

安時處順： An Embodiment of Heaven and Human in Union

Robin R Wang (王蓉蓉)

美國洛杉磯羅耀拉大學哲學教授
亞太研究主任

安時處順：An Embodiment of Heaven and Human in Union.

Medicine heals the sicknesses of bodies; but wisdom (sophie) rides the soul of its suffering (pathe).

-----Democritus

Greek philosophy Pythagoras gave us the word philosophy, love of wisdom. He also indentified three distinct life styles: the acquisitive, the competitive, and the contemplative. He argued that contemplation, awareness, awakening is by far the best lifestyle. However there might be other important lifestyle: transformative living. This talk will discuss 安時處順 (finding peace in time and going with flowing) as an embodiment of heaven and human in union. The intrinsic connection between Dao and de is a key to grasp heaven and human in union. Dao is heavenly movement; de is earthly nourishment. By applying Dao and de, one will transform along with the great rhythm of the world. This provides a good model for human behavior. The greatness of Dao is in its ability to transform and change. De is “responding by attuning.” Both require a creative synergy. According to Zhuangzi, when you get the Dao, you will be able to penetrate the patterns (li), and then you will have a clear head to weigh or balance things (quan 權), and then you will also gain bodily powers.

Key Word: 安時處順, Embodiment, Dao, De, quan 權, 莊子

安時處順：
An Embodiment of Heaven and Human in Union

Robin R Wang (王蓉蓉)

美國洛杉磯羅耀拉大學哲學教授
亞太研究主任

摘要

醫藥可以療癒身體的疾病，而智慧可以讓靈魂從情感的糾結中釋放出來。
——德謨克里特。

希臘哲學家畢達哥拉斯給了我們「哲學」一詞，也就是愛智，他也指出三種不同的生活類型：好營利者、好名譽者，以及愛好智慧者。他主張說，沉思、認知和覺醒才是最好的生活類型。然而或許還有其他重要的類型：蛻變的生活。本次演講將討論安時處順，作為天人合一的體現。道和德的內在關聯是領悟天人合一的關鍵。道是天的運行；德是地的長養。運用道和德，人會隨著世界的偉大律動而轉化。這為人類行為提供一個很好的模式。道的偉大在於它的運化能力。德是「調而應之」。兩者都需要創造性的綜效。《莊子》說，知道者必達於理，達於理者必明於權，明於權者不以物害己。

關鍵詞：安時處順、體現、道、德、權、莊子。

安時處順： An Embodiment of Heaven and Human in Union

Robin R Wang (王蓉蓉)

Medicine heals the sicknesses of bodies; but wisdom (sophie) rides the soul of its suffering (pathe).

----- Democritus

Greek philosophy Pythagoras gave us the word philosophy, love of wisdom. He also identified three distinct life styles: the acquisitive, the competitive, and the contemplative. He argued that contemplation, awareness, awakening is by far the best lifestyle. However there might be other important lifestyle: transformative living. This talk will discuss 安時處順 (finding peace in time and going with flowing) as an embodiment of heaven and human in union. The intrinsic connection between Dao and de is a key to grasp heaven and human in union. *Dao* is heavenly movement; *de* is earthly nourishment. By applying *Dao* and *de*, one will transform along with the great rhythm of the world. This provides a good model for human behavior. The greatness of *Dao* is in its ability to transform and change. *De* is “responding by attuning.” Both require a creative synergy. According to *Zhuangzi*, when you get the *Dao*, you will be able to penetrate the patterns (*li*), and then you will have a clear head to weigh or balance things (*quan* 權), and then you will also gain bodily powers.

