

# PHL 500 The Generativity of Being and the Status of the Human II: *The Zhuangzi*

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office hours: Mon 1:30-2:30; Wed 2:30-3:30

## Description and Objectives

This course will use a historical/comparative approach to think through some of the consequences and problems that follow from the rejection of transcendence and radical dualisms. In positive terms, it will examine philosophical positions that are based on immanence and that take being as inherently dynamic and generative. While we will examine the ontological foundations for such views, we will focus largely on their consequences for the status of human beings. We will examine these issues from two perspectives, that of Spinoza's *Ethics* (in the fall) and that of the early Daoist text the *Zhuangzi* (in the winter). The winter course will divide roughly into three parts. We will begin in the first three sessions by setting some context for the *Zhuangzi*, with readings from the *Daodejing*, *Mozi*, and *Mengzi*. In these sessions, we will examine some of the metaphysical assumptions of the time and look at particular concerns with affects and with setting up standards. The second part will consist of a close reading of the *Zhuangzi*, concentrating on the so-called "inner chapters," but drawing other views from later chapters. The last three class sessions will be explicitly comparative, taking up themes from the *Zhuangzi* as they inform, expand, or contradict themes we have discussed from Spinoza. These themes will vary depending on student interests, but among the central themes will be the contrasting emphases on singularity and commonality (which goes along with the contrast between skepticism and rationalism), conceptions of the self and self-control, and the need for categories of good and bad. During these class sessions, students will also give brief presentations on their own research projects for the final paper. Ultimately, our goal is not just historical/comparative but rather to better understand the possibilities for a philosophy of radical immanence.

## Requirements

Reading: The *Zhuangzi* consists of loosely organized stories and dialogues, with themes often scattered across many chapters. You will need to frequently reread the text with attention to the themes for that day.

Presentation: Each student will give one presentation, which can be on the *Zhuangzi* alone or on the *Zhuangzi* and Spinoza together. The presentation should be a chance to test out some of your ideas for the final paper. The presentations must be organized and focused, and you can talk for no more than eight minutes, ending with a few questions for discussion. You can distribute written materials ahead of time, but do not read to the class.

Final Paper: If you are taking just this course, you should write a final paper approximately 12 pages long, on any aspect of the philosophy in the *Zhuangzi*. You can write a comparative paper, but must include at least 9 pages on the *Zhuangzi*. If you are writing a paper for this course and PHL 440 from the autumn quarter, you must write an article length paper (approximately 20 pages) dealing with both Spinoza and the *Zhuangzi*, although it need not focus on the two equally (that is, you can focus on one and use the other to set up a problem or contrast). This paper will determine your grade for both the autumn and winter courses. In any case, you should discuss your topic with me ahead of time. You should consult secondary sources written by at least two people.

## Required Texts

*Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, ed by Ivanhoe, Van Norden (Hackett)

*Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings*, translated by Brook Ziporyn (Hackett)

## Recommended Texts:

*Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, translated by A.C. Graham (Hackett) (The full translation by Burton Watson also is good, published by Columbia University Press).

*Daodejing*, by Laozi, translated by Hans-Georg Moeller (Open Court, 2007).

## Tentative Schedule of Readings and Themes

1/3	Introduction. Consequences of immanence. Orientation in Chinese Philosophy. Early Chinese cosmogonies.  Read: “The Great One Gives Birth to Water” and “Constancy First” (handout)
1/10	Immanence and vitality in the <i>Daodejing</i> .  Read: Read <i>Daodejing</i> , excerpts from <i>Lushi Chunqiu</i> (handout). Translation exercise.
1/17	Establishing standards. Role of affects.  Read: Excerpts from <i>Mozi</i> and <i>Mengzi</i> in <i>Readings</i> . “Xing Zi Ming Chu” (handout).
1/24	Orientation in the <i>Zhuangzi</i> . How do we approach this text? Themes of singularity, spontaneity, change.  Read: <i>Zhuangzi</i> chapters 1-7, pp. 3-54.
1/31	Language and skepticism.  Read: <i>Zhuangzi</i> ch. 2, reading closely two translations, read commentary pp. 135-165 Optional: Xunzi, “Rectification of Names” (handout).
2/7	Self, identity, and affect.  Read: Reread <i>Zhuangzi</i> , chapters 1-7. Read commentaries, pp. 129-212.
2/14	The status of the human. Valuing life, accepting death.  Read: <i>Zhuangzi</i> , outer and miscellaneous chapters, pp. 57-126; focus pp. 57-66.
2/21	Comparative Themes: Singularity and commonality as strategies. Presentations.  Reread: <i>Zhuangzi</i> .; Read: Ziporyn, “Spinoza and Daoism” (handout)
2/28	Comparative Themes: Change, self-control, self-protection. Presentations.  Reread: <i>Zhuangzi</i> .
3/6	Comparative Themes: Good, bad, and politics. Presentations.  Reread: <i>Zhuangzi</i> .