existence. Unlike any other classical Chinese philosophical texts, the *Zhuangzi* problematizes the aspect of entanglement in relationality. In many ways, the Zhuangzian project of freedom is how to overcome such entanglements.

Zhuangzi's uneasiness about the relational nature of existence in the world is vividly captured in a well-known story from "The Moun-

tain Tree" (*Shanmu* 〈山木〉) Chapter. A cicada is about to be preyed upon by a mantis who is oblivious of its own imminent danger of being attacked by a magpie who itself does not realize that it is the target of a bird-catcher, with the latter in each pair taking advantage of the former's self-deception and illusory sense of safety.[28] When Zhuangzi sees this, he is alarmed: "[i]t is inherent in things that they are tie[d] to each other, that one kind calls up another."[29] He remains gloomy for three days. Clearly, the relational nature of being in the world is deeply troubling for Zhuangzi. Consequently, how to effectively negotiate various domains of relationality lies at the heart of the Zhuangzian project of freedom.

The Zhuangzian freedom (*xiaoyao*) can be articulated in the cluster of three related concepts, transformation (*hua* 化), roaming (*you* 遊), and forgetting each other and letting each other be (*wang* 忘). More specifically, the Zhuangzian freedom is grounded in the "transformation of the self" (*hua*) such that the transformed self can gracefully roam (*you*) within the complexity of the world as well as beyond the constraint of worldly entanglements, forget each other and let each other be (*wang*). Let us briefly examine these aspects.

The condition of the self is front and center in Zhuangzi's meditation on freedom in that he takes personal cultivation and transformation, *hua*, as the point of departure. The stories of personal cultivation and transformation abound in the text.[30] One of the most important occurrences of *hua* appears in Zhuangzi's signature butterfly story. Here Zhuangzi tells us about being a butterfly in a dream; once awakened, he cannot tell whether he is Zhuang Zhou who dreams he is a butterfly or the butterfly who dreams it is Zhuang Zhou. As he is musing on the difference and the connection between him as Zhuang Zhou and the butterfly in the dream, he invokes the notion of "transformation between things" (*wuhua* 物化).[31] What does *wuhua* mean in the *Zhuangzi*?

There are several notable stories of *wuhua* in the text. Besides the story about the dramatic transformation between Zhuangzi and a butterfly, between dreaming and awakening, there is also the famous story about the fantastic transformation of a huge fish Kun into a giant bird Peng at the start of the opening chapter, "Roaming with Ease" (*Xiaoyao You* 〈逍遙遊〉). These stories suggest that, as A. C. Graham perceptively observes, "the Taoist does not permanently deem himself a man or a butterfly but moves spontaneously from fitting one nature to fitting another."[32] The *Zhuangzi* dramatizes a highly cultivated daemonic state in which all of our sense organs are perfectly attuned to the way of the world such that it enables us to roam along with the myriad creatures by acclimatizing ourselves to the world. For Zhuangzi, such a state is not so much a mystical union as a nimble

mind that is attuned to the way of the world. The Zhuangzian cultivation transforms the self such that it is aligned with the "axis of the Dao" (*daoshu* 道樞) and becomes a daemonic[33] self. Zhuangzi portrays in some detail the daemonic in the *Xiaoyao You* Chapter:

> [i]n the mountains of far-off Ku-yi there lives a daemonic man, whose skin and flesh are like ice and snow, who is gentle as a virgin. He does not eat the five grains but sucks in the wind and drinks the dew; he rides the vapour of clouds, yokes flying dragons to his chariot, and roams beyond the four seas. When his spirit is concentrated, it keeps creatures free from plagues and makes the grain ripen every year.[34]

Many commentators interpret this passage "mystically," and it is indeed tempting to do so. However, if we do not treat the passage literally, but rather metaphorically, we can characterize the daemonic (*shen* 神) in terms of the images invoked here: lofty (mountain), disentangled from the world (far-off), cool (ice and snow), gentle and pure (virgin), refined and subtle (sucking in the wind and drinking the dew instead of eating five grains), not limited by space (roaming beyond the four seas), cultivated and nurtured (concentration), and potent (keeping creatures free from plagues and making the grain ripen every year). Interpreted this way, the *Zhuangzi* can be seen as describing this daemonic being as a spiritual dimension within us, characterized by its subtlety, purity, potency, and free-spiritedness.

Another famous example of the transformation of the self is captured in a dialogue in "The Teacher Who Is the Ultimate Ancestor" (*Da Zong Shi* 〈大宗師〉) Chapter between Confucius and his favorite disciple, Yan Hui 顏回. Here Yan Hui describes the stages of his spiritual progress to Confucius, from forgetting benevolence (*ren* 仁) and rightness (*yi* 義), to forgetting ritual (*li* 禮) and music (*yue* 樂), and finally to sitting and forgetting (*zuo wang* 坐忘). Yan Hui explains the experience of *zuo wang* as: "I let organs and members drop away, dismiss eyesight and hearing, part from the body and expel knowledge, and go along with the universal thoroughfare."[35] Confucius is stunned by Yan Hui's achievement, "If you go along with it, you have no preference; if you let yourself transform, you have no norms,"[36] and asks to be Yan Hui's disciple.