A "Governor" 制者 of Human Life

In *Liezi*, an unfolding story allows us to dance with a mystic force of the universe and improvise a justifiable model for thinking. Jiliang was sick but he refused to have any medical treatment. After seven days his situation became serious. His sons stood in a circle and begged him in tears to seek medical attention. In order to teach his sons a lesson about life he agreed to call in three doctors, Qiao, Yu, and Lu, in order to take his pulse and make a diagnosis. Qiao explained that Jiliang's cold and hot temperatures, the invisible and visible forces in his body, were all out of order. So the illness was the result of improper diet, sexual indulgence, and stressful things in his life. It could be cured. Jiliang responded, "This is a *zhongyi* 眾醫 (common doctor), get rid of him now." Next, Yu offered his diagnosis and interpretation: "The current condition started even in your mother's womb. Your mother suffered a deficiency of embryonic *qi* and an excess of breast milk. This illness was not a matter of one day or one night. It has gradually been developing." Jilang responded, "This is a *liangyi* 良醫 (good doctor), serve him a dinner." Lastly, Lu offered his diagnosis and point of view: "The illness is neither from heaven, nor from a human or ghost. Your life was generated and endowed with a form 稟身授形 (*bing shen shou xing*). However it also came with a governor 制者 (*zhizhe*). You should know it. What can all medicine do for you?" Jilang responded: "This is a *shenyi* 神醫 (divine doctor), give him a great gift."

How can we make sense of this metaphorical story? Why is doctor Lu a *shenyi* (divine doctor)? The first *zhongyi's* diagnosis is an accurate description of common human life: dietary indiscretion and life style caused a possible syndrome X. The second *liangyi's* diagnosis sees the interdependencies in human life. It examines life in a genetic context. In fact, even today, we are told that some distress may be the result of a DNA defect in the human genome. The *shenyi's* diagnosis points to a "governor" of human life. In other words, Lu means that there is a *shen* 神 (spirit, force, power), a ruling and managing entity in one's life. If one can cultivate this *shen* the illness will be cured without any medications. A commentary claims that "the stupid ones will be perplexed when they hear it but the intelligent ones will be enlightened when they learn it." The cultivation of this *shen* within the human body through persistent efforts and practices later canonized in the Daoist tradition, eventually led to the formation of *neidan* 內丹 (inner alchemy). What is this *shen* then? The *Yijing (The Book of Changes)* supplies one of many interpretations: "The unpredictability of *yin* and *yang* is called *shen*." In the *Classic of the Yellow Emperor*, "Yao asked Shun: 'In Under-heaven what is most valuable?' Shun replied: 'Life is most valuable.' Yao said: 'How can life be cultivated?' Shun said: 'Investigate *yin* and *yang*'" (*Shiwen*). These claims imply the assumption that *yinyang* is the very force of the universe and human life.

Shi 時 (Timing): Art of Dao 道之術

In a tale contained in the *Liezi* (列子), a very poor Mr. Xiang from the state of Song asks a rich man from the state of Qi for his technique (*shu* 術) for gaining wealth. The rich man answers simply, "I'm good at stealing [*dao* 盜]." Mr. Xiang is excited and thinks he has found the secret to gaining wealth, so he goes out to commit a robbery. Unfortunately, he is caught and punished. Later, he goes back to ask the rich man why he tricked him. The rich man clarifies "the way of stealing":

Heaven has its seasons, earth has its benefits. I rob heaven and earth of their seasonal benefits, the clouds and rains of their irrigating floods, the mountains and marches of their products, in order to grow my crops, plant my seeds, raise my walls, build my house.¹

Mr. Xiang was still perplexed and thought this rich man was trapping him again. So he came to Master Dongguo for the clarification. Master Dongguo answered,

Is not your very body stolen? When you must steal the Yin and Yang energies in harmonious proportions even to achieve your life and sustain your body, how can you take the things outside you without stealing them?²

The *shu* (technique) for becoming rich is to "steal" *yinyang*. Here, *yinyang* serves to achieve specific accomplishments in the world. The character used here for to steal or rob, *dao* 盜, has complex sense. Its pronunciation is the same as the *Dao* 道 that means "the way." The

¹ A. C. Graham (trans.), *The Book of Lieh-tzu, A Classic of Tao* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

meaning of the character itself has a double sense: in one definition, it denotes “to steal” but in another it means “to be secretive.” This link to stealing and secrecy appears in other texts, as well. For example, in the “Shuogua” commentary in the *Yijing*, the hexagram which corresponds to yin, *Kan*, is given roughly 25 manifestations. Some of these are what we would expect, such as water and the moon, but the last one is *dao*, stealing or being secretive. The use of stealing points to an underlying assumption about yinyang as a strategy – it involves having great achievements without appearing to exert effort, doing so by taking advantage of unseen factors and hidden beginnings. The *Liezi* passage above suggests another key aspect of yinyang, which is the importance of aligning one’s self with heaven’s timing and terrain’s placement --that is, with skillfully taking advantage of the available context.

