HEIDEGGER, TAOISM AND THE QUESTION OF METAPHYSICS

The two themes in Heidegger I would like to talk about that seem to me to have a definite Taoist flavor are those of Way (Weg) and releasement (Gelasseheit). In the course of inquiry into these themes, it will become increasingly clear that they are almost impossible to separate. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to start with the Way as the more basic theme that determines or attunes releasement. Strictly speaking, the two are not concepts belonging to metaphysical thought; they are themes of post-metaphysical or non-metaphysical reflection. The question of the relation of both Heidegger and Taoism to metaphysics will be taken up briefly at the end of this paper. If we were to consider these two themes in a traditional metaphysical manner, the Way would represent the objective side of a relationship and releasement would represent the subjective side. We want to try and understand that and how neither Heidegger nor Taoism do this.

Way (Weg, Tao). In contrast to releasement, which has implicit precursors in Being and Time but really gets developed only in Heidegger's later thought, the theme of the Way is explicitly present in Being and Time and runs throughout all of Heidegger's writings. Thus, in Being and Time we are told that Dasein is always underway and that standing and remaining are only limited cases of this directional "underway." And at the very conclusion of the book Heidegger states: "One must seek a way of illuminating the fundamental question of ontology and then go this way. Whether this is the sole or right way can be decided only after one has gone along it." The central importance of the way and being underway or on the way stands out in the titles of at least three subsequent works: Woodpaths, On the Way to Language and The Fieldpath. One thinks also of Wegmarken, a volume reprinting many works.

Unlike Lao Tse who begins by saying that the Way or Tao that can be told of (literally, that can be wayed) is not the eternal Tao, Heidegger
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has a good deal to say about the Way. What finally could not be told of for
Heidegger was Being. In the foreword to the collection of essays entitled
Holzwege or Woodpaths, we read:

"Wood is an old name for forest. In the wood are paths that
mostly wind along until they end quite suddenly in an impenetra-
ble thicket.
They are called 'woodpaths.'
Each goes its peculiar way, but in the same forest. Often it seems
as though one were identical to another. Yet it only seems so.
Woodcutters and foresters are familiar with these paths. They
know what it means to be on a woodpath."?

As D.F. Krell points out in his general introduction to the anthology,
Basic Writings, the meaning of the colloquial German expression, "to be on
a woodpath," does not coincide with the philosophical meaning Heidegger
gives the phrase. The popular expression means to be on the wrong track,
to be on a path that doesn't go anywhere. This popular meaning finds its
way into the title of the French translation of Holzwege: Chemins qui ne
mènent nulle part, ways that lead nowhere. Now we could say that wood-
paths do lead somewhere or other, but where they lead us is somehow in-
cidental. The function of woodpaths, which the woodcutters leave behind
them as they cut and gather wood, is not to lead someone from one point
to another; rather, the path is almost a necessary byproduct of the wood-
cutter's activity. For those of us non-woodcutters walking in the forest,
we don't know where the woodpaths are leading and if our primary aim were
to arrive at some fixed destination in the shortest amount of time, we
wouldn't be on a woodpath. Thus, the philosophical meaning of being on a
woodpath is not so much that it doesn't go anywhere but that the meaning
of being on it is not to arrive at a known or predetermined destination. One
does not necessarily know at the outset where one is going. For Heidegger,
woodpaths express the fact that thinking is thoroughly and essentially
questioning, a questioning not to be stilled or "solved" by any answer, a
questioning that cannot calculate in advance the direction in which it will
be led, let alone the destination at which it will arrive.
We need to ask what Heidegger means by way. Following his own tactic and that of many thinkers before him, we might best begin by saying what way does not mean for him. First of all, he brings his own conception -of way into sharp contrast with the way or method (methodos, way) of the sciences.

"To the modern mind, whose ideas about everything are punched out in the die presses of technical-scientific calculation, the object of knowledge is part of the method. And method follows what is in fact the utmost corruption and degeneration of a way.