If we juxtapose these accounts of personal transformation, it should be clear that the daemonic cultivated through various practices described in the *Zhuangzi* transcends the worldly constraints and limitations. The transformed, daemonic self, when negotiating with the world, takes one of two routes, either beyond the norms and boundaries or within them. This is captured in the two kinds of roaming (*you*) depicted in the *Zhuangzi*. The first kind of roaming, namely roaming beyond the boundaries, is the paradigmatic Zhuang-

zian *you* and it has been duly noted by traditional commentators as well as modern interpreters, for example, roaming between heaven and earth (*you hu tiandi zhi yi qi* 遊乎天地之一氣), into the infinite (*You wuqiong* 遊無窮), beyond the four seas (*You hu sihai zhi wai* 遊乎四海之外), beyond the dust and grime (*You hu chen'gou zhi wai* 遊乎塵垢之外), beyond the norm (*You fang zhi wai* 遊方之外), and so on.

The second kind of *you*, roaming within boundaries, is subtler and less prominent in the Inner Chapters. This aspect of the Zhuangzian freedom represents "the freedom that *roams in between* constraints."[37] The celebrated story of the butcher Cook Ding is the ultimate example of the second kind of *you*, supremely attuned senses and daemonically guided actions in roaming between the constraints within an ox. As the butcher describes it, at the beginning he sees the whole ox, and gradually he is able to discern bone and muscle patterns and eventually he discovers what are normally invisible paths inside the ox. The butcher describes how he does it this way: "[a]t that joint there is an interval, and the chopper's edge has no thickness; if you insert what has no thickness where there is an interval, then, what more could you ask, of course there is ample room to move the edge about."[38]

What is extraordinary in this description is Cook Ding's discernment of an interval in a joint (*You jian* 有間) and his realization of thicklessness of his chopper's edge (*wu hou* 無厚). Neither is apparent from the ordinary perspective. Clearly in the butcher's long years of practice, both he himself and the ox are transformed such that he can run his chopper as if its edge had no thickness while at the same time the intervals of the ox's joints are brought into the open. Put differently, in his cutting, or rather disentangling, of an ox the butcher is no longer his ordinary self while the ox is no longer an ox to an ordinary person. He is transformed in such a way that neither the butcher nor the ox stands in the way of the other. This is in line with our interpretation that self-transformation is foundational in the Zhuangzian project of freedom.

Here Zhuangzi paints a picture of perfect attunement with nature,[39] with the transformed self perfectly aligned with the axis of the Dao, to use the Zhuangzian language. The ox is a metaphor for the intricacy and complexity of the world, which explains the lesson, on how to nurture life, learned by the king from the butcher's performance and explanation. Zhuangzi calls this state "the Great Thoroughware"[40] (*datong* 大通) or "the Great Openness."[41] As a result, the world opens itself up and any resistance drops away. Hence the butcher does not need to hack his way through the ox; instead, his chopper roams between the joints inside the ox, staying intact for

more than nineteen years and counting. Analogously, a perfected Zhuangzian sage can roam the world without having to force his way through, by exploring route and ways invisible and unavailable to the uncultivated.

The transformed self is internally and externally realigned with the axis of the Dao such that it attunes perfectly to the vicissitudes of the world. For Zhuangzi, the ordinary relational self is misaligned such that self and the world stand in the way of each other's movement. The solution lies in realigning the human agency in a way that relationality of the world no longer constitutes an obstacle in one's actions. This is the immanent dimension of the freedom in the *Zhuangzi*, as opposed to the transcendent dimension of the freedom understood in terms of roaming beyond norms and boundaries mentioned previously. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the immanent *you* is almost always used in a situation where there is potential danger in dealing with various external constraints, especially when facing the state. This is particularly clear in expressions like "roaming within his (the ruler's) cage" (*You qi fan* 遊其樊). We will come back to this point later in the article.

Socially, the ideal state of freedom is understood as one wherein everybody is no longer consciously upholding morals and values. Instead, they just forget each other and let each other be (*wang*). *Wang* is a prominent theme in the *Zhuangzi*. We have already seen its usage in connection with sitting (*zuo wang*) in describing a rarified state of self-cultivation wherein the everyday cognition drops away and the daemonic comes in. *Wang* also has a social aspect. The most famous instance of forgetting in a social context is pronounced, ironically and playfully of course, through the mouth of Confucius on the spuriousness of morals and values:

> [w]hen the spring dries up and the fish are stranded together on land, they spit moisture at each other and soak each other in the foam, but they would be better off forgetting each other in the Yangtse or the Lakes. Rather than praise sage Yao and condemn tyrant Chieh, we should be better off if we could forget them both and let their Ways enter the transformations. As the saying goes, "Fish forget all about each other in the Yangtse and the Lakes, men forget all about each other in the lore of the Way."[42]

Commentators usually interpret the Zhuangzian forgetting as the manifestation of an un-self-aware spontaneity, a consummate virtue in classical Chinese thought. However, this interpretation underappreciates the social and political aspects of the idea of *wang*. Socially, it can be interpreted as leaving each other alone or letting each other be. Such an interpretation is supported by the use of *wang* in the peculiar Zhuangzian discourse on friendship.