The *Huangdi Yinfujing* 黃帝陰符經 (*The Yellow Emperor's Book of Secret Correspondence*), a text that probably originated in the Han Dynasty but may go back to the Warring States Period, is one of the most popular texts in contemporary Daoist temples, after the *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi*.³ Li Quan 李筌, a Tang dynasty commentator, explains the title – that yin is *an* 暗 (dark, hidden) and *fu* 符 is to join, combine, or follow. *Yinfujing* literally means the classic of joining obscure or dark forces. It directs one to seek, understand, and align with the hidden forces in universe. This text explicitly affirms the role of “stealing”:

The myriad things are thieves (*dao*) of heaven and earth; human beings are thieves of the myriad things; the myriad things are thieves of human beings. When the three thieves are appropriate, the three resources are in equilibrium.⁴

天地，萬物之盜；萬物，人之盜；人，萬物之盜。三盜既宜，三才既安。

The use of *dao* to refer to stealing or robbing in this passage first of all shows dependence – the myriad things need the resources of heaven and earth, and human beings and the myriad things need each other. The use of *dao*, though, also suggests a more agonistic relationship, that each side must *take* from the other. Li Quan explains that while heaven and earth generate the myriad things, they can also harm them, as when natural disasters occur that destroy crops. Thus, to live a good life, one must skillfully take what is beneficial while avoiding what is harmful. When each thing does this in proper measure, all the elements of the world will be in a sustainable relationship.⁵

Yinyang brings all things into oneness. As an explanatory matrix, this oneness is built on shared structures and functions as well as on interactions and causal connections. The earth is the fundamental root of human beings. Soil is the base and water is essential to what terrain can engender. Terrain, though, cannot be separated from heaven, as it relies on heavenly timing or seasonal changes. The peace of the human world depends on these seasonal and terrestrial conditions. The relationship between heaven, earth, and human beings exists as a great unity with distinctions: heaven concerns *shi*, timing or seasons; earth determines the place or location;

³ The text is commonly chanted daily in the morning and evening in Daoist temples across China today. Although this text has only about 400 characters, there are more than 20 commentaries and versions of the text collected in the *Daozang* 道藏 (*Daoist Canon*). The most popular version is from Li Quan 李筌, a Tang Dynasty commentary. The original date for the text itself is uncertain.

⁴ *Yellow Emperor's Book of Secret Correspondence* in *Daozhang* 道藏 (*Documents of Dao*), vol. 4, p. 2467.

⁵ Ibid.

human beings embody this harmony in time and space.

Yinyang is a *shu* 術, a strategy or technique that enables one to function effectively in any given circumstance. The word *shu* in oracle bones refers originally to a road, thus connected to the way, *dao*. According to the *Shuowen Jiezi*, the original meaning is a way [*Dao*] through a town [術, 邑 中道也]. Discussions of *shu* became increasingly important as classical Chinese thought developed, marking a shift how the world was approached. Arts [*shu*] designate the techniques of statecraft, rhetoric, mind cultivation—virtually any significant activity [that] had a skill particular to it. *Shu*, techniques, stand halfway between the spontaneity of the *Dao* and the use of coercion. *Shu* is coercive in a sense being active and directed toward a goal, but it attempts to bring about results through what is easiest and smoothest, instead of relying on something like skill. There is a *shu* of medicine and a *shu* of divination. Martial arts are *wu shu* (武術), literally the *shu* of combat or what is martial (*wu*). In modern usage, academia is referred to as *xue shu* (學術), which means the *shu* of study or learning. Any school of thought could be described as a kind of *shu*. The aspect of *shu* as a part of nature comes out perhaps most clearly in an explanation given by the well-known strategist Fan Li 范蠡 (517 B.C.E.-?), in explaining *shu* to Goujian 勾踐 (497–465 B.C.E.), the famous king of the state of *Yue* (越). The dialogue appears in an early history of the state of *Yue*, the book titled *Yuejueshu* (越絕書). The king begins by asking, what should be on the left and what on the right, what should be abandoned and what should be taken? Fan Li responds:

左道右術，去末取實。”越王曰：“何謂道？何謂術？何謂末？何謂實？”范子對曰：“道者，天地先生，不知老；曲成萬物，不名巧。故謂之道。道生氣，氣生陰，陰生陽，陽生天地。天地立，然後有寒暑、燥濕、日月、星辰、四時，而萬物備。術者，天意也。盛夏之時，萬物遂長。聖人緣天心，助天喜，樂萬物之長。

On the left is *Dao* and on the right is *shu*; abandon the insignificant and take the substantial...The *Dao* is before the heaven and earth, never getting old; completing all myriad things without names or craft. Thus it is called the *Dao*. *Dao* generates *qi*, *qi* generates yin, yin generates yang, yang generates heaven and earth. After heaven and earth are established, there is cold and hot, dry and wet, the sun and moon, stars and galaxies, and the four seasons, and then the myriad things are completed. *Shu* is the will of heaven. At the peak of summer, the myriad things grow. Sages rely on the heart of heaven, helping what delights heaven and finding joy in the growth of the myriad things.⁶

⁶ The date and authorship of this historical text is uncertain. The earliest suggested time is the Spring and Autumn Period, but it could be as late as the end of the Eastern *Han*. The authorship is also unclear. There are five different names associated with it, three of whom were disciples of Confucius. In any case, it is regarded as the one of the most important texts for the study of early Chinese history. In chapter 13, “Goujian,” the king of *Yue* asks his minister Fan Li how ancient sages govern, which leads into this discussion (*Yue jue* chapter 13 and 16, p. 65)

Yinyang strategy consists in having a situation develop in a certain way so that the outcome flows naturally from the situation and accumulated conditions. Sunlight and water are two basic natural prerequisites for farming. Plentiful sunlight and timely rain will secure a harvest to support human life. Sun and water provide the basis for human actions, captured in the timing (or seasons) of heaven (*tianshi* 天時) and the advantages of earth (*dili* 地利).⁷ From the sun, one learns to follow the rhythm of seasons or the changes of yinyang; from irrigation, one investigates how to go along with the rhythm and circumstances of the earth, taking advantage of conditions without coercing things.

The role of heavenly timing and earthly benefit could be extended into more abstract terms of time and space. Time is a sequence and a flow; space is like the roof of a house that covers all things. Space has a sense like *tianxia* 天下, what is under-the-sky. The *Huangdi Neijing* proclaims, “To be able to model the transformations of the yinyang of heaven and earth, is to not break from the rhythm of the four seasons. To know the reasons (*li* 理) of the twelve rhythms is a knowledge (*zhi* 知) that sages cannot miss.”⁸ To use yinyang to grasp rhythm is the way of the sage and the way to avoid error or fault. The *He Guanzi*, “*Tai Lu* 泰錄” chapter says, “Sages are those who go out with heaven and return with earth. They are with heaven and earth like yin and yang, restraining dry and moist to form models, moving according to the time (*shi* 時).”⁹

Time is the alteration of yinyang, while timing is how yinyang operates. To understand this connection, we must consider that, in early Chinese thought, time is not conceived of or spoken of in the abstract. The word we have been using for “timing” (*shi* 時), literally means the seasons. The word for “day” is literally the sun, *ri* 日, and the month is literally the moon, *yue* 月. An age or an era is also a generation, *shi* 世. The words for a year, *nian* (年) and *sui* (歲), both mean “harvest.” Thus, to speak of next year is also to speak of the next harvest. The most central concept is *shi*, timing or seasons. Time (*shi*) in Chinese is a particular point as well as a movement.