"For reflective thinking, on the contrary, the way belongs in what we here call the country or region. Speaking allusively, the region is that which regions, is the clearing that sets free, where all that is cleared and freed, and all that conceals itself, together attain open freedom. The freeing and sheltering character of this region lies in this way-making movement which yields those ways that belong to the region."^3

The topic of the sciences and in general of technology is far too vast to go into here and is, moreover, not essential to this inquiry. Suffice it to say that Heidegger's conception of way has nothing to do with the uncanny and threatening usurpation of the objects of knowledge by the calculative procedures and methods of technology that, as Heidegger says, represent the utmost corruption and degeneration of what he means by way.

If, then, it has essentially nothing to do with scientific and technological method, what kind of way is Heidegger talking about? Two other possible conceptions remain to be discussed and ultimately rejected. The first is the obvious, literal meaning of a way or path leading from one place to another. Although most of the connotations belonging to this conception are inappropriate for what Heidegger is after, the "literal" meaning of way is very germaine to what he is saying and is not to be sacrificed in favor of some kind of abstract symbolism. The Way is not to be taken in an abstract, symbolic sense, a literal path standing for some kind of royal road to the Absolute. This would be sheer metaphysics. The whole schema of something concrete and sensuous symbolizing something abstract and non-sensuous very defini-
tely belongs to a metaphysical kind of thinking that Heidegger always sought to avoid, particularly in his work on the Pre-Socratics and the poets. Thus, we are to retain something of the "literal" meaning of a path. But, in keeping with Heidegger's whole constant polemic against *Vorhandenheit*, against objective presence, presence at hand, a way for him is not something lying there all finished, leading from one point in the parameters of space to another. Heidegger's understanding of space, and later of time when he gains some distance from his earlier, fundamentally Kantian conception, is quite close to the Taoist conception. I shall have something to say on this and some other points of similarity between Heidegger and Taoism in my concluding remarks on the question of metaphysics.

For Heidegger, the way is of such a nature that it originates with the movement of walking on it. Strictly speaking, one could almost say that the way is this movement.

"Thinking itself is a way. We respond to the way only by remaining underway... We must get on the way, that is, must take the steps by which alone the way becomes a way. The way of thinking cannot be traced from somewhere to somewhere like a well-worn rut, nor does it at all exist as such in any place. Only when we walk it, and in no other fashion, only, that is, by thoughtful questioning, are we on the move on the way. This movement is what allows the way to come forward."\(^4\)

At least two things are striking here. First of all, the way is not already there for us to follow, but comes into being as we go along it. Since it is not already stretched out in space, this also means that it has no initial point of departure and no final goal. Besides stressing the fact that it doesn't lead anywhere, one should also emphasize that it doesn't begin anywhere either. We are always already underway and remain so as long as we dwell on earth.

Secondly, the way is essentially a way of *thinking*. This points forward to our imminent discussion of releasement and can form a sort of transition to it. We had remarked at the beginning that way and releasement would be difficult, if not impossible, to separate. If the way is a way of thinking, does this not mean that we produce the way, that the way is something subjective? I shall come back to this second point about the way of thinking after discussing the first point further.
Perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of Heidegger's way is that it allows us to *reach* something, to reach something not as a final goal to be possessed, but as an ongoing reaching that belongs to what it reaches.

"Within language as Saying there is present something like a way or path.

"What is a way? A way allows us to reach something."\(^5\)

The way allows us as we listen to attain language and thus belong to Saying. We are able to attain language only because we already belong to Saying. What is it that the way allows us to reach here? For Heidegger, the term Saying points to the way in which we respond to what happens. Saying is not simply linguistic; it includes poetic and artistic kinds of human response as well as silence. Saying is a kind of showing what happens. What happens is Appropriation, the primordial relation, the belonging-together of man and Being. This relation, thought by Heidegger under both aspects of identity and difference, is more fundamental than the "elements" in it. The elements, man and Being, don't constitute the relation; the relation constitutes the elements.