The *Da Zong Shi* Chapter describes an interesting group of friends, Zi Sanghu 子桑戶, Meng Zifan 孟子反, and Zi Qinzhang 子琴張, whose take of friendship is rather unusual, to say the least:

> [w]hich of us can be *with* where there is no being with, be *for* where there is no being for? Which of us are able to climb the sky and roam the mists and go whirling into the infinite, living forgetful of each other for ever and ever?
>
> The three men looked at each other and smiled, and none was reluctant in his heart. So they became friends.[43]

What is of special interest to us here is the peculiar way ideal Zhuangzian friendship is depicted as friends forgetting each other and letting each other be who they want to be. Apparently, even friendly entanglement for Zhuangzi should be resisted and rejected.

In many ways, letting each other be is a core Zhuangzian social value, in contrast with what he regards as the meddling and intrusive ways of the Confucian or Moist moralists. This is a clear indication of value-pluralism in the *Zhuangzi*. It celebrates excellence in all walks of life as well as in all forms of life. It does not seek to impose a fixed perspective on what is worthy and respectable.

However, this does not mean that Zhuangzi is a moral relativist. Interpreters of Zhuangzi have struggled with various passages in the text that seem to advocate some form of relativism. If we couch the Zhuangzian project within the context of the classical Chinese debate on human nature, we can see that nature poses a limiting condition for the range of possibilities for what is considered valuable in the text. This can be explained by what P. J. Ivanhoe points out,

> Zhuangzi believed there are ways of living that are contrary to the way the world is: that is, which violate our nature and set us against the natural patterns and processes to be found in the world. Moreover, he further believed that there are ways of acting that enable us to accord with the nature of both ourselves as creatures—things among things in Nature's vast panorama—and Heaven's patterns and processes. People who act in such a way are paragons for human living.[44]

For example, Zhuangzi observes that a damp environment is unhealthy for humans but is perfectly fine for eels. Clearly nature poses a limit for the range of possibilities to flourish for Zhuangzi. But since we do not always know the limits and the possibilities (in fact more often than not we simply do not know), it makes more sense to be open-minded about the world. Hence I would characterize Zhuangzi as a value-pluralist, rather than a relativist. Zhuangzi is pushing against the Mencian tactics to justify the Confucian moralism by their selective treatment of various natural inclinations. For Zhuangzi, moralism damages the integrity and authenticity of natural human endowments, hence crip-

pling the natural development of those endowments. The *Zhuangzi* is full of fantastic tales celebrating the extraordinary accomplishments of people in various professions and social status, like a butcher, a fisherman, a social outcast, and others. The key lies in staying "authentic to their nature" (*zhen* 真).[45] The Zhuangzian authenticity is nonformulaic and serves as a way to resist the darker sides of moralism, namely dogmatism, hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness, close-mindedness, moral aggressiveness, and moral aggrandizement.

The idea of letting each other be is also carried into Zhuangzi's discussion about politics. In the last of the Inner Chapters, "Responding to Emperors and Kings" (*Ying Diwang* 〈應帝王〉), the *Zhuangzi* offers some thoughts on governance. As Graham points out, this is clearly not the kind of subject Zhuangzi devotes his time and effort to.[46] The most relevant passage to our discussion here in that chapter addresses the ideal of an enlightened kingship:

> When the enlightened king rules
> His deeds spread over the whole world
> but seem not from himself:
> His riches are loaned to the myriad things
> but the people do not depend on him.
> He is there, but no one mentions his name.
> He lets things find their own delight.[47]

This represents the Daoist ideal that a sage-king who rules the least and is not imposing rules the best. He just lets everybody be. The *Laozi* has a similar take on the ideal governance and is much more developed than the *Zhuangzi* in discussing the ideal Daoist sage-ruler.

It is obvious that Zhuangzi does not enjoy discussing politics, at least not directly and explicitly. He is much more interested in spiritual freedom in all of its subtle and fantastic dimensions. His general attitude toward politics, by contrast, is that of futility and aversion. This explains the limited contribution the *Zhuangzi* makes to the traditional Chinese political discourse. In other words, for those who want to get away from politics (e.g., hermits) or are frustrated in their political ambitions (e.g., exiled scholar-officials), the *Zhuangzi* is their counsel and comfort.[48] Other than that, the *Zhuangzi* has not been a major voice in traditional Chinese political discourse, especially the political discourse on freedom where it could have made the most contribution. This has far-reaching ramifications, which will become even more problematic when we bring in Berlin.