It follows from this contextual and concrete view of time that there exists a certain configuration of forces at any given “time,” and these configurations are conceived of in terms of yinyang. Therefore, the *He Guanzi* answers the question “what is yinyang?” by saying yinyang is timing.¹⁰ The *Baihutong* uses yinyang to define a period of time: “Time/season is the period of time, the period of yinyang alterations.”¹¹ Since timing dictates the pattern of these changes, it is

⁷ The *Mengzi* also articulates three basic things needed for any accomplishment: heavenly timing (*tianshi*, 天時), advantage of terrain (*dili*, 地利) and the harmony of human beings (*renhe*, 人和) (Book 6). The specific example he gives is in relation to defending a town.

⁸ Y.Zhang, (ed.), *Huangdi Neijing*, p. 241.

⁹ X. Wang (ed.) *He Guanzi*, p. 36.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 15. 陰陽何若？鶻冠子曰：“神靈威明與天合，勾萌動作與地俱，陰陽寒暑與時至。三者聖人存則治，亡則亂，是故先人富則驕，貴則贏。

¹¹ G. Ban (ed.), *Hanshu*, *sishi* chapter, p. 429. [時者，期也，陰陽消息之期也].

inseparable from yinyang. The most obvious example is the steady alternation of days and the seasons. For example, the *Guanzi* says,

Spring and autumn, winter and summer represent shifts in the Yin and Yang. The shortening and lengthening of the seasons represent the function of their beneficence. The alternations of day and night represent their transformations. Thus the Yin and Yang maintain proper order. But even if they lacked this proper order, what was excessive could not be lessened, nor what was deficient be increased. No one can add to or detract from Heaven.¹²

The chapter on Distinctions among things in the *Shuoyuan* connects yinyang to time more broadly:

Heaven and earth has its power (*de* 德); uniting with it generates the *qi* (氣) that has vital essence; yinyang wax and wane and then changes have timing. If the timing is attained order will follow and transformation will take place; if the timing is lost there will be disorder.¹³

夫天地有德，合則生氣有精矣；陰陽消息，則變化有時矣。時得而治矣，時得而化矣，時失而亂矣

Yinyang as a manifestation of timing reminds us that human nature has a source in heaven and earth and must operate in relation to them, forming a third. We see this in a comment from the *Liezi*: “Formerly, the sages reduced heaven and earth to a system by means of yin and yang.”¹⁴ The yinyang structure of change and temporality cannot be separated from yinyang as a strategy for acting effectively, for taking advantage of the timing of heaven. Yinyang offers a context for configuring the essential date that heaven and earth supply for human beings, who must utilize natural phenomena to guide human actions. Consider two passages from the *Guanzi*:

Accordingly, the Yin and Yang are the primary organizational principle of Heaven and Earth, and the four seasons are the primary pattern of the Yin and Yang the four seasons.¹⁵

Things always exist in a moment of changes (*bian* 變) with a dynamic configuration of forces, as we have seen in the *Yijing* and the idea of *xiang* (images), both of which represent this configuration through yinyang. That configuration of forces offers behavioral guidance. In fact, since yinyang refers to forces rather than static elements, all strategic uses of yinyang can be seen as appeals to proper timing.

We have seen that time and timing as they relate to acting appropriately in the face of the demands of the moment are not clearly distinguished in classical Chinese and use the same term,

¹²Rickett, *Guanzi*, p. 116–117.

¹³X. Liu, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, p. 178.

¹⁴Graham (trans.), *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, p. 18.

¹⁵Rickett, *Guanzi*, p. 111.

shi (時). Knowing timing means knowing how to act in accordance with the patterns of change. The world is not a set of objects with properties but a self-organizing process with a built-in engine of yinyang. Thus, in conceptualizing yinyang through timing, human beings are not simply agents manipulating a world through representational knowledge. They are participants in the process. The rhythms of the world provide the context for action through mutual stimulation and responsiveness.