It is the way which is the "how" of the happening of Appropriation. The way is how Appropriation does what it does, better expressed, lets happen by making its own, appropriating.

"The way to language belongs to Saying determined by Appropriation. Within this way, which belongs to the reality of language, the peculiar property of language is concealed. The way is appropriating."\(^6\)

This passage leads us right into the heart of Heidegger's later thinking. The central themes of Appropriation, language and Saying are now brought into relation with the way. The passage continues and introduces a further qualification of the way that seems to be Heidegger's utmost effort to make an initially somewhat indeterminate thought, the way, as concrete as possible.
“To clear a way, for instance across a snow-covered field, is in the Alemannic-Swabian dialect still called wegen even today. This verb, used transitively, means: to form a way and, forming it, to keep it ready. Way-making understood in this sense no longer means to move something up or down a path that is already there. It means to bring the way . . . forth first of all, and thus to be the way.”

The totality of what Heidegger has to say about the way gets crystallized in this word from the Alemannic-Swabian dialect, Bewegung. Without the umlaut, the word is the common designation for movement. Peter Hertz translates it as way-making. Literally, it means waying. To try once more to place it in relation to Appropriation, language and Saying, we might try to say that way-making is how Appropriation (the belonging-together of man and Being) appropriates by bringing Saying to language, to unconcealment.

I would like to note that in the following passage Heidegger’s turning (which could be expressed here as the turning from man on the way to Being to Being on the way to man) is very clearly stated with regard to language.

“Appropriation appropriates man to its own usage. Showing as appropriating thus transpires and Appropriation is the way-making for Saying to come to language. This way-making puts language (the essence of language) as language (Saying) into language (into the sounded word). When we speak of the way to language now, we no longer mean only or primarily the progression of our thinking as it reflects on language. The way to language has become transformed along the way. From human activity it has shifted to the appropriating nature of language. But it is only to us and only with regard to ourselves that the change of the way to language appears as a shift which has taken place only now. In truth, the way to language has its unique region within the essence of language itself. But this means also: the way to language as we first had it in mind does not become invalid; it becomes possible and necessary only in virtue
of the true way which is the appropriating, needful way-making.
For, since the being of language, as Saying that shows, rests on
Appropriation which makes us humans over to the releasement
in which we can listen freely, therefore the way-making of
Saying into speech first opens up for us paths along which our
thinking can pursue the authentic way to language.

"The formula for the way: to bring language qua language
to speech, no longer merely contains a directive for us who are
thinking about language, but says the forma, the Gestalt, in which
the essence of language that rests in Appropriation makes its
way (literally ways itself, moves)."

Stated as simply as possible, what Heidegger wants us to do is to stop
representing language as a system of information and begin to reflect. To
reflect (sinnen) means for him not the absolute reflection of German Idealism
(the benending and shining back into itself of absolute Spirit), but entering
into the movement of waying. This could tie in nicely with the literal
meaning of the English word experience which means to go through.

Finally, in the lecture series entitled, What Calls for Thinking, Heidegger
ruminates on the meaning of the word "call" (heissen) and brings calling
into relation with the way.

"In the widest sense, 'to call' means to set in motion, to get
something underway—which may be done in a gentle and there-
fore unobtrusive manner, and in fact is most readily done that
way. In the older Greek version of the New Testament, Matthew
8:18, we find: 'Seeing a large crowd around him, he called to
them to go to the other side.' (Idon de ho Iesous ochlon peri
auton ekeleusen apelthein eis to peran). The Greek verb keleuein
properly means to get something on the road, to get it underway.
The Greek noun keleuthos means way. And that the old word
'to call' means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that
therefore the 'call' has an assonance of helpfulness and complais-
ance, is shown by the fact that the same word in Sanskrit still
means something like to invite.'
"The meaning of the word 'call' which we have described is thus not altogether unfamiliar to us. It still is unaccustomed as we encounter it in the question 'what is called thinking—what does call for it?' When we hear that question, the meaning of 'call' in the sense of 'instruct, demand, allow to reach, get on the way, convey, provide with a way' does not immediately occur to us."