IV. Berlin and Zhuangzi on Negative Freedom

The Zhuangzian freedom, insofar as it is predicated upon what Charles Taylor calls an exercise-concept, namely self-transformation,

is more in line with Berlin's definition of positive freedom. However, in some critical respects, Zhuangzi's idea of freedom, in its effort to push against the suffocating and crushing relationality of being in the world, also resonates with Berlin's negative freedom. Both Zhuangzi and Berlin cherish the personal space and celebrate the value of pluralism. Like Berlin's negative freedom, the Zhuangzian freedom thrives in personal space with its characteristic ambivalence toward the state. Zhuangzi's antipathy toward moral monopoly, social conformity, and political tyranny is evident throughout the text. This makes Zhuangzi unique among traditional Chinese thinkers most of whom are more interested in exploring positive freedom, e.g., Xunzi. Nevertheless, the centrality of self-transformation in the Zhuangzian project of freedom and its lack of political engagement are problematic for Berlin. Let us examine these aspects in greater detail.

In his discussion of the two concepts of freedom, Berlin devotes significant effort to debunking the social and political implications of various ideals of spiritual freedom cherished in some religious and non-religious traditions, such as the Stoic and the Buddhist. At the heart of such conceptions of freedom lies what Berlin describes as a "strategic retreat into an inner citadel—my reason, my soul, my 'noumenal' self—which, do what they may, neither external blind force, nor human malice, can touch."[49] Berlin is clearly troubled by this approach to freedom and is at times even hostile to it by calling it a form of the doctrine of sour grapes: "[i]t is perhaps worth remarking that in its individualistic form the concept of the rational sage who has escaped into the inner fortress of his true self seems to arise when the external world has proved exceptionally arid, cruel, or unjust."[50] This is the doctrine that "maintains that what I cannot have I must teach myself not to desire; that a desire eliminated, or successfully resisted, is as good as a desire satisfied."[51] We can understand Taylor's accusation of Berlin's sweeping caricaturization of all expressions of positive freedom mentioned previously.

To be fair to Berlin, he is not arguing against the doctrinal integrity or the spiritual values of those expressions of freedom per se, but rather their social and political ramifications and potential abuses. In this respect, he views them as antithetical to the project of political freedom: "[a]scetic self-denial may be a source of integrity or serenity and spiritual strength, but it is difficult to see how it can be called an enlargement of liberty. . . . Total liberation in this self (as Schopenhauer correctly perceived) is conferred only by death."[52]

The Zhuangzian freedom exhibits some of the traits Berlin critiques. For example, one instance of roaming (*you*) within boundaries is found in the expression "roaming free inside his (the king's) cage" (*You qi fan* 遊其樊). This appears in the discussion of the fasting of the

heartmind[53] (*xin zhai* 心齋) between Confucius and Yan Hui in the "Worldly Business among People" (*Ren Jian Shi* 〈人間世〉) Chapter. The context of this is a discussion of how a Daoist sage can live an enlightened life while trying to bring his wayward ruler closer to the Way. Zhuangzi, through the mouth of Confucius, proposes the fasting of the heartmind so that the enlightened person "no longer has deliberate goals, the 'about to be' at the center of him belongs to the transforming processes of heaven and earth. Then he will have the instinct for when to speak and when to be silent, and will say the right thing as naturally as a bird sings."[54] In other words, an enlightened Zhuangzian has to learn how to navigate within the dangerous confines of the king's cage.

Here it seems as though Zhuangzi is guilty of advocating a retreat to the inner citadel of oneself in order to avoid confronting the complexity and the danger of the world. However, that is not quite true. This case involves a Zhuangzian attempt to engage with the world in its most perilous and risky endeavors, namely how to guide an all-powerful monarch away from his waywardness with no protection. Zhuangzi is not advising against engaging the king, but is rather trying to find a more effective way to do so. He is explicit in justifying such a worldly engagement:

> [t]o leave off making footprints is easy, never to walk on the ground is hard. What has man for agent is easily falsified, what has Heaven for agent is hard to falsify. You have heard of using wings to fly. You have not yet heard of flying by being wingless; you have heard of using the wits to know, you have not yet heard of using ignorance to know.[55]

As Graham points out insightfully here, Zhuangzi is making the point that "it is easy to withdraw from the world as a hermit, hard to remain above the world while living in it."[56] This is precisely the kind of roaming that takes place within the boundaries of the worldly affairs without being bound by them, as opposed to transcending such boundaries by leaving behind worldly affairs.

However, although Zhuangzi does not advocate simply retreating into the inner citadel of oneself in his advice on how to navigate inside the king's cage, he is not challenging or even questioning the legitimacy of the cage, either. His advice on how to deal with it rests on accepting the king's cage as an unalterable, if hopeless, political reality. He does not ponder the possibility of enlarging the proverbial cage or destroying it. Not even as a matter of *imagination*. Given the richness of the Zhuangzian *imaginaire*, it is puzzling and, indeed, unfortunate that it has a rather limited imagination about the state and politics. The advice given in the text is either on how to operate

within the cage or how to stay out of it. When operating within the cage of the state, the Zhuangzian imagination is devoted to the discernment of potentials that lie in the invisible or even the undesirable realms of the world in order to "*roams in between* constraints"[57] with greater efficacy and ease. Zhuangzi's discussion of the fasting of the heartmind mentioned above and the wonderful story about Cook Ding are both such cases.