Yu 御：The Art of Human Being

The “*Zun Deyi*” (“Respecting Virtue and Rightness”) text recently excavated at Guodian says:

Yu the Great’s moving the waters was by following the *Dao* of water. Zao Fu’s riding horses was by following the *Dao* of horses. Hou Ji’s planting the earth was by following the *Dao* of the earth. There is nothing that does not have its *Dao*, but the *Dao* of human beings is nearest. Thus, gentlemen first select the *Dao* of human beings.¹⁶

禹之行水，水之道也。造父之禦馬，馬也之道也。後稷之藝地，地之道也。莫不7有道焉，人道為近。是以君子人道之取先。

These three popular heroes exemplify advantageous human action, which comes from following along with the way of things, whether of water, horses, or human beings. Water is a dominant metaphor relating to terrain. Yu the Great (大禹 *Dayu*) was the legendary founder of the Xia Dynasty (2070 – 1600 B.C.E.). He mastered flood control techniques to tame rivers and lakes. In *Mengzi*, chapter 3, there is an account of how bad these floods were. Originally, Yu’s father Gun (鯀) was assigned by King Yao (堯) to tame the raging flood waters. Over nine years, Gun built strong dikes all over the land in the hope of containing the waters. But during a period of heavy flooding, all of these dikes collapsed and the project failed miserably. Gun was executed by King Shun (舜). Yu learned from his father’s mistakes and took a different approach to manage the water. Instead of using force to combat the floods, such as dikes to stop up the water, he used the way of *shudao* 疏導 (redirecting) and *shun-ni* (順逆) (following along/going against). He dredged new river channels to direct the flow of the water, going with rather than resisting the tendencies of the water. These channels served both as outlets for the torrential waters and as irrigation conduits to distant farm lands. He thus successfully controlled the floods. His method serves as the metaphor of flowing along in attunement with terrain in order to get things done with excellence, ease, and sustainability.

The horse was a very significant image in many early Chinese texts. Managing horses effectively was a necessary condition for success, and horse-driven chariots were crucial for early military battles. The horse was, thus, a symbol of military culture and could be the sign of victory as well as the image of a king. The *sima* 司馬, the officers of the calvary (literally officers of the horse,

¹⁶ Z. Liu, (ed.), *Guodian Chujiang Jiaoyi*, p. 122.

ma) were also the officers for military affairs during the Zhou Dynasty, and the term “horse” was used to refer to military leaders in the Shang Dynasty. The horse was even a common exemplar for debates about language and logic, as Gong Sunlong’s (公孫龍 320–250 B.C.E.) most famous argument was that “a white horse is not a horse.” The *Zhuangzi* goes so far as to say that the myriad things are one horse (萬物，一馬).¹⁷

The best connection between the metaphor of charioteering and the use of yinyang strategy appears in the *Huainanzi*:

Therefore, the Great Man calmly has no worries and placidly has no anxieties. He takes Heaven as his canopy; Earth as his carriage; the four seasons as his steeds, and yin and yang as his charioteers. He rides the clouds and soars through the sky to become a companion of the power that fashions and transforms us. Letting his imagination soar and relaxing his grip, he gallops through the vast vault [of heavens]... Thus, with Heaven as your canopy, nothing will be uncovered; With Earth as your carriage, nothing will be unsupported; With the four seasons as your steeds, nothing will be unemployed. With yin and yang as your charioteers, nothing will be incomplete.”¹⁸

The four seasons are the horses, and yinyang is the driver. In this way, the Great Man can ride through the clouds and beyond the sky. He will go with transformation and change, doing as he pleases and unfolding with rhythm. He gallops an infinitely vast land.

The *Huainanzi* here compares yinyang to *yu* 御, the skill of steering a chariot. *Yu* is one of six ancient arts in the *Zhouli*.¹⁹ The character for *yu* consists of three parts: walking (*xing* 行), a rope (*sheng* 繩), and human being (*ren* 人). Putting them together, a human being holds the reins while riding a horse; thus, it is the art of navigating a path for a horse-drawn chariot (Figure 8). Of course, this can extend to navigating any path, from one’s personal life to political organizations. We can speculate – why would horse riding be one of the six arts? It is about training someone to become a superb horse rider by cultivating a yinyang intelligence by which one can easily and artfully locate oneself in relation to one’s *milieu*.