The last passage to be quoted that speaks of the way is the one where Heidegger has the most to say explicitly about Tao itself.

"The word 'way' probably is an ancient primary word that speaks to the reflective mind of man. The key word in Laotse's poetic thinking is Tao, which 'properly speaking' means way. But because we are prone to think of 'way' superficially, as a stretch connecting two places, our word 'way' has all too rashly been considered unfit to name what Tao says. Tao is then translated as reason, mind, raison, meaning, logos.

"Yet Tao could be the way that gives all ways, the very source of our power to think what reason, mind, meaning, logos properly mean to say—properly, by their proper nature. Perhaps the mystery of mysteries of thoughtful Saying conceals itself in the word 'way,' Tao, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken, if only we are capable of this, to allow them to do so. Perhaps the enigmatic power of today's reign of method also, and indeed preeminently, stems from the fact that the methods, notwithstanding their efficiency, are after all merely the runoff of a great hidden stream which moves all things along and makes way for everything. All is way."

Surely the terms supposed to "translate" Tao that Heidegger mentions here are woefully inadequate, if not outright distortions. Heidegger's main point seems to be that Tao is the source of what we call reason, mind and which we assume we understand. This is somewhat analogous to thinking Being as a being. We fail to think the source; more stringently, perhaps, it fails to "think" us.
We turn back now to the second point we made about way, that it is a way of thinking. This will lead us into the second theme of our paper, releasement. To put this back into Heidegger's own language, if the Tao belongs more on the "Being" side of the belonging-together (Ereignis) of man and Being, then releasement belongs more on the side of man, although it is nothing that he does or accomplishes. To anticipate, we could say tentatively that thinking is a kind of "waying" through which the Way, Tao, comes to presence.

In an essay interpreting a poem from Trakl, Heidegger discusses the word for madness (Wahnsinn), saying that a madman has a different mind or way of sensing from other people; not that he has a mind filled with senseless delusions, but he senses differently. Then Heidegger tells us that "Sinnen," sensing, originally meant to travel, to strive after . . . to take a certain direction; the Indo-Germanic root sent and set means way.11 Thus, to sense, or, in Heidegger's special use of the term, to think, means precisely to be on the way. In answer to our previous question whether the fact that the way was a way of thinking meant that the way was something produced by us, and thus totally subjective, we can now say that thinking, sensing, being on the way is about as far removed from subjectivity as you can get. The change from all subjectivistic, reifying representational thinking to the kind of thinking or sensing Heidegger is trying to convey occurs through releasement (Gelassenheit). The Taoist equivalent for releasement is, of course, wu wei, (at times perhaps best rendered as non-interference).

Now, Gelassenheit, or releasement, is, of course, not a term originating with Heidegger, but is, for example, a central term in Meister Eckhart. It even has a kind of precursor in the Stoic conception of apatheia, a term designating freedom from strong and turbulent emotions. Gelassenheit is often translated as detachment, which can be misleading if it implies mere indifference, an attitude of not caring about anything. In order to distance his own conception from this negative one, Heidegger states that releasement lies outside the distinction of activity and passivity.12 It definitely has nothing to do with willing and yet it is not just a passive doing nothing. Heidegger characterizes Gelassenheit as a kind of waiting. In contrast to expecting which has an object, which is an expecting something, waiting does not have to have an object and is closer to a keeping oneself open without having anything definite in mind. Heidegger is here in an area where
there is nothing spectacular, nothing excitingly or dramatically metaphysical to say. The phenomenon is so simple that it eludes us. Instead of being describable in terms of what one is doing or supposed to do, *Gelassenheit* means rather to stop doing all the things we constantly do. One is reminded of Nietzsche's poem, "Sils-Maria":

Hier sass ich wartend, wartend, — doch auf nichts,  
jenseits von Gut und Böse, bald des Lichts  
geniessend, bald des Schattens, ganz nur Spiel,  
ganz See, ganz Mittag,  
ganz Zeit ohne Ziel.