When living outside the cage of the state, Zhuangzi enjoys life at the margin of society, being left alone. The most famous example of the Zhuangzian advice to stay out of the king's cage can be found in the "Autumn Floods" (*Qiu Shui* 〈秋水〉) Chapter wherein Zhuangzi compares someone who serves the state to an enshrined dead tortoise and asks the king's two emissaries: "[w]ould this tortoise rather be dead, to be honored as preserved bones? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?"[58] Once the two emissaries reply that the tortoise would prefer the latter, Zhuangzi demands that they leave him alone, "Away with you! I shall drag my tail in the mud."[59] As opposed to trying to find an effective way to engage politics and the state, Zhuangzi only wants to be left alone here.

However, from Berlin's perspective, the political implications of leaving the society behind are deeply problematic:

> [t]his is the traditional self-emancipation of ascetics and quietists, of stoics or Buddhist sages, men of various religions or of none, who have fled the world, and escaped the yoke of society or public opinion, by some process of deliberate self-transformation that enables them to care no longer for any of its values, to remain, isolated and independent, on its edges, no longer vulnerable to its weapons.[60]

As such, it is not really a political doctrine, even though it has clear political implications.[61] It is not particularly useful as a way to engage politics and enlarge the realm of freedom *within* society and politics. This particular criticism is clearly relevant to the *Zhuangzi*. The Zhuangzians,[62] with their general antipathy toward politics, tend to cede the ground of political discourse to others, mostly the Confucians, in premodern China. Aside from obvious historical and cultural reasons, this also reflects a limitation of the Zhuangzian ability to imagine a kind of polity that can accommodate the desire for personal space and allow for individual freedom *within* society and politics, not outside.

From Berlin's perspective, at the root of the inadequacy of the Zhuangzian imagination of political freedom lies the axiomatic primacy of self-cultivation in the traditional Chinese discourse on personhood. As Gerald MacCallum perceptively observes, advocates of negative freedom "hold that the agents whose freedom is in

question (for example, 'persons,' 'men') are, in effect, identifiable as Anglo-American law would identify 'natural' (as opposed to 'artificial') persons"[63] and the defenders of positive freedom "sometimes hold quite different views as to how these agents are to be identified."[64] This means that Berlin's negative freedom is articulated from the perspective of an ordinary person with natural cognitive endowments. This is clear from Berlin's fight against the monistic conviction of moral philosophers that all true values are ultimately commensurable. Berlin proposes that "we must fall back on the ordinary resources of empirical observation and ordinary human knowledge"[65] and takes seriously "[t]he world that we encounter in ordinary experience"[66] in understanding the human society. The valorization of an ordinary "natural" person with her ordinary knowledge and ordinary experience is at the heart of Berlin's deliberation on freedom. In many ways, negative freedom safeguards the "ordinariness" of a free and natural moral agent against the encroachment by others.

So the obvious question is: does the concept of an ordinary natural person exist as the focus of intellectual deliberation, aside from the need for cultivation and education, in traditional Chinese philosophy? The *Zhuangzi*, with its celebration of ordinary folks, might seem like a good place to locate a discourse on a natural person, but the "ordinary" folks in the text are not ordinary at all. They are often exemplars of unique virtues and paragons of special skills, even though their social status varies widely. This points to the assumed primacy of self-cultivation in the *Zhuangzi*.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that Berlin does not reject the project of self-transformation. In fact, as John Gray convincingly argues, the value of negative freedom for Berlin lies in its being "a condition of self-creation through choice-making."[67] Berlin's powerful defense of negative freedom is precisely to enable our self-creation through the choices we make as free agents. However, what is different between Zhuangzi and Berlin is that Berlin theorizes from the perspective of an ordinary "natural" person and the choices available to her, instead of reasoning from the vantage point of a perfected sage or the paragon of skills and the range of possibilities for him as in the case of Zhuangzi.

So what does this discussion amount to if we hope to make the *Zhuangzi* more relevant to the modern discourse on political and social freedom?[68] To develop a Zhuangzian *imaginaire* of political freedom that safeguards an individual against the encroachment of others and the state, thinkers in the Chinese tradition need to think through the implications of such a world from the vantage point of an ordinary, average person. This requires a paradigm shift, away from the axiomatic premise of self-cultivation and epistemic superiority of

a cultivated sage, an assumption that is shared by all traditional Chinese thinkers, including Zhuangzi.

From a traditional Zhuangzian perspective, an ordinary person cannot be really free from various entanglements due to the intrinsic interconnectedness of beings in the world; only a cultivated and daemonic person can be genuinely free in this sense. That is, only a cultivated person can obtain through cultivation the kind of personal space that is invisible, hence unavailable, to others wherein one can enjoy freedom from any entanglement and thrive. However, there is no reason that a Zhuangzian cannot imagine a political system wherein such valued personal space is actually brought out in the open as a political space for individuals that is institutionally protected. In other words, if it is indeed possible for an accomplished Zhuangzian paragon to gain access to the precious personal space through his vigorous cultivation, there should be nothing inherently prohibitive that prevents the Zhuangzian from envisioning a more effective way to enlarge such personal space so that more people can enjoy and thrive. Such a protected political space for individuals is Berlin's negative freedom. The conception of this political space requires a new social and political imagination, entirely consistent with the Zhuangzian spiritual *imaginaire*. If such a move is possible for a modern Zhuangzian, he can certainly embrace some idea of political rights as the institutional guarantor of an individual's freedom against the interference by other people as well as the state. Put differently, for a Zhuangzian breakthrough in the political and social arena, there needs to be a new imagination of what is politically and socially possible, instead of simply accepting the political reality of whatever era or rejecting politics as an unworthy cause.