We see the purpose of *yu* training in the five ways the *Zhouli* gives for evaluating excellence in horse riding.²⁰ The first (*ming he luan* 鳴和鸞) is synchronizing the sound of two bells on the carriage. If the horse and carriage move smoothly, the bells will make rhythmic sounds that can measure the skill of the driver. The second (*zhu shui qu* 逐水曲) is passing through dangerous and complicated winding roads along a river without falling down into the water. The third (*guo*

¹⁷ Ziporyan (trans.), *Zhuangzi*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Roth, *The Huainanzi*, p. 52.

¹⁹ The other five arts are: rites, music, archery, calligraphy, and math. 禮、樂、射、禦、書、數

²⁰ Y. Wang (ed.) *Zhouli*, p. 193.

jun biao 過君表) is demonstrating good temperament by staying calm and showing sincerity and respect while passing important sites. The fourth (*wu jiao qu* 舞交衢) is crossing busy traffic intersections smoothly. The fifth (*zhu qin zuo* 逐禽左) is herding animals onto the left in order to put them in the best position for hunting. As we can see, the elements of horse riding go beyond winning races. In the *Hanfeizi's* commentary on the *Daodejing*, there is a classic story about King Zhao of Jin learning the art, *shu*, of charioteering. After learning the art, King Zhao was eager to defeat his master. He requested three races with three different horses but he lost all three times. He was angry at the master and thought that he had not taught him a complete skill. The master told him:

I have given you all the techniques you need to ride a horse. However, there is a deficiency in your usage of these skills. The most important thing for the art of charioteering is to have the horse peacefully reside with the chariot and to have the rider's heart/mind come together with horse. However, you only care about who is in front and who is behind. If you were behind, you worried about catching me; but if you were ahead, you worried about being caught by me. There is always a rider either ahead or behind. If all of your attention focuses on me, how can you come together with the horse? This is the reason why you lost the race.²¹

Clearly, a good horse rider must be able to peacefully work with a controlled flow that responds to unrestrained forces and variations, and not focus on one single specific external fact such as who will win the race. Skill at charioteering is not a case of courage (*yong* 勇), but is rather a demonstration of a kind of intelligence (*zhi* 智), a strategy for becoming an embodied navigator.

The five standards above define a good charioteer. Based on the *Huainanzi's* metaphor, we can see them as demonstrations of a kind of yinyang intelligence. This technique or *shu* can be analyzed from two distinct points of view. First, yinyang intelligence is rooted in a view of the universe as an organic self-generating system. Self-organization and self-stabilization presuppose interaction between system and environment. In the case of the *shu* of horse riding, effective interaction occurs through movement. The immediate interfaces of navigating a horse-drawn carriage include the horses and their power, the terrain, the weather, and one's purpose. The horse rider is linked to the many external factors that may disturb his or her inner state and draw out different kinds of responses. It is a kind of open system that deals with environmental disturbances and processes within it. The *Huainanzi* depicts that you feel with your hand yet respond through your heart/mind. This is a common saying, *dexin yingshou* (得心應手), "getting it through your heart/mind and responding with your hands." In this aspect, the world to a rider is not observed but felt. The whole nexus of senses (including vision) is a felt response. Like the sting of the sunlight or rush of the wind, the act of seeing has a similar feeling. It involves the mind and body working together. The *Liezi* presents another description of the art of

²¹ G.Gu (ed.) *Han Feizi*, p. 93.

charioteering:

Internally, one focuses the center of the heart/mind; externally, one unites with the will of the horse. One is able to go forward and backward but there is center and one goes around it as if with a compass. One can take the road on a long journey yet still have strength to spare.²²