Here I sat waiting, waiting — yet for nothing,  
beyond good and evil, sometimes enjoying light,  
sometimes shadow, completely only play,  
completely lake, completely noon,  
completely time without goal.

Like the way, *Gelassenheit* has some roots in *Being and Time*, for example, when Heidegger speaks of *letting* the real Self act. Less obvious, but certainly equally important, is his emphasis on *resolve* (*Entschlossenheit*) which he uses in the unusual, literal sense of being unlocked, of being open for something. In later works, the conception of letting-be is quite prevalent. The root of the word *Gelassenheit* is *lassen*, letting, allowing; it is a conception that becomes more and more central in Heidegger's later works.

Heidegger moves this word specifically into a *philosophical* framework, that is, he is not talking so much about the way we should lead our everyday lives as about what the philosopher should stop doing—in order to get out of metaphysics. There are three things the philosopher should "let go of": (1) the subject-object dichotomy where the human being becomes an ego and things become objects for that ego; (2) and (3) he should desist from representing the relation of *Gelassenheit* to what it lets be, for example, that which regions (*die Gegnet*) as (a) any kind of causal connection (*Wirkungszusammenhang*) and as (b) a horizontal-transcendental connection. The statement that the relation of *Gelassenheit* to that which regions cannot be thought of as any kind of causal connection means that the relation cannot be thought as an ontic one. The statement that the relation of *Gelassenheit* to that which regions cannot be thought of as a horizontal-transcendental
connection means that the relation cannot be thought of as an ontological one. With this, Heidegger has left behind one of the most fundamental distinctions, not only in Being and Time, but throughout all his writings, the distinction ontic/ontological, beings/Being, the ontological difference. Gelassenheit simply enables us to step out of the realm of that distinction.

We might briefly consider the relation of Gelassenheit to the will before going on to see its relation to thinking. In other words, seeing what it is that Heidegger wants us to let go of will bring us closer to the kind of thinking that may be able to lead us back to the direction of Being. For Heidegger, the will is perhaps the most insidious ingredient of metaphysics culminating in the will to will, or technology. The delicate question of what it is we are “doing” in Gelassenheit if we are not willing and are also not totally passively idle leads Heidegger to speak of Gelassenheit as “the release of oneself from transcendental re-presentation and so a relinquishing of the willing of a horizon. Such relinquishing no longer stems from a willing, except that the occasion for releasing oneself to belonging to that which regions requires a trace of willing. This trace, however, vanishes while releasing oneself and is completely extinguished in releasement.”

This is tricky business. But anyone familiar with any kind of “meditation” will recognize what Heidegger is trying to deal with here. We cannot will not to will, will to relax, calm down or be enlightened, and yet we won’t get there by doing nothing at all. We can’t simply drop into the lap of Being. Here Heidegger brings in another word to intimate the kind of “doing” he has in mind. The word is Inständigkeit, indwelling, and points to the same phenomenon designated by perdurance (Austrag). This phenomenon is related to the kind of thinking Heidegger calls Andenken. It is a kind of waiting, not a passive waiting, but a very attentive, intense one. Perhaps as not too apt examples we could cite the solo musician who is about to begin his recital, collecting and gathering himself in an intense concentration, a centering. Or even a baseball player at bat as he waits for the pitch. One could adduce many such examples. Each one would fall short and fail in one way or another, but perhaps they could point us in the right direction. Inständigkeit or perdurance is a kind of intensely receptive sticking something through, sticking it out, perhaps something akin to what we do when we try to recall something we have forgotten. It reminds me of what the Buddhist thinker Dogen called “sustained exertion.” A kind of non-
willing (not unwilling) exertion distances Inständigkeit from all flabby passivity. To use the more familiar word, when we endure something, we are not willing it, but we are not passive either. What we endure could be either something greatly painful or greatly joyful. Even the way we read a great and important book could be characterized by Gelassenheit and Inständigkeit. If I read the book in an unfocussed way, I will only get a diffuse picture of it. I must have something in mind I want to find, the way I read when I am going to teach or write something on the book; and yet I must be open and receptive to something of which I perhaps have no idea.