Importantly, venturing into the social and political arena does not compromise the lure of the Zhuangzian project. As I pointed out earlier, Zhuangzi and Berlin share many concerns with regard to moral monism, social conformity, and political tyranny and share their advocacy of value pluralism and epistemic humility. Their difference has to do with where they see the viable and attractive solutions lie. Clearly, Berlin's ultimate concern is political with the spiritual regarded as a suspect at best whereas Zhuangzi's case is exactly the opposite. More specifically, for Berlin, the political should be the ultimate arbiter for any spiritual claim whereas for Zhuangzi the spiritual should be vigorously pursued whereas the political is to be put up with.

However, as Charles Taylor perceptively argues in his critique of Berlin, negative freedom without spiritual inspiration is impoverished and self-defeating.[69] On the other hand, as Berlin powerfully demonstrates, escapist spirituality and monistic positive freedom often

pervert the project of individual freedom. The Zhuangzian spiritual freedom can potentially bridge the gap between the two. The value of the Zhuangzian spiritual freedom lies precisely in its cultivation of personal space, its pursuit of disentanglement from the world, its advocacy of value-pluralism, and its epistemic humility. This very much resonates with Berlin's political project of negative freedom. What worries about Zhuangzi for Berlin is its antipathy toward politics, but there is nothing intrinsically anti-political in the Zhuangzian project. In fact, Berlin can well supplement the Zhuangzians with a viable and attractive political *imaginaire*. On the other hand, in Zhuangzi, we see a spirituality that is non-aggressive and non-imposing. It is a kind of negative spirituality that can serve as the spiritual corollary of the political and social project of negative freedom Berlin so powerfully articulates and defends. Moreover, Berlin's negative freedom enhances the Zhuangzian spiritual freedom in the political and social arena. Here we see a genuine opportunity for potentially fruitful cross-fertilization on the project of negative freedom between Berlin's political interest and Zhuangzi's spiritual pursuit. Indeed, it can even be argued that to be a Berlinian politically is to be a Zhuangzian spiritually.

V. Conclusion

In this article, I have used Isaiah Berlin as the interlocutor to reexamine the Zhuangzian project of spiritual freedom in order to raise new questions and expand the traditional horizon.[70] It is clear from our comparative study that for Zhuangzi freedom is first and foremost a spiritual problem that can only be resolved through spiritual cultivation hinted at in the text. On the other hand, for Berlin, freedom is primarily a social and political problem that can be dealt with only within the social and political realm. That is, for Berlin a political system should be set up in such a way that an ordinary person can make her own choices in her self-realization and self-actualization. Both Berlinian and Zhuangzian negative freedoms are achievement: for Berlin negative freedom is a political project, a constitutional achievement; for Zhuangzi, negative freedom is a spiritual project, an inner accomplishment.

Berlin argues against two troubling tendencies in some of the moral and spiritual traditions in the West: moral monism and political disengagement. Berlin's solution is political negative freedom and value pluralism, accomplished through a constitution of the political institution in modern liberal democracy. Although Zhuangzi shares Berlin's concern about moral monism and advocates moral pluralism, it is

rather unfortunate that the Zhuangzian expressions of negative freedom are mainly confined to the spiritual domain and are not forcefully carried into the political discourse in reimagining new possibilities with regard to the state. It never happens to Zhuangzi[71] that the state can be reconstituted in such a way that its ability to intrude upon people's personal freedom can be kept in check. Therefore, what is lacking in the classical Chinese tradition is not so much the discourse of negative freedom itself but rather its limitation to the spiritual matter with little direct engagement with the mainstream political discourse. It is no surprise that we do not find any codification of negative freedom in institutional building in traditional China. Consequently, it is left to individuals themselves to cultivate a personal space, instead of its being codified in a constitution as in modern liberal democracy.[72]

We hope this comparative engagement between Berlin and Zhuangzi has made it clear that the challenge to Zhuangzi from Berlin's perspective is how the Zhuangzian project of freedom can have bigger voice in the political discourse on freedom, aside from its spiritual values. This is where the Zhuangzian tradition can learn from the West, and Berlin in particular, namely to develop a new kind of political *imaginaire* about the state which is capable of leaving people alone and giving room for them to realize and actualize themselves, consistent with the Zhuangzian *imaginaire* of spiritual freedom. On the other hand, Zhuangzi's spiritual negative freedom can help to mitigate Taylor's critique of Berlin. Such a cross-cultural conversation can indeed be promising in enriching our conceptual resources in dealing with various issues of our time.