In riding horses, one can distinguish the internal (focusing the heart) and the external (the horse itself) but the crucial point is being able to reach the center. *Liezi* clarifies further that one receives (*de* 得) the bit and responds with the bridle; one receives in the bridle and responds in the hand; one receives in the hand and responds with the heart/mind. This way one sees without eyes and urges without a goad; relaxed in the heart/mind and straight in posture, holding six bridles and pacing twenty-four hooves to advance, withdraw, and swing around with perfect precision. The heart/mind plays a key role in adjusting the situation. One's heart/mind is synchronized and functions with the natural flow of the horse and chariot. Here the rider is in a condition lacking deliberateness or discursive thought, but has a great awareness that allows overall optimal performance.

Zhu Xi, the influential Song Dynasty Confucian, uses the analogy of horse and rider to discuss the movement and stillness of *taiji* [great ultimate] and *qi*: “The movement of *Taiji* generates yang, stillness generates yin. *Taiji* is *li* (pattern); *qi* is movement and stillness. When *qi* moves, *li* moves, too. They are interdependent and cannot be separated. *Taiji* is like the horse rider and movement and stillness are like the horses. Horses hold the horse rider and the rider rides the horses.”²³

We see a conception of yinyang strategy as attunement and embodiment in the *Zhuangzi*. In chapter 24, a disciple was eager to learn and get the *Dao*. He thinks that getting *Dao* will enable him to get a cauldron of water to boil in the winter and to make ice in the summer. This appears to be good method: winter is cold, so one needs boiling water; and summer is hot, so one needs the coldness of ice. Yet, the master answers that this is only using yang to evoke yang and using yin to evoke yin. The getting of *Dao* is different. He begins by placing two zithers in different rooms, and when he plucks a note on one, the same note on the other resonates. He then changed the tuning of one string so that it matched no proper notes, but as soon as he plucked it, twenty-five strings on the zither resonated with it. This one sound was like the master of all the others, simply by stimulating them to resonate along with it.²⁴

Liezi tells the story about making music. The spring hints at the notes of the fall; the winter hints at the notes of summer.²⁵ Music not only shows the root scale that is associated with the four seasons, but, more importantly, it reveals a pattern of hidden forces. In this sense, yinyang is not about matching one thing to another, but rather resonating with the hidden forces

²² Graham (trans.), *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, p. 183.

²³ Li Li (ed.) *Sayings of Zhuzi*, 朱子語類 (Beijing: Chinese Press, 中華書局, 1999), vol. 94. p. 2376.

²⁴ Ziporyan (trans.), p. 103.

²⁵ Graham (trans.), *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, p. 108.

at work in any situation, using such resonances in order to skillfully bring about results.

The second aspect of yinyang intelligence is found in adaptivity. Horse riding works with external forces and internal constraints that lead to adaptive self-organization. In this facet, adaptation is not synonymous with stability or harmony (*he*) but is closer to functional efficiency in coping with actual environmental disturbances. It is more about efficacy than about harmony. For example, what if the horse goes slowly but the rider needs to travel faster? The rider needs to initiate a way to make the horse go as fast as it can. The rider must engage in yielding and pulling movements, a dynamic yinyang play: giving and taking, pushing and pulling with the powers of the horse. The *Liezi* explains: “equalizing the give and the pull is the ultimate principle of dealing with the world.”²⁶ What is the “equalizing” (*jun* 均)? It is the center of the wheel that can turn to face any direction. The rider can only reach his or her goal by working with it, negotiating all variables to attain the desired result. The rider incorporates his surroundings into his perception-response loops in order to maintain efficacy.

Horse riding also requires human adaptation, affecting the reorganization of inherited behavior patterns to fit the existing environmental situations. This yinyang intelligence as an adaptation is an indispensable instrument for the interaction between oneself and the world. Yinyang is a configuration of forces: fundamental forces that can be exerted only by certain types of configurations and the qualities that emerge from such configurations. Only sages know how to use or obtain *Dao*. *Dao* is not just getting things but knowing how to use power, like navigating a boat in moving water, or using the wind to sail at sea.

²⁶ Ibid. p.104.