A final mundane “example” might be found in the phrase, “I am growing carrots and peas.” There is no way on earth that I can grow carrots and peas or anything else; all I can do is let them grow by providing the proper conditions of water, good soil, etc.

The concluding section of this paper will concentrate on the question of metaphysics and of Heidegger’s and Taoism’s relation to it. I shall be asking to what extent Heidegger, who started out wanting to do fundamental ontology, succeeded in extricating himself from metaphysics. I shall contend that Taoism was never metaphysical at all, at least not in Heidegger’s sense of that term. Of course, it all depends on how you define metaphysics, so perhaps it is best to begin with that. One of my main intents will be to show that the way out of metaphysics does not lead back to some kind of naive empiricism, nor can it lead “beyond” metaphysics which would again be a sort of super-metaphysics, or, better, a hyper-metaphysics. Heidegger’s phrase is to step back out of metaphysics, leaving it as it is.

Heidegger’s definition of metaphysics is clear and univocal. Metaphysics begins with the separation of essence and existence, of the “what” and the “that.” This occurs explicitly with Plato. Nietzsche saw this separation occurring in Plato as the separation of the true world from the apparent world, the world of Being (the Forms) from the world of becoming. Heidegger defines essence as what is possible and what makes possible. If there is going to be a tree, treeness makes that actual tree possible; the tree becomes a tree by participating in treelessness. The actually existing tree is then the real, reality. Essence thus has to do with possibility, existence with reality.

This is undoubtedly Heidegger’s fundamental conception of metaphysics. This conception later broadens to what he calls onto-theo-logic. Christian Wolff, a contemporary of Leibniz, had divided metaphysics into
general metaphysics and special metaphysics. General metaphysics was the equivalent of ontology, the science of being; special metaphysics was then divided into three sectors: rational psychology, dealing with the soul; rational cosmology, dealing with the world; and rational theology, dealing with God. Heidegger takes the entire content of general and special metaphysics and gives it the label of onto-theo-logic, the logic of being and of God. Metaphysics thinks the Being of beings as *summmum ens* and *causa sui*, as the highest being and as the cause of itself.

The whole of metaphysics with its separation of essence and existence belongs on one side of another, more fundamental division: the ontological difference, the difference between Being and beings. The separation of essence and existence occurs within the realm of beings; it is not applicable to the division of Being and beings. The significance of the ontological difference in Heidegger's later works is not without some ambiguity. He is trying to work his way out of a metaphysically tainted conception of the ontological difference to a conception more appropriate to his direction of the step back out of metaphysics. In at least one of his latest formulations (in one of the Thor seminars), the enterprise of the ontological difference is said to be ultimately untenable.

We shall try to characterize briefly as best we can Heidegger's way out of metaphysics and where it led him. In conclusion, we shall then make a few general remarks about a basic compatibility of this realm of thinking with that of Taoism. More we cannot do within the scope of this paper. The topic is vast, and we have barely scratched the surface.