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Endnotes

This article partially builds on the argument I put forward in my 2011 article, "Two Notions of Freedom in Classical Chinese Thought: The Concept of *Hua* 化 in the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi*" (*Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10, no. 4: 463–486). That article was originally inspired by Isaiah Berlin's articulation of two concepts of freedom in modern Western social and political philosophy, negative and positive. Berlin's discussion and articulation was instrumental in helping me to conceptually realign key ideas in classical Chinese thought in order to tease out and construct credible Chinese notions of freedom that are not confined to the modern Chinese translation of the word freedom, namely *ziyou* 自由. Since the two reviewers of the article in the *Dao* expressed the hope that I dealt with Berlin's argument more fully and systematically rather than simply using it as a framing device to construct Chinese notions of freedom, the current article gives me an opportunity to do exactly that. I am indebted to those two reviewers for pushing me in this direction. I appreciate it that the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* has provided me this opportunity to do it. I am grateful for the helpful and often challenging

philosophical and editorial comments and suggestions offered by Editor-in-Chief, Chung-ying Cheng, Managing Editor, Linyu Gu, and one of the coeditors for this special issue, Eric Nelson. A Chinese version of this article was presented at the Centennial Celebration Conference of the Philosophy Department at Peking University in October 2012. I appreciate the comments from the conference participants, especially Chenyang Li and Robin Wang. However, all possible errors remain mine alone.

1. In March of 2011, there was an international symposium on Isaiah Berlin and contemporary Chinese thought held at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. This is a clear indication of the importance Chinese thinkers attach to Berlin's thought.
2. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 122.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 131.
5. The conflict between the two will be elaborated later in this essay.
6. Berlin specifically mentions the stoics and Buddhist sages as examples of positive and spiritual freedom: "There are two methods of freeing myself from pain. One is to heal the wound. But if the cure is too difficult or uncertain, there is another method. I can get rid of the wound by cutting off my leg. If I train myself to want nothing to which the possession of my leg is indispensable, I shall not feel the lack of it. This is the traditional self-emancipation of ascetics and quietists, of stoics or Buddhist sages, men of various religions or of none, who have fled the world, and escaped the yoke of society or public opinion, by some process of deliberate self-transformation that enables them to care no longer for any of its values, to remain, isolated and independent, on its edges, no longer vulnerable to its weapons. All political isolationism, all economic autarky, every form of autonomy, has in it some element of this attitude. I eliminate the obstacles in my path by abandoning the path; I retreat into my own sect, my own planned economy, my own deliberately insulated territory, where no voices from outside need be listened to, and no external forces can have effect. This is a form of the search for security; but it has also been called the search for personal or national freedom or independence." Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 135–36.
7. Ibid., 152.
8. Ibid., 170.
9. Ibid., 147.
10. Ibid., 148.
11. Ibid., 154.
12. Ibid., 168.
13. Ibid., 169.
14. Ibid., 171.
15. Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175.
16. Ibid., 176. Taylor seems to have softened his critique of Berlin later on, e.g., *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 685.
17. Ibid., 176.
18. Ibid., 177.
19. Ibid.
20. John Gray defends Berlin against Taylor's charge by arguing that negative freedom is "*choice among alternatives or options that is unimpeded by others*" (John Gray, *Isaiah Berlin* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997], 15, original italics), instead of simply the unobstructed pursuit of one's desires as Taylor alleges.
21. Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 178.
22. Ibid., 179.
23. Ibid., 191.
24. Taylor agrees that we should examine whether a view of freedom can only be realized within a certain form of society and whether this pursuit necessarily leads to justifying the excess of totalitarian oppression in the name of liberty. But he dismisses any attempt to evade the question "by a philistine definition of freedom which relegates

them by fiat to the limbo of metaphysical pseudo-questions." Ibid., 193. It is not clear whether the issue of incompatibility of values falls under the category of "metaphysical pseudo-questions" or not. Taylor's later works acknowledge this issue more forcefully.