For starters, the title of the essay, "Overcoming Metaphysics," is somewhat misleading. It sounds as if we, we human beings, were able, if we wanted to and decided to, to set about getting rid of metaphysics by surmounting or transcending it to a "higher" point of view or position. Heidegger often used the far less common word for overcoming, "**Verwinding**," to indicate that we cannot simply do away with metaphysics by our own efforts; rather, we can learn to live with it by not paying excessive heed to it or getting obsessed with surmounting it. Basically, Heidegger is saying that metaphysics is where we *are* right now, the reality oppressing us in the form of the will to will, of framing, of the essence of technology. To think that we can change this by some kind of *fiat* is a sheer pipedream. All attempts at overcoming anything, not just metaphysics, are inextricably
caught in the fatal net of this will to will, of the Ge-stell (framing). Metaphysics is with us, and there is no way that we can assert with any degree of certainty that it won’t stay with us. The wish for this degree of certainty is itself already a consequence of the modern gestalt of metaphysics, the Cartesian desire for clarity and certainty, for an unshakeable foundation (fundamentum inconcussum).

Basically, there is nothing whatever we can “do”; the doing is part of the problem, if not its source. All “doing” is itself metaphysical, is a kind of production that finds the epitome of its expression in Karl Marx. “If one believes that thinking is capable of changing the place of man, this still represents thinking in accordance with the model of production.” No wonder when asked in the Spiegel interview what philosophy could do to save us in our present situation, Heidegger answered quite simply: nothing. His much-touted statement that only a god can save us is only another way of saying the same thing.

Put as succinctly as possible, Heidegger is waiting for, is attentive to, the possibility of a shift from the history of metaphysics as the history of the Being of beings to the entry into Being as Being, which has no history, certainly not in the metaphysical sense in which Heidegger has interpreted philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche. This leaves him with the non-metaphysical “experiences” (I avoid the term “concept”), partially prefigured and even present in Being and Time, of Lichtung (opening, clearing, unconcealedness, “truth”), Ereignis ( Appropriation, belonging-together) to which belongs difference (no longer the metaphysically thought ontological difference, but the perdurance (Austrag) of the difference between Being and beings) and, in slightly different contexts, the fourfold (das Geviert) of earth and heaven, immortals and mortals.

To sum up, apart from the two fundamental thoughts of the Way and releasement which I have attempted to touch upon in this paper, there are other more pervasive, less easily specifiable non-metaphysical affinities between the later Heidegger and Taoism which I would state as follows:

1. Taoism is basically outside the Aristotelian categories of predication. (Example: yin and yang cannot be pinned down either as substances or as forces); Heidegger is trying to move outside of them. (Example: Being is certainly not a noun, a being or thing; but saying that it is a verb, an activity or process, doesn’t solve much either). Similarly, the genus-species classification is lacking in Taoism and is rejected by Heidegger.
2. There is no emphasis on causality. Instead of a succession of Phenomena in the relation of cause and effect, Taoism sees rather changes of aspect; Heidegger moves from the "why" of things to their "because" (Silesius' poem: The rose is without a why; it blooms because it blooms).

3. Thinking is neither representational nor abstractly conceptual nor calculative. A correlate of this kind of thinking (Andenken, thinking toward, in the direction of something instead of representing it as something over against us–object) is that space and time are not thought in terms of parameters and measurement. Again, in Taoism they never were, and Heidegger always distanced himself from the outset from looking at the world in terms of objective presence or presence at hand (Vorhandenheit), reifying objects in Newtonian container-space and conceiving time as the Aristotelian series of now-points.

These points are all so interconnected that they can barely be discussed in isolation. Finally, the Tao has been described, I think rather aptly, as "the rhythm of the space-time structure," as "an uncircumscribed power ruling the totality of perceptible givens, itself remaining inaccessible to any specific actualization." This is not exactly Heidegger's language, but surely the true spirit of his thought.

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NOTES

4. Ibid., p. 126.
5. Ibid., p. 126.
6. Ibid., p. 129.
8. Ibid., p. 130.


15. *Vier Seminare*, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 177, p. 128.