25. Defenders of Berlin, such as John Gray, argue that choice is essential to Berlin's conception of negative freedom and reject Taylor's charge that Berlin's negative freedom is purely an opportunity-concept.
26. This is more apparent in Taylor's later works, such as *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).
27. For the purpose of discussions in this essay, I will not differentiate between the historical Zhuangzi's own writings and later additions to the text bearing his name. There is enough cogency and internal coherence of the text, as well as the way it was received historically, that warrant this approach. My focus here is on what the text represents within the Chinese intellectual tradition, not the historicity of its different layers.
28. This is the source of a popular Chinese saying, "*Tanglang buchan huangque zai hou* 螳螂捕蟬黃雀在後."
29. A.C. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 118.
30. I have argued elsewhere that to properly the Zhuangzian idea of freedom we need to move away from the idea of choice or from the focus on *ziyou* 自由, usually translated as freedom in modern Chinese, and instead examine the concepts of *hua* 化 (transformation or to transform) and *you* 遊 (to roam or to navigate). I have made the case that *hua* and *you* in the *Zhuangzi* points to a vision of transformative freedom as the result of spiritual transformation. The paradigmatic expression of this transformative freedom is Confucius's autobiographical note that at the age of seventy he could follow his heartmind's (*xin* 心) desire without overstepping the boundary of propriety (*Analects*, 2: 4). Put differently, at that point in Confucius's life, his heartmind's desire is so well aligned with the norm of propriety that there is no struggle on his part to follow the norm of what is right. This sense of freedom exemplified in Confucius's life at seventy is an achievement, not a natural state he is born into. Such an accomplishment requires sustained effort in personal cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) on the part of the agent that transforms himself from the state of uncouth nature to the state of moral refinement. In this essay, I will expand my earlier discussion of the Zhuangzian freedom.
31. Translators of the *Zhuangzi* almost uniformly gloss *wuhua* as the transformation of things. Brook Ziporyn puts it somewhat differently as "the transformation of one thing into another." Brook Ziporyn, trans., *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), 21. I will adopt Ziporyn's rendition as it does not have the ambiguity with the phrase "transformation of things," and modify it as "transformation between things."
32. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 61.
33. Here "daemonic" is used synonymously with "spiritual," distinguished from "demonic" that carries a negative meaning.
34. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 46. The last sentence is revised at the suggestion of Chung-ying Cheng. The original translation is: "When the daemonic in him concentrates it keeps creatures free from plagues and makes the grain ripen every year."
35. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 92.
36. Ibid.
37. Scott Cook, "Zhuang Zi and His Carving of the Confucian Ox," *Philosophy East and West* 47, no. 4 (1997): 540, original italics.
38. Graham, trans. *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 64.
39. Although, as Chung-ying Cheng points out to me, the ox might disagree. I interpret the ox as a metaphor for the intricacy and complexity of the world, echoing the view advanced by Robert Eno in his essay "Cook Ding's Dao and the Limits of Philosophy," in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, eds. Paul Kjellberg and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York, 1996).

40. Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 90.
41. Brook Ziporyn, trans., *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, 49 *fn*. Graham translates it as "the universal thoroughfare." Ziporyn renders *datong* as "Great Openness" even though he amends it as *huatong* (化通) by adopting a parallel in the *Huainanzi*. Mair's translation as "the Transformational Thoroughfare" follows the same textual change (Victor Mair, trans., *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*, [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997], 64).
42. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 90.
43. Ibid., 89, Graham's italics.
44. Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Was Zhuangzi a Relativist?" in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, 201.
45. One reviewer raised the issue concerning the social implications of this claim. The Zhuangzian authenticity can open the door to resignation, rather than freedom, and passivity of an indirect acceptance or even affirmation of social conformity and hierarchy. Such troubling implications will be dealt with when we critique the Zhuangzian conception of freedom from Berlin's perspective later in the essay.
46. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 94.
47. Ibid., 96.
48. Berlin calls this the "doctrine of sour grapes." Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 139. More on this later in the essay.
49. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 135.
50. Ibid., 139.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 140.
53. The Chinese term *xin* 心 is usually translated as heart or heart-mind. But as many modern commentators have correctly pointed out, there is no distinction between the heart and the mind in classical Chinese thought. Therefore, I have decided to coin the term "heartmind" to translate *xin* in order to highlight such a non-distinction implied in it.
54. This is from Graham's note, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 69.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Cook, 540, original italics.
58. Graham, trans., *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, 122.
59. Ibid.
60. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 135–36.
61. Ibid., 139.
62. These can include those who are lifelong hermits who live at the margin of society or those whose political ambitions are frustrated.
63. Gerald C. MacCallum, Jr. "Negative and Positive Freedom," *The Philosophical Review* 76, no. 3 (1967): 321.
64. Ibid.
65. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 168.
66. Ibid.
67. John Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, 21.
68. I would like to thank Chung-ying Cheng for pushing me to clarify the implications of my discussion of Berlin and Zhuangzi here.
69. Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," 179, 192.
70. Several people have raised the objection that my critique might have been too demanding, too harsh, or even unfair, to Zhuangzi. While I agree that this essay might be more critical of Zhuangzi than celebratory, my purpose is to make better use of the unique aspects of the Zhuangzian freedom, namely its negative aspect, as a possible indigenous intellectual resources for the development of a liberal polity in China. Since there are few traditional Chinese thinkers who demonstrate a profound appreciation of negative freedom, Zhuangzi deserves to be taken more seriously in the contemporary political discourse, not just being elevated, but confined, to the spiritual domain.

71. I do not mean to fault Zhuangzi alone for the lack of political imagination here. Imagination is socially and culturally conditioned even as it tries to transcend such conditions, with varying degrees of success. The limitation of the Zhuangzian political imagination is in many ways the product of a lack of alternative forms of political systems in early China.
72. I do not mean to imply that the lack of a political discourse on negative freedom alone is responsible for the lack of development in the democratic institution building in traditional China. The historical circumstances are of course too complicated to be reduced to a single cause. But the lack of intellectual interest and popular *imaginaire* in this direction must have played some role.